



# THE WARS BEFORE THE GREAT WAR

Conflict and International Politics  
before the Outbreak of the First World War

EDITED BY  
WILLIAM MULLIGAN, ANDREAS ROSE  
AND DOMINIK GEPPERT



## The Wars before the Great War

Between 1911 and 1914, the conflicts between Italy and the Ottoman Empire, together with the Balkan Wars that followed, transformed European politics. With contributions from leading international historians, this volume offers a comprehensive account of the wars before the Great War and surveys the impact of these conflicts on European diplomacy, military planning and popular opinion, and their role in undermining international stability in the years leading up to the outbreak of the First World War. Placing these conflicts at the centre of European history, the authors provide fresh insights on the origins of the First World War, emphasizing the importance of developments on the European periphery in driving change across the continent. Nation and empire, great powers and small states, Christian and Muslim, violent and peaceful, civilized and barbaric – the book evaluates core issues which defined European politics to show how they were encapsulated in the wars before the Great War.

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# 1 Introduction

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*Dominik Geppert, William Mulligan and Andreas Rose*

On 28 July 1914 Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. While this marks the beginning of the First World War, European politics had already been transformed by three wars over the previous three years – the wars before the Great War. In September 1911, Italian forces invaded Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, present-day Libya, but then two North African provinces of the Ottoman Empire. The war between Italy and the Ottoman Empire was followed by two wars in the Balkans in 1912 and 1913. In the First Balkan War, Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece and Montenegro, forming the Balkan Confederation, defeated the Ottoman Empire; in the Second Balkan War, in July 1913, the erstwhile Balkan allies fought each other, as Serbia, Greece and Romania easily defeated Bulgaria. These wars dominated European politics on the eve of the First World War. They constitute a bridge dividing a period of relative peace on the continent from the era of ‘total war’. These three wars accelerated the collapse of Ottoman power in one of Europe’s geopolitical cockpits, the Balkans, and the consequences rippled across the continent, raising questions about the balance of power, the visions of future war and the principles that underpinned political action in Europe. The purpose of the present volume is to place these wars and their wider repercussions at the centre of the transformations in international politics on the eve of the First World War.

Contemporaries recognised the significance of these wars. In November 1915 the second edition of *The War in the Balkans* appeared. Written by Noel Buxton, a British Liberal with a long-standing interest in the Balkans and the question of nationality politics, the book was re-issued in a second edition because ‘it has been found by experience to meet a widely felt need’. Nobody, argued Buxton, could deny the significance of the conflicts in the Balkans in 1912 and 1913 ‘as a factor in the European war’.<sup>1</sup> Others pushed the causal chain back to the Italian-Ottoman War and its repercussions in the Balkans. ‘The war became inevitable’,

<sup>1</sup> Noel Buxton, *The War in the Balkans*, 2nd edition (London: Allen & Unwin, 1915), p. 9.

the former French Foreign Minister Stephen Pichon told the nationalist writer Maurice Barrès in May 1916, ‘after the march on Fez. This decision released Italy, which was eyeing Tripolitania. Then it was war between Italy and Turkey. There were the Balkan states raising their standards under the protection of Russia. Everything unfolded fatally.’<sup>2</sup> In 1921 Francesco Nitti, the former Italian Prime Minister, recalled: ‘It is difficult to explain why Italy went to Tripoli in the way she did in 1911, bringing about the Italo-Turkish war, which brought about the two Balkan wars and the policy of adventure of Serbia, which was the incident, though not the cause of the European war.’<sup>3</sup>

Nor were these simply post-facto judgements, forged in the desperate circumstances of the First World War. Even before the Italian invasion of Tripolitania in September 1911 there were warnings about the possible repercussions. ‘The outcome [of an Italian invasion] is uncertain’, Alfred von Kiderlen-Wächter, the German Foreign Secretary, told Jules Cambon, the French ambassador, on the eve of Italy’s attack on Libya, ‘and it will be impossible the moment it breaks out to hold back Bulgaria, Serbia, and Greece. The Albanians and the Arabs in Yemen will revolt, and Austria, and perhaps Russia, will be compelled to intervene in the conflict which will set fire to the whole of the Orient: it will be a general war.’ Cambon, who saw the war as a danger to ‘Europe’, was sympathetic to Kiderlen’s plea.<sup>4</sup> The Italian Prime Minister, Giovanni Giolitti, noted in May 1911 that an invasion risked setting off a wider European conflict.<sup>5</sup> On 25 September 1911, an editorial in the leading Viennese newspaper, *Neue Freie Presse*, predicted that the conflict would spread to Europe, as the Ottoman Empire would respond to military attack by boycotting Italian goods and expelling Italian citizens from the Empire. The racial and religious hatred between Muslims and Christians would resonate in the Balkans, leading to conflict there. National hatred and the use of military power, unfettered by moral and legal restraints, would change the international system.<sup>6</sup>

Yet the significance attributed to these conflicts at the time had, until recently, lost its purchase on historical explanation. What Buxton believed in 1915 could hardly be denied, namely the seminal significance

<sup>2</sup> Maurice Barrès, *Mes cahiers, 1896–1923* (Paris: Plon, 1963), p. 761.

<sup>3</sup> Francesco Nitti, *Peaceless Europe* (London: Cassell, 1922), chapter 3.

<sup>4</sup> Jules Cambon to Selvès, 24 September 1911, *Documents Diplomatiques Français* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1930–55), 2nd series, vol. 14 (hereafter *DDF*), doc. 354, pp. 503–4.

<sup>5</sup> See [Chapter 2](#), pp. 24–5.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Beginn des Kampfs um Tripolis’, *Neue Freie Presse*, 25 September 1911, p. 1; see also [Chapter 18](#), pp. 329–30, on British liberal concerns about the consequences.



of the Balkan Wars, became marginalised in the historiography. In his study of the Balkan Wars, originally presented as a PhD thesis at Harvard in 1932, E. C. Helmreich noted that 'the Balkan Wars were fought only to be at once dwarfed by the World War'.<sup>7</sup> The sheer scale of the First World War encouraged historians to look for longer-term causes and trends, such as imperial expansion, Anglo-German rivalry from the turn of the century and arms races. On the other hand, the debate on the immediate causes, the decisions taken in the July crisis, remained contentious because of the so-called war guilt clause in the treaty of Versailles, which held Germany and her allies solely responsible for the outbreak of war.

In the 1970s Joachim Remak proved to be an isolated voice in arguing that the First World War was, in fact, the Third Balkan War.<sup>8</sup> His argument was largely neglected until the 1990s, when the scholarly gaze turned towards the Balkans and the eastern Mediterranean. This reflected changes in contemporary geopolitics since the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall reshaped the map and meaning of Europe. In addition, the Yugoslav Wars in the 1990s, the emergence of Turkey as a regional power, the enlargement of the European Union and debates about multi-culturalism in contemporary Europe have reframed perspectives on the past. Katrin Boeckh acknowledged the impact of the Yugoslav Wars on her study of the Balkan Wars, while the Carnegie Report on the atrocities in the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 was re-issued in 1993, with a new preface by the historian and diplomat George Kennan.<sup>9</sup> In 2000, Richard Hall published his single-volume study of the Balkan Wars, concluding that they 'introduced an age of modern warfare, encompassing mass armies, machines, and entire civilian populations'.<sup>10</sup>

This shifting historiographical perspective on the origins of the First World War found its most vivid expression in Christopher Clark's monumental study *The Sleepwalkers*, which places the Balkans at the heart of the debate on the origins of the First World War. He acknowledges the contemporary context in which he writes. The world before 1914 no longer strikes us as strange and distant, but modern and fresh, he argues. Complex European crises, terrorists, rising and declining powers, and

<sup>7</sup> Ernst Christian Helmreich, *The Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars 1912–1913* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1938), p. vii.

<sup>8</sup> Joachim Remak, '1914 – the Third Balkan War: Origins Reconsidered', *Journal of Modern History*, 43, 3 (1971), pp. 353–66.

<sup>9</sup> George Kennan, *The Other Balkan Wars: A 1913 Carnegie Endowment Inquiry in Retrospect* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1993).

<sup>10</sup> Richard C. Hall, *The Balkan Wars, 1912–1913: Prelude to the First World War* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 130.

an international public sphere – key features of the pre-1914 world resonate today.<sup>11</sup> Clark shows how the wider tensions within European politics before 1914 intersected with the latent hostility between the national claims of Serbia and the imperial and Great Power status of Austria-Hungary. This produced what Clark calls the ‘Balkans inception scenario’, in which statesmen, generals and others considered the possibilities, dangers and attractions of a general European war, starting in the Balkans. In turn the ‘cascade of wars that brought mayhem to the Balkans’, he notes, ‘began in Africa’ with the Italian invasion of the Ottoman provinces in Libya.<sup>12</sup>

This ‘cascade of wars’, their consequences for the transformation of international relations, their impact on the European public sphere and their consequences for military thinking and planning on the eve of the war form the central themes of this volume. This is a consciously Euro-centric point of view that neglects other important events in these years before the war, notably the Mexican revolution of 1910, the Chinese revolution of 1911, the shifting balances in the British empire, particularly the negotiations at the 1911 Imperial Conference, and the election of Woodrow Wilson in the United States in November 1912. While the course and legacies of these events transformed global politics, Europe continued to make the global weather, set the agenda and change the world, for good and for ill. And within Europe, these wars were pivotal in the transformation of the international order. This book has four sections, beginning with a series of chapters examining the wars themselves and the belligerents. These states and societies managed to create space in an international order dominated by the Great Powers to assert their own interests, although the ensuing wars entailed terrible suffering, atrocities and political, economic and social upheaval. Caccamo explores Italian foreign policy, while Wilcox assesses the experiences of Italian soldiers in North Africa in 1911 and 1912. Three chapters address various facets of Ottoman history in the Balkan Wars as Tokay examines diplomatic calculations, Ginio the impact of the war on the home-front and on children in particular, and Üngör the ethnic cleansing of Muslims from the Balkans. Two chapters by Newman on Serbian politics and Vukov on Bulgarian politics conclude the section on the belligerents. The second section is devoted to the reactions of European military planners to the wars, the lessons gleaned and ignored, and the impact on their strategic calculations. Whereas Pöhlmann, Wettstein and

<sup>11</sup> Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (London: Allen Lane, 2012), pp. xxv–xxvi.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.

Kronenbitter consider to what extent these wars shaped military thinking amongst the German, French and Habsburg officer corps, Menning's chapter shows how the outcome of the wars reshaped Russian mobilisation plans. The Great Powers sought variously to control, manage and exploit the geopolitical and diplomatic consequences of the war, the subject of the third section of chapters. Otte and Kießling assess the crisis management and diplomatic efforts of the British and French Foreign Offices, Hannig reconsiders the foreign policy of Austria-Hungary and Bormann's chapter explores the ways in which notions of racial struggle influenced German foreign policy. The final section considers the popular understanding of the wars throughout Europe at a regional, national and transnational level. Rose's examination of British radicals and foreign policy provides a link between foreign and domestic politics and Kruse scrutinises the role of international socialists in localising war and the limits of the alternatives they offered. While Scheer considers the reaction of the German-language press within the Habsburg Empire, Keisinger compares the media reports on the wars in Germany, Britain and Ireland.

### **The wars and the belligerents**

The wars, on their own terms, were hugely significant events, not least because in their conduct it is possible to identify features that characterised warfare during the two global conflicts between 1914 and 1945. The Italian-Ottoman and Balkan Wars were highly destructive, marked by large-scale, often systematic atrocities against non-combatants, revealing the importance of ideas about ethnicity and religion in these wars. Though German observers attributed the atrocities in the Balkan Wars to the 'primitive level of culture', they were also fearful that these atrocities reflected the character of national wars – and might well be repeated in a general European war.<sup>13</sup> Rather than representing a reversion to ancient ways, the atrocities were a harbinger of the conflicts to come. After Arab and Turkish forces killed 21 officers and 482 soldiers at Shara Shatt, with associated rumours of mutilation and crucifixion, Italian forces responded by executing approximately 4,400 Arab civilians, including 400 women. This marked the beginning of severe repression of civilian resistance to Italian rule in Libya that endured into the 1930s.<sup>14</sup> In the Balkans regular and irregular forces pursued a policy of ethnic cleansing. This included the murder, rape and expulsion of Muslims. This created a crisis on a scale that anticipated the wave of refugees in the Russian

<sup>13</sup> See [Chapter 12](#), p. 224.      <sup>14</sup> See [Chapter 3](#), pp. 43–4.

empire in the First World War.<sup>15</sup> Almost half a million Muslims fled eastwards, some of whom were later involved in the Armenian genocide, an act of revenge against an abstract Christian enemy. Once the Balkan states began to quarrel over the distribution of territory in 1913, national minorities, notably Bulgarians in Macedonia, were vulnerable to repression, dispossession and killing.<sup>16</sup>

The conduct of military operations became a subject of intense political, as well as strategic, significance, as armies were judged according to the putative standards of 'European civilisation'. Whereas violence against civilians has long been a feature of warfare, the atrocities in these wars took place against a background of efforts to codify the laws of war at the Hague conferences of 1899 and 1907. The debate about atrocities in the wars before the war, particularly the Balkan Wars, anticipated to a certain extent the debates about German atrocities in the invasion of France and Belgium in 1914.<sup>17</sup> The politics of atrocities both revealed and reshaped existing power relationships in the international system between 1911 and 1914. Standards of behaviour were not applied equally to all belligerents, so that European liberals tended to downplay or ignore atrocities against Muslims, while criticising the Ottoman Empire for the mistreatment of Christians. This confirmed the emerging view amongst Ottoman intellectuals that the empire could not hope to rely on the precepts of 'civilisation' or international law. This mirrors the disillusion amongst Ottoman diplomats with the Concert of Europe.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, the German press in Austria-Hungary wrote about the atrocities perpetrated by Serbian troops against Muslim civilians. The German press in the Habsburg Empire reflected its political animus towards the Serbian nationalist project, but it proved unable to mobilise any meaningful political support for Muslim victims, let alone the Ottoman Empire.<sup>19</sup>

The politics of these atrocities were complex and dynamic. Violence could, but did not always, escape political control. Belligerent governments exploited atrocities to cultivate popular support for war or for future revenge. Atrocities fuelled a culture of revenge in the Ottoman Empire in 1913.<sup>20</sup> Categories of victims did not remain immutable,

<sup>15</sup> See Chapter 5, pp. 78–82; Peter Gattrell, *A Whole Empire Walking: Refugees in Russia during World War I* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

<sup>16</sup> See Chapter 8, pp. 144–6.

<sup>17</sup> John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2001).

<sup>18</sup> See Chapter 19 and Chapter 4, pp. 355–7 and 67–73; Mustafa Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 21.

<sup>19</sup> See Chapter 17, pp. 310–17.

<sup>20</sup> See Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, pp. 86–91 and 102–12.

as people found their identities recast through violence and political interest. Balkan Christians could easily be transformed into antagonistic Serbs and Bulgarians. The collapse of the alliance between the Balkan states went hand in hand with violence against ethnic minorities in the newly expanded nation-states.<sup>21</sup> In Italy the killing of Italian soldiers at Sciarra Shatt destroyed expectations of a warm welcome from the local Arab populace and hardened attitudes to the conduct of war, justified by a complex assortment of ideas, including the civilising mission, the legacy of the Risorgimento and Catholicism. The Arab 'revolt' also provided Giolitti, the Italian Prime Minister, with an opportunity to pursue his plan to annex Libya, rather than administer it. This amounted to an important escalation of Italian war aims, undermining chances for a rapid negotiated settlement and necessitating a widening of the Italian war effort from North Africa to the eastern Mediterranean.<sup>22</sup>

These wars entailed popular mobilisation, patriotic support, enormous financial costs and the drafting of a large proportion of men into armies. This was less pronounced in the case of Italy, though mobilisation went far beyond the requirements of the initial, limited military plans. Moreover, as other imperial powers before Italy had discovered, a colonial war could shake the fiscal stability of the state.<sup>23</sup> In Serbia and Bulgaria urban crowds greeted the outbreak of war with enthusiasm. Less is known about the reaction in rural areas, where the vast bulk of the population lived. In any case, enlistment rates were very high, sustained in part by popular nationalist mythology. Volunteers came from outside these states, including ethnic minorities in the Habsburg Empire and returning emigrants, demonstrating the transnational character of nationalist politics. Popular mobilisation was an uneven process, even within individual states, a result of changing war aims and enemies, experiences of war and state propaganda. Although the First Balkan War was popular in both Bulgaria and Serbia, the Second Balkan War proved less so, some viewing it as a civil war between Slav brothers.<sup>24</sup> Defeat also spurred preparations for future remobilisation, as thwarted territorial ambitions and fantasies of revenge stimulated popular anger in the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria in 1913.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup> See [Chapter 7](#) and [Chapter 8](#), pp. 124–7 and 144–6.

<sup>22</sup> See [Chapter 2](#) and [Chapter 3](#), pp. 30–6, 43–4 and 47.

<sup>23</sup> See [Chapter 2](#) and [Chapter 3](#), pp. 35–6 and 44–51; Douglas Forsyth, *The Crisis of Liberal Italy: Monetary and Financial Policy, 1914–1922* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 84–5.

<sup>24</sup> See [Chapter 7](#) and [Chapter 8](#), pp. 124–7 and 141–4.

<sup>25</sup> See [Chapter 8](#), [Chapter 6](#) and [Chapter 5](#), pp. 145–7, 102–12 and 86–91.

Mobilisation sharpened conflicts between and within civilian and military authorities. As happened during and after the First World War, military service enabled officers to assert their claims to represent the nation. In the context of 'institutional radicalism', the Serbian officer corps, already a powerful political force since the coup of 1903, framed the national interest in a particularly aggressive way, escaped the control of civilian authorities, supported paramilitary groups and by the spring of 1914 had provoked a major constitutional crisis. The domestic political crisis in Serbia further exacerbated tensions between Belgrade and Vienna on the eve of the First World War. Blurred lines between civilian, military and paramilitary authorities and institutions in Serbia complicated Austro-Hungarian efforts to manage the threat of Serbian nationalism to the Habsburg Empire.<sup>26</sup> Despite defeat the army remained a significant force in Bulgarian politics. Many Bulgarians, in their analysis of the defeat, emphasised the political errors that threw away early military victories.<sup>27</sup> In the Ottoman Empire, as elsewhere in the Balkans, the lines between military and civilian authority were blurred because of the series of coups and counter-coups since 1908, culminating in the seizure of power by the Committee of Unity and Progress in January 1913. Under Enver Pasha, the CUP sought to forge a militarised national community, rendering conventional understandings of the distinctions between soldier and civilian meaningless. For example, children's education was shaped by their future role as soldiers.<sup>28</sup>

The extent to which remobilisation in 1913 and 1914 was hindered by the experience of wars is touched upon in several contributions. Popular expectations before and at the beginning of these conflicts contrasted with high death tolls, humanitarian crises and financial strain. Although the Balkan Wars were short in comparison to the First World War, death tolls in less than a year of fighting equated to 1 per cent of the population in Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria. These were similar to death rates in the early months of the war for the French and German armies. The number of refugees in the Ottoman Empire amounted to over 2 per cent of the population. All of the belligerents were forced to take on foreign loans to service the costs of war – with the exception of Italy, whose fiscal retrenchment since the turn of the century was undone by the ongoing conflict in Libya. In other words, a short war could be extremely costly in blood and treasure. Despite the persistent tensions and the unresolved crises, these experiences acted as a restraint on renewed war in 1914.

<sup>26</sup> See [Chapter 7](#), pp. 122–8.

<sup>27</sup> See [Chapter 8](#), pp. 140–3.

<sup>28</sup> See [Chapter 6](#), pp. 107–10.

Political leaders, even when they entertained hopes of a future war of conquest, wanted peace to consolidate their gains. Even in the Ottoman Empire where greater pressures for revenge existed, diplomacy proved cautious.<sup>29</sup> Of the belligerents in the wars before the war, only Serbia fought from the outset of the Great War.

### **The reaction of military planners**

These wars proved to be the final opportunity for European general staffs to observe combat before the First World War. Despite the employment of aircraft for the first time by Italian forces in November 1911, European observers considered that they had little to learn from the war in North Africa because of the asymmetry between the forces and the particular nature of the environment. Conceptions of cultural and racial differences engendered scepticism about the possible lessons of the Italo-Ottoman War. Italian soldiers viewed their Habsburg foes after 1915 as similar, whereas they dismissed their Turkish and Arab opponents as bestial and barbaric.<sup>30</sup> Indeed assumptions about social and cultural development in the Balkans shaped the attitudes of European observers in the wars in 1912 and 1913. Notions of geography and cultural specificity were closely intertwined. Some admirers of the Balkan states emphasised that atrocities were specific to Ottoman military practice.<sup>31</sup> German military observers blamed the atrocities on the perceived cultural backwardness of the belligerent societies, at the same time harbouring anxieties that they were a product of modern nationalist mobilisations.<sup>32</sup>

Despite these assumptions, European armies sent officers to observe and analyse these wars – as had happened in the Russo-Japanese and South African Wars earlier in the century.<sup>33</sup> These observers, despite their limited access to the front, paid close attention to infantry tactics and artillery support. Yet these observations had no significant impact on military operational and tactical thought on the eve of the war. Wettstein, Kronenbitter and Pöhlmann offer similar arguments as to why this was the case. First there was simply no time for the armies of the Great Powers to learn lessons, update tactical guides and change training techniques in the twenty months or so that separated the outbreak of the First Balkan War from the Great War. Second, armies, like other large institutions,

<sup>29</sup> Aksakal, *Ottoman Road*. <sup>30</sup> See [Chapter 3](#), pp. 40–2, 48–9.

<sup>31</sup> See [Chapter 11](#), p. 197. <sup>32</sup> See [Chapter 12](#), pp. 224–6.

<sup>33</sup> Olivier Cosson, *Préparer la Grande Guerre: L'armée française et la guerre russo-japonaise (1899–1914)* (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2013).

have a complex bureaucracy that slowed down the possibility of change. Yet even with more time, as all three authors emphasise, it is unlikely that the officers' observations would have altered military doctrine radically. They viewed the battlefields in the Balkans through the lens of pre-existing ideas.<sup>34</sup> Hence Austro-Hungarian and French observers praised the primacy of the offensive in Bulgarian and Serbian operations as the key to their success. The emphasis on the cult of the offensive was further enhanced by the limited equipment of the belligerents – morale, rather than materiel, became the key explanation for the victory of the Balkan states over the Ottoman Empire, reflecting in some ways contemporary Ottoman criticisms of their own military performance. Military observers claimed that good morale derived from the patriotic and offensive spirit. In this sense the Balkan Wars provided the prelude to the offensives of 1914, inspired by patriotic fervour and military training.<sup>35</sup> By contrast the trench warfare at Çatalca, between Bulgarian and Ottoman forces, had little place in the European military imagination in 1914.

The outcome of the wars did have consequences, however, for the war plans of the Great Powers. The Austro-Hungarian general staff, already facing the potential danger of a three-front war, now had to take the Serbian military threat seriously. The Habsburg army would have to be equal in size to its Serbian enemy; it could no longer rely on superior technology, training or command. This exacerbated the strategic dilemma facing the Austro-German alliance, as Habsburg forces were in a worse position to hold off Russian offensives in the east.<sup>36</sup> Russian planners were slower to see how the outcome of the Balkan Wars altered the strategic calculus in Europe, only recognising in 1914, two years after redrafting the mobilisation plan, that the rise of Serbia would draw off Habsburg forces from the Russian front. On the other hand, Russian planners took the diversion of Italian forces to North Africa into account, believing that it was now unlikely that Italy would participate in a war against France, therefore easing the burden on the Franco-Russian alliance.<sup>37</sup> Such an assessment chimed with the drift of Italian diplomacy, but the Chief of the Italian General Staff, Pollio, was busy assuring his German counterpart, Helmut von Moltke, of Italian aid in case of a general European war. Neither the Russian nor the Habsburg generals had worked out adequate plans on the eve of the war, caught as they were between multiple threats and competing intelligence assessments.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup> See [Chapter 10](#), [Chapter 11](#) and [Chapter 12](#), pp. 183–6, 195–7 and 220–2.

<sup>35</sup> See [Chapter 10](#) and [Chapter 11](#), pp. 180–4 and 198–9.

<sup>36</sup> See [Chapter 11](#), pp. 199–202. <sup>37</sup> See [Chapter 9](#), pp. 164–6.

<sup>38</sup> See [Chapter 9](#) and [Chapter 11](#), pp. 168–75 and 199–203.



## The diplomatic dimension

In addition to altering significantly the balance of military power between the Triple Alliance and the Entente, managing the consequences of these wars was the most pressing preoccupation in international politics before the war. As the contributions of Hannig, Otte and Kießling remind us, a general European conflict was not an inevitable outcome of the transformations in North Africa and the Balkans.<sup>39</sup> Nonetheless, the wars did not only lead to a changed balance of power between and within the two alliance blocs, but also raised fundamental questions about nation and empire, the management of the European order and the norms and conventions of international politics.

These wars marked the beginning of the final disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. As Tokay shows, Ottoman diplomatic miscalculation compounded the military weakness and absence of Great Power support in hastening the demise of the empire. The Great Powers sought to manage Ottoman decline and stave off a European war. Italian leaders wished to localise the conflict in the somewhat paradoxical hope that the Ottoman Empire would survive.<sup>40</sup> Italian leaders hoped for a rapid military victory, which would forestall a widening of the conflict and the opportunities for expansive measures by either the Balkan states or Austria-Hungary. The war, however, produced new dynamics. In an effort to end the conflict, the Italian military and navy widened the conflict to the Red Sea and the Dardanelles. Moreover Giolitti, initially ambiguous towards the war, became the leading advocate of annexing Libya into the Italian empire. This was more radical than previous imperial predations against the Ottoman Empire, such as Britain's position in Egypt after 1882 and Austria-Hungary's administration of Bosnia-Herzegovina between 1878 and its annexation in 1908. This made it more difficult for the Ottoman government to reach an agreement with Italy. Yet, at the same time, Italian diplomats reiterated their commitment to the status quo in the Balkans. Military imperatives and diplomatic ambitions ran in contrary directions. Equally, Ottoman diplomats miscalculated and only the prospect of war in the Balkans brought them to a settlement with Italy in the treaty of Lausanne in October 1912.<sup>41</sup>

The Great Powers continued to claim their right to manage the international system. Cartwright, the British ambassador at Vienna, noted acidly that no Great Power could tolerate the 'anarchy' or 'inflated

<sup>39</sup> Holger Afflerbach and David Stevenson (eds.), *An Improbable War? The Outbreak of World War I and European Political Culture before 1914* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007).

<sup>40</sup> See [Chapter 2](#), pp. 30–40.

<sup>41</sup> See [Chapter 2](#) and [Chapter 4](#), pp. 38–40 and 63–5.

ambitions' of a 'small neighbouring country'.<sup>42</sup> The clear hierarchy between the Great Powers and the other states was neatly demonstrated at two conferences in London between December 1912 and August 1913. The ambassadors' conference, with the five ambassadors of the Great Powers and Sir Edward Grey, negotiated key territorial and other changes in the wake of the First Balkan War, while the delegations from the belligerents were left to squabble – and fight once again – over Macedonia, an area now of marginal interest to the Great Powers. The revival of the Concert of Europe, in the form of the ambassadors' conference, represented a chance for peaceful, managed change. One of the major sources of international instability in the first decade of the century, Anglo-German antagonism, appeared to give way to cooperation.<sup>43</sup> The desire to avoid the catastrophe of a general European war was central to the diplomatic mediations of 1912 and 1913. Indeed the apparently successful containment of the wars led diplomats to become increasingly confident that they could master the treacherous currents of international politics.<sup>44</sup>

The effectiveness of the Concert was undermined in various ways. First, the division of Europe into two alliance blocs cut across the logic of the Concert. Concert diplomacy required mediation between the Great Powers, whereas the diplomacy of the balance of power divided Europe into two separate, if not always antagonistic, blocks. Grey tried to reconcile these different principles of crisis management; indeed his success in balancing the competing demands of British entente policy and Concert diplomacy was central to the successful ambassadors' conference in London.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, the dictates of the alliance system required partners to support each other, even if their own specific interests were not at stake or the merits of the case were dubious. The preservation of the alliance enjoyed primacy in French foreign policy.<sup>46</sup> The Concert, however, required mediation. Granted mediation was not disinterested, but it required the Great Powers to share common goals and to work towards solutions – in this case, the localisation of the wars in the Balkans. The British and French approaches demonstrate the underlying tensions. British officials cooperated with their German counterparts and sought to contain the crises. For French leaders, notably President Raymond Poincaré, the crises in the Balkans were a testing ground for the alliance with Russia. Although the ambassadors' conference proved remarkably

<sup>42</sup> See [Chapter 15](#), p. 267.

<sup>43</sup> See [Chapter 15](#) and [Chapter 16](#), pp. 269–70 and 289–90.

<sup>44</sup> See [Chapter 16](#), pp. 278–80, 294–5. <sup>45</sup> See [Chapter 15](#), pp. 269–72.

<sup>46</sup> See [Chapter 16](#), pp. 287–8, 295–7.

successful in avoiding a general war and drafting the main lines of the settlement by spring 1913, there remained difficult issues throughout the eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans, from determining borders to the formation of a new state, Albania. These issues sapped the Concert of its effectiveness. This did not merely reflect the scale of the issues, however, but also the low-level reversion to block politics, in which allies backed each other and blocked mediation.<sup>47</sup>

These concerns – of mediation and fidelity to the alliance (*Bundestreue*) – also shaped the evolution of the Austro-German alliance in 1912 and 1913. Different underlying conceptions hampered the operation of the alliance.<sup>48</sup> Austria-Hungary, in spite of Berchtold's tactical nod towards the principle of nationality, followed what Hannig describes as a 'typical plan of classical diplomacy'. Berchtold sought to isolate Serbia, through the formation of a new Balkan League, including Bulgaria and Romania, under Habsburg leadership. Traditional calculations of threat, security and military power informed thinking in Vienna. Austro-Hungarian diplomats were committed to maintaining peace by isolating Serbia, rather than preparing for a future war. The restrained modes and aims of Habsburg diplomacy were in stark contrast to a new element in German foreign policy. Following the death of Kiderlen-Wächter in December 1912 Gottlieb von Jagow was elevated to the post of Secretary of State. Jagow, as Bormann shows, viewed international relations in terms of Bismarckian *Realpolitik*, imperial power struggles and racial conflict. Always concerned by Russian power, on grounds of imperial rivalry and racial hostility, Jagow became increasingly pessimistic in the wake of the Balkan Wars. He saw these wars as a victory for Slavdom, ultimately at the expense of German interests, whose prospects for imperial expansion in the Ottoman Empire were now blocked by the Balkan states. German and Austro-Hungarian policies in the Balkans proved incompatible, owing to these different underlying conceptions of international politics. Whereas Jagow wanted to maintain close links with Romania, he dismissed the possibility of a rapprochement with Bulgaria on the grounds of its 'Slavic' identity. This cut across Berchtold's Bulgarian option and strained relations between the two Great Powers in central Europe over the future direction of policy in the Balkans.<sup>49</sup>

This racial perspective, shared by Jagow, Bethmann-Hollweg and others within the German elite, increased the sense of peril within the minds of decision-makers, as they overestimated the homogeneity of the 'Slav'

<sup>47</sup> See [Chapter 15](#) and [Chapter 16](#), pp. 273–80 and 288–90.

<sup>48</sup> See [Chapter 13](#) and [Chapter 14](#), pp. 238–40, 246–8 and 257–63.

<sup>49</sup> See [Chapter 13](#) and [Chapter 14](#), pp. 241–8 and 253–63.

world. Simultaneously the racial perspective blocked out creative solutions to the threats of German security. In a world defined by racial conflict, rapprochement with Russia or the entry of Bulgaria into an alliance with Austria-Hungary and Germany made little sense.<sup>50</sup>

### **European publics and the wars**

There was a broader domestic and transnational political context to these diplomatic calculations. In Britain, liberals had a long-standing interest in the Balkans, dating back at least to the Bulgarian atrocities campaign of the mid-1870s. Radical liberals saw the Balkan Wars as important in and of themselves, but they also considered them as a testing ground for Grey's foreign policy. Since the Anglo-Russian entente of 1907, radical liberals had criticised Grey for pursuing a balance of power policy that even on its own merits was flawed, owing to the recovery of Russia after the 1905 revolution. In late 1912 Grey, responding to these criticisms from influential MPs and other prominent figures in the Liberal Party, shifted British foreign policy away from a balance of power to a Concert-style approach. Radicals envisioned Anglo-German mediation, as both states would restrain their partners, Russia and Austria-Hungary. Moreover radical liberals viewed the outcome of the wars as progressive, as Balkan nations expelled Ottoman tyranny from Europe, ignoring for the most part the atrocities perpetrated by the Balkan states.<sup>51</sup> On this reading the Balkan Wars appeared to signal a brighter future for European politics – the resolution of the Eastern Question with the formation of nation-states was accompanied by a perceived easing of tensions between the two alliance blocs, indeed a revival of Concert politics. However Grey's ability to reshape European politics was limited, partly by his own imagination, but also by pressures from Foreign Office officials and Britain's entente partners, France and Russia. By the spring of 1913, Grey had reverted towards a balance of power policy, supporting Russian proposals and undermining Austria-Hungary's position. Grey seemed hardly aware of the consequences of this change in policy and most radicals found it difficult to grasp. The root of their shock at the failure of the Concert in July 1914, therefore, lay in their analysis of Grey's diplomacy during the Balkan Wars.<sup>52</sup>

The military success of the Balkan states was widely applauded throughout Europe, though more so in the liberal than in the conservative press.<sup>53</sup> Even European socialists, who mobilised against the threat

<sup>50</sup> See [Chapter 14](#), pp. 261–3.

<sup>51</sup> See [Chapter 18](#), pp. 325–32.

<sup>52</sup> See [Chapter 18](#), pp. 335–41.

<sup>53</sup> See [Chapter 19](#), pp. 352–5.

of a general war in November 1912, identified the victory of the Balkan nation-states over the Ottoman Empire as a progressive moment. In liberating the Balkan peoples from the feudal system of Ottoman rule, socialists saw the wars as following the historical path to revolution.<sup>54</sup> The nation became the central reference point of the domestic and international order. And this had repercussions, most notably in Austria-Hungary. In this sense the wars, legitimised by the principle of nationality, were an existential threat to the multinational Habsburg Empire; nonetheless Berchtold called for the application of the principle of ethnicity as the basis for territorial changes after the First Balkan War. In doing so, he acknowledged the very principle that challenged the Habsburg Empire.<sup>55</sup> Commentators feared that the fate of the Ottoman Empire was a warning of what would soon befall the Habsburgs. Socialists' analyses agreed that the challenge from Serbia to the Habsburg Empire was not merely a military one, but also a normative one, that pitted nation against empire. The stakes of the war, therefore, went beyond the geopolitical transformations to encompass ideas about the future political order in Europe.<sup>56</sup> In a telling phrase, the *Neue Freie Presse*, the leading Viennese paper, considered the Ottomans to be 'fighting for Europe'.<sup>57</sup> Press reaction to the wars broke down on regional and religious lines, an illustration of the adage that foreign and domestic politics in Austria-Hungary were intertwined. Subtle linguistic changes – the older notion of a holy war against the Islamic Ottoman Empire was replaced by talk of national wars – demonstrated the principles at stake. The other Great Powers – with the exception of France – had large national minorities, but were generally able to present themselves as nation-states. In the United Kingdom, however, as Keisinger shows, Irish nationalists took heart from the success of the Balkan states in asserting the independence of small nations. These wars fed into the incipient crisis in Britain and Ireland, caused by the prospect of Home Rule.

International socialism did not offer a robust alternative to Great Power politics and hardly acted as a restraint on diplomatic decisions. Like the diplomats their primary concern in late 1912 was to localise the Balkan War, not to stop it. National interests cut across possible cooperation, so that French socialists saw a general strike as a means of stopping German aggression, whereas German socialists feared the severe repression that would follow any general strike. Despite the evident horrors of the Balkan Wars, which figures like Jean Jaurès believed offered a glimpse of the

<sup>54</sup> See [Chapter 20](#), pp. 364–5.

<sup>56</sup> See [Chapter 20](#), pp. 364–9.

<sup>55</sup> See [Chapter 13](#), p. 238.

<sup>57</sup> See [Chapter 17](#), p. 307.

destructive dimensions of a European war, socialists failed to agree on a viable strategy to prevent the outbreak of war.<sup>58</sup>

These wars did not lead inexorably to the First World War. The scope for compromise and for Concert diplomacy remained in early 1914.<sup>59</sup> Despite tensions remaining high in the Balkans and Italian forces struggling to suppress Arab resistance in Libya, many informed observers were confident in the spring of 1914 that Europe had passed the worst. The former French Foreign Minister, Gabriel Hanotaux, wondered whether it was a positive omen that the treaty of Bucharest, marking the end of the Second Balkan War, was concluded just as the Peace Palace in the Hague, the home of the Court of Arbitration, was officially opened. 'In Rome, when war ended', he wrote, 'the temple of Janus closed its doors; this [le temple de la paix], the moment war finishes, opens its doors.'<sup>60</sup>

That said, the wars before the war represented a pivot in international politics. Not only were the territorial transformations the most important in Europe since 1871 but, arguably as importantly, the wars marked a change in the ideas that informed international politics. Foremost amongst these was the emergence of the national principle and the challenge to empire, at least within Europe. Indeed the course of revolutions in Mexico and China, which began in 1910 and 1911 respectively, and the international reactions to them suggested that changes were taking place in the global, as well as the European, order.<sup>61</sup> Although nationalism had been a fundamental element of international politics since at least the French revolution and the justification for the unification of two Great Powers, Italy and Germany, in the 1860s and 1870s, it was now invoked by smaller states. By the time Woodrow Wilson brought the United States into the First World War in April 1917, the competing claims of nationalism and empire, of small state and Great Power, central to his thinking about a new world order, had been at the centre of international politics for almost six years, since 1911.<sup>62</sup> Making nations out of a multinational space in Europe was a brutal process, as the Balkan

<sup>58</sup> See [Chapter 20](#), pp. 360–72.

<sup>59</sup> Friedrich Kiessling, *Gegen den 'großen' Krieg: Entspannung in den internationalen Beziehungen 1911–1914* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2002).

<sup>60</sup> 'Le temple de la paix', 23 August 1913, in Gabriel Hanotaux, *La guerre des Balkans et l'Europe, 1912–1913* (Paris: Plon, 1914), p. 381.

<sup>61</sup> William Mulligan, *The Great War for Peace* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), pp. 12–17.

<sup>62</sup> Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anti-Colonial Nationalism* (Oxford University Press, 2007).

Wars anticipated the ethnic conflicts and violence that occurred periodically throughout the twentieth century. The divisions between the Great Powers, popular sentiments in Europe and the crisis in the Ottoman Empire, which accelerated during its war against Italy, created opportunities for the Balkan states to assert their national claims. In doing so, they transformed the international system before 1914.





*Part I*

The belligerents



## 2 Italy, Libya and the Balkans

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*Francesco Caccamo*

In the early twentieth century, Italy was still a newcomer in the European concert and her economic, political and military potential was considerably inferior to that of more consolidated powers. It was the 'least of the Great Powers', as Richard Bosworth put it.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, under the liberal ruling class and the unusually long premiership of Giovanni Giolitti, the country was experiencing a period of growth and consolidation. In the area of foreign policy, Italy derived indisputable advantages from its inclusion in the Triple Alliance of 1882. It is true that within this alliance Italy held a somewhat eccentric position, because of the privileged relations between Germany and Austria-Hungary and the tensions with Vienna for the *terre irredente*, the unredeemed lands of Trento and Trieste. Nonetheless, the Alliance with the Central Empires represented a solid foothold for Italian initiatives in the international arena. In addition, Italy succeeded in negotiating a series of agreements with the other Great Powers, reducing old reasons for conflict and opening new opportunities for collaboration. Such was the case with the agreements with England in 1887 and 1902, with France in 1900–2 and with Russia in 1909.<sup>2</sup>

This almost unique position in the context of the era, characterized by inclusion in the Triple Alliance, but also by relatively friendly ties with

<sup>1</sup> R. J. B. Bosworth, *Italy, the Least of the Great Powers: Italian Foreign Policy before the First World War* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1979). The credit for coining the expression belongs to E. Decleva, *L'Italia e la politica internazionale dal 1870 al 1914. L'ultima fra le grandi potenze* (Milan: Mursia, 1974).

<sup>2</sup> L. Salvatorelli, *La Triplice Alleanza. Storia diplomatica 1877–1912* (Milan: ISPI, 1939); L. Albertini, *Le origini della guerra del 1914*, 3 vols. (Milan: Bocca, 1942–3); F. Chabod, *Storia della politica estera italiana dal 1870 al 1896* (Bari: Laterza, 1962); E. Serra, *Camille Barrère e l'intesa italo-francese* (Milan: Giuffrè, 1950); Bosworth, *Italy, the Least of the Great Powers*; D. Grange, *L'Italie et la Méditerranée (1896–1911)*, 2 vols. (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1994); R. Petignani, *Neutralità e alleanza. Le scelte di politica estera dell'Italia dopo l'Unità* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1987); H. Afflerbach, *Die Dreibund. Europäische Grossmacht- und Allianzpolitik vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2002); L. Monzali, *The Italians of Dalmatia: From Italian Unification to World War I* (Toronto University Press, 2009).

the members of the emerging Entente, was successfully exploited in the years immediately preceding the First World War. Following the preparation set in motion by Giolitti's first Foreign Minister Tommaso Tittoni, his successor, the Marquis Antonino di San Giuliano, availed himself, through a skilful but often unscrupulous manner, of the opportunities offered by the growing tension in the international arena, adopting what might be defined as 'diplomacy of the calculated risk'.<sup>3</sup> In particular, Italy took advantage of its relations with the various powers in order to promote her economic and political expansion in the Balkan Peninsula and in the east-central Mediterranean, where the crisis of the Ottoman Empire accelerated following the revolt of the Young Turks and their uncertain attempts at reforms. In the background, Italian policymakers cultivated the hope that one day the Habsburg Empire could be convinced to abandon at least some portions of the *terre irredente* in exchange for advantages in other regions, notably in the Balkans.<sup>4</sup>

This set the stage for the first of the 'wars before the war', the Italian-Turkish conflict or Libyan War.<sup>5</sup> One can discuss the cultural climate

<sup>3</sup> This definition was coined by a leading Italian diplomat in an essay on San Giuliano's role during the July 1914 crisis: F. Salleo, *Diplomazia del rischio calcolato*, in G. Giarrizzo, *Diario fotografico del Marchese di San Giuliano* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1984), pp. 27–39. More recently, the term was used in relation to the Libyan War in the excellent biography on San Giuliano by G. Ferraioli, *Politica e diplomazia in Italia tra XIX e XX secolo. Vita di Antonino di San Giuliano (1852–1914)* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2007), p. 257.

<sup>4</sup> Among the vast array of works on the Giolitti era, see: G. Carocci, *Giolitti e l'età giolittiana* (Turin: Einaudi, 1961); E. Gentile, *L'età giolittiana 1899–1914* (Naples: Esi, 1977); A. A. Mola, *Giolitti. Lo statista della nuova Italia* (Milan: Mondadori, 2003). See also the memoirs of the Italian premier and the collections of his speeches and documents: G. Giolitti, *Memorie della mia vita*, 2 vols. (Milan: Treves, 1922); *Quarant'anni di politica italiana: Dalle carte di Giovanni Giolitti*, 3 vols. (Milan: G. Feltrinelli, 1962); above all, *Giovanni Giolitti al governo, in Parlamento, nel carteggio*, ed. A. Mola and A. G. Ricci, 3 vols. (Foggia: Bastogi, 2007–10). On Tittoni see the monumental study by Francesco Tommasini, *L'Italia alla vigilia della Grande Guerra. La politica estera di Tommaso Tittoni*, 5 vols. (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1934–41).

<sup>5</sup> On the Libyan War, see also: W. C. Askew, *Europe and Italy's Acquisition of Libya 1911–1912* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1942); G. Volpe, *L'impresa di Tripoli 1911–12* (Rome: Edizioni Leonardo, 1946); F. Malgeri, *La guerra libica (1911–1912)* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1979); S. Romano, *La quarta sponda. La guerra di Libia* (Milan: Bompiani, 1977); A. Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Libia. Tripoli bel suol d'amore* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1986), pp. 3–202; T. W. Childs, *Italo-Turkish Diplomacy and the War over Libya 1911–1912* (Leiden-New York: Brill, 1990); M. Gabriele, *La Marina nella guerra italo-turca: Il potere marittimo strumento militare e politico (1911–1912)* (Rome: USSME, 1998); S. Trinchese, *Mare nostrum. Percezione ottomana e mito mediterraneo in Italia all'alba del '900* (Milan: Guerini, 2006); N. Labanca, *La guerra italiana per la Libia 1911–1931* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2012), pp. 27–120; L. Micheletta and A. Ungari (eds.), *The Libyan War 1911–1912* (Newcastle on Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013). The opportunities for studying the conflict substantially increased thanks to the publication of some important collections of documents: the already mentioned *Giovanni Giolitti al governo, in Parlamento, nel carteggio*, with special reference to

that accompanied the so-called 'Libyan enterprise', the influence of the nationalist movement on Italian public opinion, the myths evoked to justify the aggression on the Ottoman Empire from the inheritance of the Roman Empire to the civilizing mission of Italy, from the *mare nostrum* to the 'fourth shore'. On the whole, however, it appears clear that the decisions leading to the military conquest of the last African provinces of the Ottoman Empire were shaped by the international context. 'Without underestimating the pressure exerted by public opinion and by economic-financial groups', Gentile argued, 'there is no doubt that the reasons driving Giolitti to intervene were determined by consideration of the international political situation that called either for foreclosing the mortgage on Libya or else finally giving up any idea of conquering the last territory of Mediterranean Africa still free of the dominance or the colonial influence of the other European powers'.<sup>6</sup>

For a long time, Italy had directed her attention towards Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, with the aim of following the other Great Powers on the road towards colonial expansion, of favouring an evolution of the Mediterranean balance compatible with her ambitions, and even of finding an outlet for Italian emigration. Over almost three decades, through the above-mentioned agreements, Italy obtained a more or less explicit recognition of its prevailing interest in the region. This diplomatic preparation was supported by a 'peaceful penetration' of a mostly economic nature that was supposed to combine support for the initiatives of Italian businessmen, and especially of the Banco di Roma, with the maintenance of Ottoman sovereignty. Already in the last years of the absolutist regime of Sultan Abdülhamid II, however, this policy revealed clear limitations. Italian activism was inevitably bound to awaken the suspicion of the Sublime Porte and its local representatives, who perceived that economic penetration could anticipate political interventions. Moreover, the Italian entrepreneurial initiatives suffered from intrinsic weaknesses and were in evident difficulty when faced with competition from other European powers. The situation did not improve with the Young Turk Revolution, when the policy of peaceful penetration found itself increasingly at odds with the new men in power in Constantinople. The Italian authorities stepped up their requests by claiming an exclusive economic monopoly

vol. III (*Il Carteggio*), vol. II; *I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani* [henceforth *DDI*], Series IV, vols. 7–8 (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 2004); Sinan Kunalalp (ed.), *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents on the Origins of World War One*, vol. V: *The Turco-Italian War 1911–1912*, 2 parts (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> Gentile, *L'età giolittiana*, p. 168. On the Italian nationalist movement, see F. Gaeta, *Il nazionalismo italiano* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1981); F. Perfetti, *Il movimento nazionalista in Italia 1903–1914* (Rome: Bonacci, 1984).

over the African provinces and threatening a trial of strength, but to no avail.<sup>7</sup> As far as the failure of peaceful penetration is concerned, the similarity of judgements expressed by two observers, the chargé d'affaires to Constantinople, Giacomo De Martino, and the Ottoman Minister to Rome, Seifeddin Bey, is striking. With disillusioned realism the Italian diplomat declared that 'We cannot avoid in any way that the Turks favour foreign initiatives against the Italian ones. The Ottoman government displays a legitimate right of self-defense against the Italian penetration, which is the only one that he has to fear.'<sup>8</sup> For his part Seifeddin Bey warned that 'the concessions that we could make to the Italians in our African provinces will do nothing but increase their appetite and offer them the occasion to intervene'. Moreover, 'Italian appetite is not satiable, and whatever concession or facilitation will be fatally followed by others. In this way the sacrifices that we might undertake will have no outcome but to represent temporary satisfactions, without lasting effects.'<sup>9</sup>

Despite growing tension, until the beginning of 1911 the Giolitti government did not consider military intervention as a solution to what was by then labelled the Tripoli question. In May the Italian premier expressed his difficulties with the likely consequences of a military conflict: 'The nationalists imagine that Tripolitania is the territory of a poor blackbird and that a European State could dispossess him as he likes? But Tripolitania is a province of the Ottoman Empire and the Ottoman Empire is one of the principles on which lay the foundations of Europe's peace and balance. To take possession of Tripolitania I would have to declare war on the Ottoman Empire and, in order to wage war against a Great European Power, I would need, if not a reason, then at least a pretext. I cannot justify the war against the Ottoman Empire by declaring that the nationalist party wants Tripolitania. And then . . . the integrity of the Ottoman Empire is a condition for Europe's balance and peace. Is it truly in Italy's interest to shatter into pieces one of the corner-stones of the old building? And what if, after we attack Turkey, the Balkans move as well? And what if a Balkan war causes a clash among the groups of powers

<sup>7</sup> On Italy's economic expansionism, see R. A. Webster, *L'imperialismo industriale italiano: Studio sul prefascismo 1908-1915* (Turin: Einaudi, 1974); Grange, *L'Italie et la Méditerranée*. For an overview of Italian-Ottoman relations before the Libyan War, see F. Caccamo, 'The Ottoman Empire and the Eastern Question', in Micheletta and Ungari (eds.), *The Libyan War*, pp. 175-91.

<sup>8</sup> *DDI*, vols. 7 and 8, doc. 127, De Martino to San Giuliano, 14 August 1911.

<sup>9</sup> *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents*, vol. V/I, docs. 36 and 42, Seifeddin Bey to Rifaat Paşa, 2 and 12 August 1911.

and a European war? Could we take upon ourselves the responsibility for igniting the gunpowder?'<sup>10</sup>

This situation was abruptly modified by the outbreak of the Second Moroccan Crisis during the summer. With the imminent end of Moroccan independence, Tripolitania and Cyrenaica were now the last portions of North African territory free from European control. If Italy wanted to affirm her presence in the Mediterranean and fulfil her aspirations as a Great Power, the moment had arrived to deliver on the promises and guarantees obtained from 'allies' and 'friends', in other words, from the Central Empires and from the members of the Entente. To postpone a decision simply threatened to open the field to dangerous interference: not only by France and England, whose colonial belongings surrounded Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, but also by Germany, which by then had become the main protector of the Sublime Porte and the main beneficiary of political and economic concessions within its domains. This was a risk that almost no representative of the Italian ruling group was willing to take, even without considering the agitation of the radical nationalists and the unrest in the press.<sup>11</sup> The changes introduced by the Moroccan crisis became immediately apparent. While being notified of the Agadir incident, on 1 July, San Giuliano reacted with an eloquent gesture, turning to the Undersecretary of State, Prince Giovanni Lanza di Scalea, pointing at his watch and confiding that from that precise moment the Tripoli question entered a decisive phase.<sup>12</sup> The same day the Italian Foreign Minister warned Giolitti: 'The situation that might arise in Morocco promptly requires a calm exam from our side on the line of conduct to adopt and on eventual resolutions to prepare.'<sup>13</sup>

The Italian stance quickly began to take shape. The well-known memorandum with which San Giuliano invited Giolitti and King Vittorio Emanuele III to consider a military expedition is highly revealing. With apparent caution, the foreign minister began by examining the main obstacle to such an initiative: that is, the danger that it might further destabilize the Balkan peninsula, encourage the local populations to rise against 'the madly centralistic regime of the Young Turks' and induce

<sup>10</sup> G. Ferrero, *Potere* (Rome: Edizioni di Comunità, 1946), p. 326.

<sup>11</sup> The decisive role played by the Moroccan Crisis in the Italian decision to declare war on the Ottoman Empire was remarkably evident to a contemporary observer as the British Ambassador to Rome Rennell Rodd: *British Documents on the Origins of the War*, vol. 9/I, doc. 259, Rodd to Grey, 1 October 1911.

<sup>12</sup> J. R. Rodd, *Social and Diplomatic Memories*, 3 vols. (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1925), vol. III, p. 141.

<sup>13</sup> *Giovanni Giolitti al governo, in Parlamento, nel carteggio*, vol. III, 2, doc. 182, San Giuliano to Giolitti, 1 July 1911.

Austria-Hungary to intervene in defence of her interests at a time when Italian energy would be concentrated elsewhere. Nonetheless, the elements in favour of Italian action seemed to prevail over those against it. The need to defend the Mediterranean balance altered by the Moroccan crisis and to make sure that France respected her obligations before she could accomplish the 'Tunisification' of Morocco was certainly decisive. A further incentive to action was the fear that the Germans or Austrians might take advantage of the renewal of the Triple Alliance due for 1912 in order to ask for a modification of the terms of the treaty in exchange for concessions to Italy in Africa. Finally, the solution of the Tripoli question would open the way to an improvement of the tense relations between Rome and Constantinople and lay the foundations for a policy of mutual friendship. Here the reasoning was certainly flawed, assuming that the strains caused by the war could be easily overcome and even lead to a fruitful collaboration. This inconsistency was in some way due to the delusion, which San Giuliano nurtured for a long time, that eventually the Porte would cede to threats, thereby rendering military confrontation unnecessary. According to his words, 'the most effective way to avoid the military expedition to Tripolitania is to make ready for it'.<sup>14</sup>

The memorandum of 28 July marked the beginning of San Giuliano's attempts to persuade Vittorio Emanuele III and Giolitti, attempts that would last the entire summer. There is no clear evidence on the king's stance, but without doubt Giolitti was more cautious than his foreign minister. Although Giolitti shared most of the ideas expressed in the 28 July memorandum and was sensitive to the nationalist leanings of the majority of Italian public opinion, he was also aware of the responsibility that he would take on by launching a war of aggression against the Ottoman Empire. After the attainment of a Franco-German compromise putting an end to the Agadir accident created a French and, subordinately, a Spanish protectorate in Morocco, however, even he had to acknowledge the impossibility of indefinitely postponing a decision. Political motivations were gradually joined by those of a military nature. During the summer, the Italian leadership began to realize the necessity of acting before the bad season imperiled a landing on North African shores.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *DDI*, vols. 7 and 8, doc. 108, San Giuliano to Vittorio Emanuele III and Giolitti, 28 July 1911.

<sup>15</sup> The series of letters sent by San Giuliano to Giolitti during the summer 1911 is revealing, witnessing also the evolution of the stance of the Italian premier: *Giovanni Giolitti al governo, in Parlamento, nel carteggio*, vol. III, 2, docs. 186, 189, 192, 193, 194, 195, 199, 200. Ferraioli, *Politica e diplomazia in Italia*, pp. 403–13.



While Giolitti hesitated, San Giuliano opened a round of consultations with the heads of the main diplomatic representations abroad.<sup>16</sup> The responses that he gathered were not unanimous. The ambassadors in Vienna and Berlin stressed that the partners of the Triple Alliance opposed initiatives that might imperil Austrian and German achievements within the Ottoman Empire and increase the disintegrating impulses in the Balkans.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, the overall orientation was favourable to a rapid solution of the Tripoli question. The tone was set by the rising diplomat Giacomo De Martino, who had been sent as *chargé d'affaires* to Constantinople in order to give a more determined character to the Italian policy within the Ottoman Empire, and who was soon to be promoted to general secretary of the Consulta. De Martino acknowledged with disillusioned realism that peaceful penetration had reached a dead end: 'The more or less hidden, more or less polite opposition of the Ottoman Government to our initiatives in Tripolitania is natural and unavoidable and will continue in the future. By now it is too clear that for the Turks our "peaceful penetration" is nothing other than "political penetration". The Ottoman government is well informed of some of our agreements concerning Tripolitania. For them, it is a question of legitimate defense.' At the same time it was no longer possible to continue with pressures and threats that nobody in Constantinople took seriously: 'Too many times we threatened with words. In Constantinople nobody believes our threats anymore.' The moment had arrived to prepare a military expedition, taking advantage of the agreements with the other European powers before the solution of the Moroccan question weakened French loyalty and before a new Ottoman crisis provided Austria with the pretext for trying to strengthen her position in the Balkans in exchange for concessions to Italy in the African provinces.<sup>18</sup>

The evaluations by Tommaso Tittoni, the ambassador to Paris, bore even more weight. As San Giuliano's predecessor at the helm of the Consulta under Giolitti, Tittoni had played a decisive role in formulating Italian policy in Tripolitania. Like De Martino, he acknowledged the failure of peaceful penetration and warned that waiting for too long risked weakening the assurances from the other powers. The value of French commitments would gradually wane once they obtained a protectorate over Morocco; even worse, it was not difficult to foresee that sooner or later they would direct their ambitions towards Tripoli. This danger was

<sup>16</sup> *DDI*, vols. 7 and 8, doc. 120, San Giuliano to De Martino, 9 August 1911.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 128, Pansa to San Giuliano, 11–14 August 1911; *Ibid.*, doc. 123, Avarna to San Giuliano, 12 August 1911.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, De Martino to San Giuliano, 21 August 1911, doc. 132.

described in a characteristic way: 'I am convinced that France would behave with us as a seducer who avoids the wedding after having his way with a girl through the promise of marriage.' After having laid forth such a dark scenario, Tittoni explicitly invited San Giuliano to act: 'As Your Excellency knows, I followed a cautious policy, averse to risks. As Your Excellency, I harvested unpopularity, which, I believe, was for both of us a badge of honour. However, there are moments when it is necessary to run the risk, because there is no other choice. Such seems to me the present moment. Tripolitania is necessary to Italy for the Mediterranean balance. We could wait if there were not the danger that we might lose it, and indeed we waited patiently until such danger appeared on the horizon. Today this danger begins to take shape, and with the passage of time it will grow more severe. Thus the occupation of Tripolitania imposes itself upon us as an unavoidable necessity.'<sup>19</sup>

In the meantime the idea of an expedition against the Ottoman Empire obtained the consent of some of the most prominent representatives of the Italian liberal ruling group. In mid-September Sidney Sonnino, the real leader of the liberal-conservative opposition, declared to San Giuliano his unconditional support for an act of strength. 'For our country', he explained, 'this moment is so historically important, that I believe it my duty to do everything in my power to encourage the government to the most energetic and resolute action. I am deeply convinced that, if Italy does not go to Tripoli immediately, she will not go there anymore, and that instead some other power would go there very soon.'<sup>20</sup>

During the same period, the director of the *Corriere della Sera*, Luigi Albertini, abandoned his doubts about Tripolitania's economic value and aligned his influential newspaper in the press campaign favouring intervention. As he explained in his memoirs, he had gradually come to realize that Italy could not miss the historic opportunity offered by the Moroccan crisis in order to impose its control over a portion of the North African coast if it did not want to be marginalized in the international arena and run the risk of an internal crisis.<sup>21</sup> In September Albertini entrusted the interventionist Andrea Torre – member of Parliament, *Corriere's* correspondent from Rome and its leading expert on foreign policy issues – with the task of explaining to the readers the case for Tripolitania's conquest.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, Tittoni to San Giuliano, 7 September 1911, doc. 153.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, Sonnino to San Giuliano, 13 September 1911, doc. 163. L. Monzali, 'Sidney Sonnino e la politica estera italiana dal 1878 al 1914', *Clio*, 3 (1999), pp. 397–447.

<sup>21</sup> L. Albertini, *Vent'anni di vita politica*, 5 vols. (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1951), vol. I, p. 115. O. Barié, *Luigi Albertini* (Turin: Utet, 1972), pp. 279–81.

<sup>22</sup> L. Albertini, *Epistolario 1911–1926*, 4 vols. (Milan: Mondadori, 1968), vol. I, docs. 7 and 8, Torre to Albertini, 15 and 18 September 1911; *Ibid.*, doc. 9, Albertini to Torre,

At the end of the month, he commissioned the renowned poet Gabriele D'Annunzio to write an ode to be published in the *Corriere* 'in coincidence with Tripoli, with our landing on those historical coasts, with the magnificent redemption of our national feelings'. This was to become the famous *Canzoni della gesta d'oltremare*, imbued with nationalist feelings.<sup>23</sup>

By the end of the summer the Italian government was ready to make the final decision. Giolitti opened a last round of talks, paying a visit to San Giuliano at the beginning of September in the thermal resort of Fiuggi, in Lazio, and meeting him one more time on 14 September in Rome. Then, on 17 September the president of the council called on Vittorio Emanuele III in Piedmont, in the royal palace of Racconigi. All the evidence suggests that the final decision in favour of intervention was reached here. The next day Giolitti was able to communicate it to the heads of the navy and of the army. From that moment, Italian preparations accelerated quickly, both to prevent the Turkish attempts to strengthen defences in the African provinces and not to provide the other powers time to attempt mediation. To expedite military arrangements, Rome even abandoned the project to simulate an accident that would provide a pretext for the outbreak of hostilities. Instead, the government limited itself to compiling a list of complaints to stigmatize Ottoman resistance to Italian economic initiatives.<sup>24</sup> On 27 September an ultimatum was delivered to Constantinople, followed two days later by a declaration of war.<sup>25</sup>

Immediately afterwards military operations began. After an initial expedition against the Ottoman ports in the eastern Adriatic and Ionian Seas, to which we shall return later, the nucleus of the Italian fleet sailed towards the Libyan coast in order to land about 35,000 men. This expedition corps quickly occupied the ports and the main settlements along the coastline, but was unable to attain a decisive success. The Ottoman troops, aware of their inferior number of troops and weapons, avoided confrontation in the open field and began to organize a guerrilla movement with the support of considerable sectors of the Arab and Bedouin population. An alarming episode, for the Italians, took place on 23 October in Sciara Sciat [Shara Shatt], in the surroundings of Tripoli, where the Arab inhabitants intervened in support of the Turkish forces and inflicted heavy losses on the Italians. It was the beginning of a war of

21 September 1911. For Torre's early support for the conquest of Tripolitania, *ibid.*, doc. 5, Torre to Albertini, 24 August 1911.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 10, Albertini to D'Annunzio, 29 September 1911.

<sup>24</sup> *DDI*, vols. 7 and 8, docs. 211, 221, 226; *Giovanni Giolitti al governo, in Parlamento, nel carteggio*, vol. III, 2, doc. 226.

<sup>25</sup> *DDI*, vols. 7 and 8, docs. 230, 244, 245, 250, 251, 256, 259, 261.

resistance destined to bring to light the defects of Italian military preparation. This outcome was influenced not only by structural defects, but also by the exclusion of the military commanders from the discussions during the summer and by the abrupt decision to go to war in September.<sup>26</sup>

Confusion surrounding the final objectives of the expedition exacerbated military deficiencies. Throughout the summer of 1911 San Giuliano believed that the Italian domain over Tripolitania and Cyrenaica could be limited. In this way he attempted to leave the door open to a compromise with the Ottoman Empire and with the Arab population. The Italian foreign ministry seemed to favour a settlement similar to that established in Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1878 and 1908, when the region was under Habsburg administration while formally remaining under the sovereignty of the Porte.<sup>27</sup> Even in the aftermath of the outbreak of hostilities San Giuliano reaffirmed his preference for the Bosnian solution, at least if Ottoman resistance remained brief.<sup>28</sup> Giolitti, however, did not agree. Once he overcame his hesitations about the intervention, he favoured establishing full Italian sovereignty. His radicalism was influenced by different factors: the perception that Italian public opinion would consider less clear solutions as offensive to national dignity; scepticism about the willingness of Constantinople to agree with a compromise; fear that, without a definite decision, in the future the Ottoman authorities or the other European powers would be tempted to reopen the discussion on the status quo of the African provinces. With the support of Vittorio Emanuele III and of Sonnino, by mid-October Giolitti was able to impose his standpoint.<sup>29</sup> Shortly afterwards, the episode of Sciara Sciat induced the government of Rome to clarify the situation and issue a decree of annexation on 5 November.<sup>30</sup> However, this clarification was achieved at a price: the drastic reduction of the chances of a compromise solution to the conflict, either through a direct Italian-Turkish agreement or through the mediation of the other Great Powers.<sup>31</sup>

Yet the clear military and political limitations with which Italy entered the war were nothing compared to the problems faced by their Ottoman

<sup>26</sup> Malgeri, *La guerra libica*, pp. 153–201.

<sup>27</sup> San Giuliano had voiced this opinion in the aforementioned memorandum of 28 July 1911.

<sup>28</sup> *DDI*, vols. 7 and 8, doc. 292, San Giuliano to Avarna, 3 October 1911; doc. 284, Tittoni to San Giuliano, 2 October 1911.

<sup>29</sup> *Giovanni Giolitti al governo*, in *Parlamento, nel carteggio*, vol. III, 2, doc. 244, San Giuliano to Giolitti, 5 October 1910; *DDI*, vols. 7 and 8, doc. 338, San Giuliano to various Italian representatives, 10 October 1911, in *ibid.*, docs. 346 and 348, San Giuliano to Pansa, 11 and 13 October 1911.

<sup>30</sup> *DDI*, vols. 7 and 8, doc. 410. <sup>31</sup> Ferraioli, *Politica e diplomazia in Italia*, pp. 421–41.

enemy.<sup>32</sup> Ottoman sources provide us with a revealing picture. Throughout the summer of 1911 Constantinople had accurately predicted how the outbreak of the Second Moroccan Crisis accelerated the possibility of a conflict over the North African provinces, but had been unable to articulate an adequate response. Ottoman representatives swayed between different hypotheses, each radically different from the other. They suggested, at various points, that defences be strengthened in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, that greater solidarity be achieved with the Arab population by improving local administration,<sup>33</sup> that support be solicited from the powers interested in maintaining the status quo,<sup>34</sup> that international arbitration be undertaken.<sup>35</sup> They even took into consideration a risky bluff such as threatening aggression against the tiny but restless Kingdom of Montenegro and its ruler, Nikola Petrović-Njegoš, whose daughter Elena-Jelena had married Vittorio Emanuele III.<sup>36</sup> In this atmosphere, the Ottoman ambassador in Paris claimed with pride that 'this is the supreme moment in Turkey's existence. If she is not able to assert herself with a proud and energetic approach that clearly displays her demand to be respected, she will become prey of the ambitions that are churning all around her.'<sup>37</sup> His colleague in Rome, however, doubted 'whether we could keep hold for enough time of an enemy that would cut by sea all our means of communication and supply'.<sup>38</sup>

After the Italian attack, confusion flourished. Overall, the Ottoman representatives were trapped by the perception of their military weakness, of the isolation to which the Ottoman Empire was reduced in the international arena and of national and religious tensions that were brewing internally. In the meantime, the regime of the Young Turks remained characterized by profound divisions, with a worsening of rivalries between the group identified with the Committee of Union and Progress and the men who remained loyal to the traditional system of Ottoman power and to Sultan Mehmed V. Over the months in which the conflict played out, these internal tensions were demonstrated by the alternating at the head of the Ottoman government of three grand viziers and their respective foreign ministers: first İbrahim Hakki Paşa with Rıfat Paşa, then Sait Paşa with Asım Bey, finally Ahmet Muhtar Paşa with Gabriel Effendi

<sup>32</sup> Caccamo, 'The Ottoman Empire and the Eastern Question', pp. 183–91.

<sup>33</sup> *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents*, vol. V/I, doc. 39, Seifeddin Bey to Rıfaat Paşa, 9 August 1911.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 37, Seifeddin Bey to Rıfaat Paşa, 2 August 1911.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 24, Aristarchi Bey to Rıfaat Paşa, 16 June 1911.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 77, Seifeddin Bey to Hakki Paşa, 12 September 1911.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 105, Rustem Bey to Hakki Paşa, 22 September 1911. <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 37.

Noradounghian.<sup>39</sup> In these circumstances, the initiatives undertaken by Ottoman diplomacy maintained a decidedly unrealistic character. This was illustrated by the reports of Italian war crimes in order to awaken western public opinion, by the requests aimed at obtaining a mediation by one or more European powers or the summoning of an international conference, and by the anxious search for secure and trustworthy alliances that, in actuality, no one was willing to negotiate. Perhaps the most telling demonstration of this lack of realism was a project conceived of by the Foreign Minister Asım Bey at the end of 1911, aimed at offering an agreement to Britain at whatever condition, including the resignation of the Grand Vizier Sait Paşa and the inclusion within a future government of the men most agreeable to London: a project that probably had not many precedents throughout the annals of diplomacy, so much so that British diplomats had not evinced any interest in an alliance with the Ottomans and had not formulated any request about a change of government in Constantinople.<sup>40</sup>

Already in autumn of 1911 the Libyan War was at a stalemate. After Sciara Sciat, the Italians were able to impose their control over the coastline and the main inhabited centres by strengthening their expedition corps up to 100,000 men. This did not spare them from becoming entangled in the interior in a drawn-out guerrilla war against Arab irregular forces led by Ottoman officers. At the same time, the Ottoman Empire was not able to react in an effective way, because of its military weakness and its diplomatic isolation. Under these circumstances the Italians inevitably considered the possibility of extending war operations from Tripolitania and Cyrenaica to other areas, taking advantage of their overwhelming naval superiority and of the divisions existing within the empire. While doing so, however, they had to consider the opposition that such a scenario would cause among the other powers. Special consideration was given to the objections raised by Austria-Hungary and Russia. Despite their traditional rivalry in Southeastern Europe, the two

<sup>39</sup> For Ottoman internal policy see: F. Ahmad, *The Young Turks: The Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics, 1908–1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969); E. Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1984); M. Ş. Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902–1908* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). See also Hanioglu, 'The Second Constitutional Period, 1908–1918', in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. IV: *Turkey in the Modern World*, ed. R. Kasaba (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 62–111.

<sup>40</sup> *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents*, vol. V/I, doc. 803, Asım Bey to Tevfik Paşa, 28 November 1911. According to the Ottoman Foreign Minister, 'we will be glad to withdraw from power, confident that, in leaving the government to statesmen more welcome to the [London] government, we would carry out a patriotic duty'. For the decision to abandon this initiative, *ibid.*, doc. 837, Tevfik Paşa to Asım Bey, 30 November 1911.

powers were fully in agreement about stressing the dangers that would result from the Balkan involvement in the conflict. Even in Rome there were second thoughts, because of the fear of an indiscriminate widening of the crisis and perhaps of a dissolution of the Ottoman Empire right at the moment when Italian energy was focused on the struggle in northern Africa.<sup>41</sup>

Indeed, the limitations caused by the Balkan question had been evident from the outbreak of hostilities. The Consulta tried immediately to clarify that Italy did not plan an extension of military operations to the European domains of the sultan and urged the small and medium Balkan powers to maintain a strictly peaceful line of conduct.<sup>42</sup> At the same time, the Italian authorities did not believe it possible to engage in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica without having first removed the danger that the Italian coast-line might be attacked by the 'dangerous Turkish destroyers' coming from the Ottoman bases in Albania and Epirus.<sup>43</sup> With the complicity of the impulsive initiatives of the Italian naval commanders, however, the operations soon transformed into a series of raids against the Ottoman ports of Prevesa and San Giovanni di Medua. Faced with these developments, Austria-Hungary reacted harshly. Count Alois Lexa von Aehrenthal, the Dual Monarchy's Foreign Minister, stressed in categorical terms the need to respect the declarations on the exclusion of the Balkans from the war theatre and threatened 'very grave consequences' otherwise. In the end, Aehrenthal's case was very strong: with article 7 of the Triple Alliance, Italy and Austria-Hungary had committed themselves to preserve the status quo within the Ottoman territories in the Balkans and in the Adriatic and Aegean Seas and, if this proved impossible, to compensate the eventual occupation by one signatory by concessions in favour of the other.<sup>44</sup> Under these circumstances San Giuliano had no other choice but to give his Austro-Hungarian colleague broad guarantees that Italy would not intervene against the Ottoman Empire in Europe.<sup>45</sup> From his side, Giolitti berated the actions of the naval commanders in the Adriatic or in the Ionian Seas: 'It is lamentable that personal vanities compromise

<sup>41</sup> DDI, vols. 7 and 8, docs. 212, 216, 228, 229, 243, 248, 260.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, docs. 228, 229, 234, 240, 246, 260, 264, 265, 269. See also *Österreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik von der Bosnischen Krise bis zum Kriegsausbruch 1914 [ÖUA]* (Wien-Leipzig: Österreichischer Bundesverlag für Unterricht, Wissenschaft und Kunst, 1930), vol. III, docs. 2644, 2654, 2670.

<sup>43</sup> DDI, vols. 7 and 8, docs. 268, 271, 279; *Giovanni Giolitti al governo, in Parlamento, nel carteggio*, vol. III, 2, docs. 229 and 241.

<sup>44</sup> DDI, vols. 7 and 8, docs. 275, 281, 282, 303, 307, 315, 328; *Giovanni Giolitti al governo, in Parlamento, nel carteggio*, vol. III, 2, doc. 240.

<sup>45</sup> DDI, vols. 7 and 8, docs. 325, 336, 337, 345.



vital interests of the country', or 'Disobedience to the orders received borders on treason.'<sup>46</sup>

From this moment, Italy scrupulously avoided undertaking initiatives in the Balkans and refused the overtures that powers from the region made to her to undertake joint actions against the Ottomans. Throughout the entire duration of the war rumours kept circulating in Vienna and Constantinople about alleged manoeuvres or plots promoted by the Italians beyond the Adriatic, yet the actual situation was quite different. San Giuliano was sincere when he explained to the Austro-Hungarian ambassador to Rome that the only interest of his government in the Balkans was that 'tranquility and the status quo be maintained'. Given the vast number of adventurers and *gens sans aveu* meandering throughout the entire Orient, he could not categorically exclude that some Italian citizens, 'out of sheer criminal sense or of political fanaticism', had got involved in the aforementioned plots. Nonetheless, he believed that it was much more likely that those responsible would be found among Montenegrin, Albanian and Bulgarian activists, if not among Young Turk provocateurs.<sup>47</sup> From the same perspective, the Italian government did not lend support to proposals by the businessman Giuseppe Volpi or less influential agitators about the possibility to weaken the Ottoman enemy by supporting Montenegro and King Nikola or by inciting rebellion among the *malësorë* tribes of northern Albania. As Giolitti himself carefully explained, 'in this moment a [rebellious] movement in Albania could create huge damage to Italy'.<sup>48</sup>

Yet the cautious line of conduct adopted in the Balkans was not followed in other areas, further away from the attention of the other powers and less apt to cause general crisis. Without doubt, here the Italians were less scrupulous. For instance, from the end of October Giolitti and Vittorio Emanuele III agreed on the opportunity of preparing an intervention in the Aegean Sea and to occupy some islands, 'to impose peace upon Turkey'.<sup>49</sup> Once more, the Italian projects were blocked by Aehrenthal,

<sup>46</sup> *Giovanni Giolitti al governo, in Parlamento, nel carteggio*, vol. III, 2, doc. 247, Giolitti to Leonardi Cattolica, 6 October 1911, and doc. 249, Giolitti to San Giuliano, 6 October 1911.

<sup>47</sup> *ÖUA*, vol. III, doc. 3082, Mérey to Aehrenthal, 9 December 1911.

<sup>48</sup> *Giovanni Giolitti al governo, in Parlamento, nel carteggio*, vol. III, 2, doc. 289, Giolitti to Panizzardi, 8 February 1912. S. Romano, *Giuseppe Volpi. Industria e finanza tra Giolitti e Mussolini* (Milan: Bompiani, 1979).

<sup>49</sup> See the correspondence between San Giuliano, Giolitti and Vittorio Emanuele III at the end of October 1911, in *Giovanni Giolitti al governo, in Parlamento, nel carteggio*, vol. III, 2, docs. 265, 266, 267, 271, 272. The correspondent from the *Corriere della Sera* Andrea Torre appears to have been well-informed about these projects: Albertini, *Episolario*, vol. I, docs. 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25.



who pointed out that the Aegean islands were also covered by article 7 of the Triple Alliance. As San Giuliano specified, however, this was only a temporary postponement, not a final cancellation. According to San Giuliano's complex, sometimes even twisted, but not altogether groundless reasoning, the worst threat to article 7 and to the maintenance of the status quo in the European domains of the Sultan was posed by the indefinite continuation of military operations; therefore, a quick action in the Aegean Sea would speed up the end of the conflict and allow the consolidation of the Ottoman Empire. Following the same logic, San Giuliano made a distinction among the Aegean islands, claiming that the more easterly ones were of a more Asiatic than European character and their occupation would not produce relevant repercussions in the Balkans.<sup>50</sup>

The Italians, thwarted from acting in the Balkans and induced temporarily to suspend their projects of intervention in the Aegean, now turned their attention to the Red Sea and the Arab peninsula.<sup>51</sup> From information gathered from their colonial possessions in Eritrea and Somalia, Rome was aware that here Ottoman domination had been confronted in recent years with uprisings promoted by local notables, such as Imam Yahia from Yemen and Sheik Idris from Asir. As a further demonstration of his growing attention to foreign policy after the outbreak of the Libyan conflict, Giolitti himself in late October instructed the Italian commands to establish contact with Yahia and Idris and to encourage them to rebel. In the eventuality of a positive answer, Italy was prepared to provide them with weapons and ammunition, send them money and also support them militarily from the coast (but not directly on the ground). Giolitti provided adequate assurances about the compatibility of the Italian war operations with Muslim religious sentiment and Arab national aspirations. 'The war we undertook against Turkey' – he wrote – 'is thus not a war of religion, but a war in defense of our dignity and in protection of our compatriots and of their interests. Nothing else. On the other side, we do not care about the reasons that induce the sheik and the imam to rebel, we would consider with favour just one thing: the substitution in Arabia of Arab governments and governors to Turkish misrule.'<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup> *DDI*, vols. 7 and 8, docs. 412, 418, 425, 429, 432, 435. See also R. Orlandi, *Le isole italiane dell'Egeo (1912–1947)* (Bari: Levante, 1984); M. G. Pasqualini, *L'esercito italiano nel Dodecaneso 1912–1943. Speranze e realtà*, (Rome: USSME, 2004); L. Micheletta, 'The Questions Raised by the Occupation of the Dodecanese: Thoughts on the Foreign Policy of Liberal Italy', in Micheletta and Ungari (eds.), *The Libyan War*, pp. 159–74.

<sup>51</sup> M. Lenci, *Eritrea e Yemen: tensioni italo-turche nel Mar Rosso 1885–1911* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1990).

<sup>52</sup> *Giovanni Giolitti al governo, in Parlamento, nel carteggio*, vol. III, 2, doc. 277, Giolitti to Giovanni Cerrina-Feroni, 28 October 1911. See also *ibid.*, doc. 279, Giolitti to Rubiolo,

The rivalries existing among the Arab lords prevented the outbreak of a general anti-Ottoman uprising. Even more, threats and flattery induced Imam Yahia to reach an agreement with the Porte. Italian manoeuvres, however, were not altogether unsuccessful. Thanks to the intervention of the khedive of Egypt and of his brother, the Italophile Prince Fuad, Rome managed to convince Sheik Idris to renew the rebellion from his stronghold in Asir. Loyal to their promises, in the following months the Italians sent his followers weapons, ammunition and financial means. In the meantime, the Italian navy eliminated the Ottoman fleet in the Red Sea and imposed a maritime blockade on the ports on the eastern coast, cutting off the supply lines of enemy troops and contributing to their demoralization. In this way, Idris' troops managed to advance along the Arab peninsula and even to threaten the holy city of Mecca.<sup>53</sup>

Despite these successes, the Red Sea remained too marginal to have decisive repercussions on the Libyan theatre of war. Subsequently, at the beginning of 1912, with the approaching of the good season, Italy once again considered extending military operations to the eastern Mediterranean. A first signal was given by the bombing of Beirut on 24 February, then by a naval demonstration against the Dardanelles. Moreover, projects aiming at the occupation of islands in the Aegean Sea again garnered support, especially since the region had become the main Ottoman supply route for Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. By then, even Austro-Hungarian authorities were more sensitive to Italian arguments. Following Aehrenthal's death in February, Leopold von Berchtold, his successor at the helm of the Ballplatz, recognized the threat to the Ottoman Empire of the indefinite continuation of hostilities and the increasingly worrisome signals of unrest coming from the regional Balkan powers. Once Vienna agreed to a temporary occupation, the Italian navy did not have problems in seizing Rhodes and the other islands of the southern Sporades between the end of April and May. For the occasion, they were renamed the Dodecanese.<sup>54</sup>

This selective extension of the conflict was, in the end, successful, showing that Italy was able to block the sea routes of the Ottoman Empire and to menace the shores from Anatolia and the Straits themselves. The Turks, with Arab support, had sustained a valiant resistance in the Libyan hinterland and would have been able to continue it for an

13 December 1911, where the Italian premier summed up: 'The revolt of the Arabs against the Turks for us would be of fundamental importance.'

<sup>53</sup> On the relations between Italy and Idris, *DDI*, vols. 7 and 8, docs. 459, 462, 497, 515, 578, 592, 616, 632, 655, 661, 713, 739, 752, 783, 793; *Giovanni Giolitti al governo, in Parlamento, nel carteggio*, vol. III, 2, docs. 280, 281, 282, 283.

<sup>54</sup> *DDI*, vols. 7 and 8, docs. 683, 703, 747, 761, 768, 773, 777, 784.

indefinite period. Yet, faced with the escalation taking place in the eastern Mediterranean, they were forced to acknowledge their vulnerability and agree to the opening of peace negotiations. In reality, contact between the belligerents had never been completely interrupted, thanks to the permanence in Constantinople of the Italian Embassy First Secretary, Carlo Garbasso, of the director of the Società Commerciale d'Oriente Bernardo Nogara and of a vast array of informers and confidants – a very unusual fact, which was a further demonstration of Ottoman weakness. Incidentally, Nogara's reports were regularly forwarded to Giolitti by the chief executive officer of the Società Commerciale d'Oriente, the already-mentioned Giuseppe Volpi, constituting for the Italian premier a precious source of information on the internal situation of the Ottoman Empire and on the inclinations of his representatives.<sup>55</sup>

Despite these precedents, the Dodecanese occupation allowed for a marked improvement. Already by June, Ottoman authorities agreed to a confidential mission to Constantinople by Volpi, by then one of the pillars of unofficial diplomacy whose strings were personally controlled by Giolitti.<sup>56</sup> After this preliminary contact, real peace negotiations were opened in Switzerland, first at an unofficial and later at official level. Beyond the ubiquitous Volpi, the Italian delegation included two members of Parliament and former ministers with proven loyalty to Giolitti, Pietro Bertolini and Guido Fusinato. As a further demonstration of Giolitti's preeminent role in the field of foreign policy during the conflict, the diplomatic corps was not represented, although San Giuliano was obviously kept informed of developments in the negotiations. On the other side, the helm of the Ottoman delegation was initially entrusted to the Arab Said Halem Paşa, President of the Council of State and former president of the Committee of Union and Progress; afterwards, following the fall of the cabinet led by Sait Paşa and the creation of a new government under Ahmet Muhtar Paşa, he was replaced by two diplomats, Naby Bey, the Minister to Sofia, appointed for the occasion Undersecretary of State, and Fahreddin Bey, former Consul to Budapest and new Minister to Cetinje.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>55</sup> A wide selection of Nogara's reports can be found in *Giovanni Giolitti al governo, in Parlamento, nel carteggio*, vol. III, 2.

<sup>56</sup> For the report drawn by Volpi at the end of his mission, *ibid.*, doc. 325, Volpi to Giolitti, 20 June 1912.

<sup>57</sup> Childs, *Italo-Turkish Diplomacy*, pp. 160–230. The documents concerning the negotiations now are largely available in *Giovanni Giolitti al governo, in Parlamento, nel carteggio*, vol. III, 2. See also the wealth of information provided by the special envoy of the *Corriere della Sera*, the famous journalist and writer Luigi Barzini: Albertini, *Epistolario*, vol. I, docs. 85, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 94.

Without doubt, initiating the peace talks did not mean that the Ottomans were willing to unconditionally surrender to Italian desires. Their true objective was to negotiate the downsizing of Rome's demands for full sovereignty over Libya by ensuring the maintenance of some form of Ottoman control over at least parts of the country. However, such aspirations were imperiled by the clear vulnerability of the empire at a military level (further demonstrated, if necessary, by a new expedition of the Italian navy in the Dardanelles in mid-July), by the persistent divisions among the Young Turks, and even by the ambiguous relations of some Ottoman personalities with Italy. For instance a leading representative of the Committee of Union and Progress, the Armenian deputy speaker of the House and former minister for Public Works Halagiyan Efendi, was intimately linked to the Società Commerciale d'Oriente, 'having received, along with his family, more than half a million for the mines of Eraclea'.<sup>58</sup> Similar was the case of the Foreign Minister Gabriel Noradounghian Effendi (incidentally, also Armenian), who also had collaborated with the Società Commerciale d'Oriente and who had proved to be 'not altogether indifferent' to financial favours.<sup>59</sup> Obviously, such connections gave rise to paradoxical situations. For example, at the moment of the opening of the official peace negotiations in Switzerland, Nogara forwarded to Rome a very original request from Gabriel Effendi: 'I am led to understand that the delegation that will be sent there will cost. I leave you the deductions.'<sup>60</sup> In other words, the Ottoman Foreign Minister himself did not hesitate to request economic support to the Italian enemy in order to finance the envoy of his own representatives to Switzerland – or, at least, he used this envoy as a pretext to obtain a bribe. Apart from anecdotal curiosities, what is relevant here is to stress the difficulty that under such circumstances the Ottoman representatives could operate exclusively for their country's sake and avoid pressures and demands from the Italian side.

Ottoman diplomatic resistance broke down between September and October 1912, following the increasing signs of unrest in the Balkans, the mobilization of Montenegrins, Serbs, Bulgarians and Greeks, and eventually the outbreak of the Balkan Wars.<sup>61</sup> Faced with the prospect

<sup>58</sup> *Giovanni Giolitti al governo, in Parlamento, nel carteggio*, vol. III, 2, doc. 312, Volpi to Giolitti, 8 April 1912.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 338, Fusinato to Giolitti, 26 July 1912. In reality already at the beginning of 1912 Volpi spoke of Noradungian Efendi as 'a sincere friend of ours', who 'works for us' within the Ottoman Parliament: *ibid.*, doc. 285, Volpi to Giolitti, 26 January 1912.

<sup>60</sup> *DDI*, vols. 7 and 8, doc. 953, Nogara to Volpi, 4 August 1912.

<sup>61</sup> H. Yavuz and I. Blumi (eds.), *War and Nationalism: The Balkan Wars, 1912–1913, and their Sociopolitical Implications* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2013).

of fighting a conflict on two fronts, Ottoman authorities surrendered their last hopes. By then, Italy felt free from restraints and threatened direct intervention in the Balkans. It threatened specifically the bombing of the port and railway junction of Dedeagaç and the subsequent interruption of the primary route for the Ottoman forces from the heart of the empire to the new war theatre in the European Southeast. Giolitti's confidences during a conversation with the journalist Andrea Torre seem noteworthy: 'We do everything possible to avoid complications; we want peace as much as the others, if not more than the others. However, faced with the dilemma: either to abandon sovereignty over Libya in order to save Turkey, with the peace, from Balkan movements, or maintain our sovereignty over Libya even at the cost of Turkish ruin or of the Balkan war, I would not hesitate: I would maintain our sovereignty at every cost; the interests of my country, above all.'<sup>62</sup> After the arrival in Switzerland of an Ottoman plenipotentiary, the Minister for Agriculture, Industry and Trade Reshid Paşa, and after an Italian ultimatum aimed at overcoming the last attempts of Constantinople to gain time, the ground was finally ready for a positive conclusion of the peace negotiations.

The treaty agreed in Lausanne on 15 October left the Ottoman Empire some evident concessions.<sup>63</sup> The sultan was allowed to avoid the recognition of Italian sovereignty by issuing an edict or *firman* conceding autonomy to Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. With another *firman*, Mehmet V obtained the appointment of a special representative responsible for the protection of Ottoman interests in the former provinces. Moreover, the Italians committed themselves to financial compensation and to a declaration – in reality rather bland, and immediately rendered anachronistic by military developments in the Balkans – on the maintenance of the status quo in the European and Mediterranean domains of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>64</sup> Italian success, however, was evident. Giolitti, San Giuliano and the entire liberal ruling group had established Italian preeminence over Libya, testified to by the recognition of Italian sovereignty by the Great Powers.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, Italy took advantage of the circumstances and postponed to an unspecified date the restitution of the Dodecanese to Constantinople, preserving in her hands a valuable pledge for the

<sup>62</sup> Giovanni Giolitti al governo, in *Parlamento, nel carteggio*, vol. III, 2, doc. 448, Vittorio Emanuele III to Giolitti, 3 October 1912; moreover docs. 438, 439, 447, 450, 455; Albertini, *Epistolario*, vol. I, doc. 95, Torre to Albertini, 17 September 1912; *ibid.*, doc. 99, Albertini to Torre, 3 October 1912.

<sup>63</sup> Childs, *Italo-Turkish Diplomacy*, pp. 201–30.

<sup>64</sup> DDI, vols. 7 and 8, docs. 1023, 1028, 1030, 1067; Giovanni Giolitti al governo, in *Parlamento, nel carteggio*, vol. III, 2, doc. 468.

<sup>65</sup> Ferraioli, *Politica e diplomazia*, pp. 493–7.

future.<sup>66</sup> Finally, in order to protect the positions obtained in the Arab peninsula, the Italian delegation did not abandon the Sheikh Idris to the punishment of the Porte and managed to obtain the concession of an amnesty in his favour.<sup>67</sup>

Perhaps such an outcome was not sufficient to elevate Italy beyond the position of 'the least of the Great Powers', but it certainly allowed Rome to pursue with greater authority its ambitions in the Balkans and in the eastern Mediterranean throughout the difficult international juncture that was appearing on the horizon. Furthermore, the elimination of the North African quarrel conferred on Italy more freedom of movement in the opening of a dialogue with Vienna on the delicate issue of the *terre irredente*. These were important achievements, although attained at the price of a new blow to the fragile structure of the Ottoman Empire and of the escalation of international tension.

<sup>66</sup> See Sinan Kuneralp (ed.), *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents on the Origins of World War One*, vol. VI: *The Aegean Islands Issue 1912–1914* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2011).

<sup>67</sup> On the Italian action in Idris' defence during the peace negotiations, *Giovanni Giolitti al governo, in Parlamento, nel carteggio*, vol. III, 2, docs. 391, 392, 447, 456.

### 3 The Italian soldiers' experience in Libya, 1911–1912

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*Vanda Wilcox*

When the First World War began, the Italian army – unlike the armies of other Western European nations – had a very recent experience of war. In fact many of the officers and men who fought between 1915 and 1918 had already seen active service in the Italian war against the Ottoman Empire, 1911–12. A fairly typical example was Antonio Tognella, born in 1891, and initially exempted from military service because of weak lungs. Despite his poor health, Tognella was called up in November 1911 to be sent to Tripolitania, where he served in the infantry until discharged in February 1913. In April 1915 he was recalled and deployed immediately to the Isonzo front; in 1916 he saw action in Albania. He had reached the rank of sergeant by October 1917 when he was taken prisoner during the Italian defeat at Caporetto. After a year in an Austrian prisoner of war camp at Mauthausen, Tognella returned to Italy in November 1918 but was not permanently discharged until 10 August 1920.<sup>1</sup> Like many other men, in total Tognella completed seven years of military service spread over nearly a decade. His experiences in the First World War were inevitably coloured by his early military experiences in Libya.

Just as the First World War was not experienced in isolation within men's lives, it should not be studied thus. The project 'The Wars before the Great War' offers an opportunity to investigate the experience of Italian soldiers fighting in Libya in 1911–12, many of whom would later serve on the Alpine and Isonzo fronts against Austria-Hungary. To better understand the Italian experience of the war of 1915–18 it is sensible to examine the experiences of the earlier conflict – a study which is also timely in view of the recent growth in scholarly interest in the field of Italian colonialism. The attitudes of Italian troops in the First World War were quite unlike those revealed in this colonial endeavour: beliefs about the purpose of the war, about the nature of the conflict and about the enemy were strongly coloured by religious, cultural and racial

<sup>1</sup> L. Beltrame Menini (ed.), *Adorata Luigia: Mio diletto Antonio. Storia d'amore e di guerra (1910–1919)* (Padua: Panda Edizioni, 2001), p. 8.

assumptions. Given the close proximity in time, and the fact that many of the same men fought in both wars, a comparison between soldiers' experience and attitudes in the two conflicts illuminates the extent to which notions of patriotism and views on combat were highly context-dependent. This case study offers some important reflections on the debate about combat motivation in the era of the First World War.

### The Italo-Turkish war

When Italy declared war on the Ottoman Empire on 29 September 1911 many – at home and abroad – were taken by surprise, despite the intensive propaganda campaigns which had taken place since the start of the year.<sup>2</sup> In fact the government did not even inform military planners of their intentions in Libya until late September, with the consequence that the class of 1889 were demobilised after completing their service only a fortnight before the crisis, leaving the army short of men.<sup>3</sup> Many senior officers were unprepared for the news: Eugenio De Rossi, intelligence expert and second in command at the military college in Turin, later recalled that in mid-September 1911 'I could never have supposed that we were close to arriving at a serious ultimatum and at the search for a *casus belli* that could justify a maritime expedition.'<sup>4</sup> Indeed the ultimatum delivered to the Sublime Porte on 28 September 1911 contained little which could act as a convincing justification for war.<sup>5</sup>

Italian mobilisation was chaotic and bureaucratic, so that operations in Libya began only on 3 October 1911 with the bombardment of Tripoli, giving the Turks a few precious days to prepare for action. Italian plans were riddled with political, strategic and tactical miscalculations. It had been expected that the native Arab population would support the Italian intervention against the Ottomans, but this assumption was not backed up by what little intelligence was available. In fact, extraordinary as it might seem, much of the discussion of the territory and its population was based on classical authors: the armed forces' own service publication, the *Rivista Militare Italiana*, relied extensively on reports from Caesar, Sallust, Strabo and others for topography, while its consideration of the

<sup>2</sup> A. Del Boca, *Gli Italiani in Libia*, 2 vols., in vol. I: *Tripoli bel suol d'amore, 1860–1922* (Bari: Laterza, 1986), pp. 51–64.

<sup>3</sup> R. Cruccu, 'L'esercito nel periodo Giolittiano (1909–1914)', in *L'esercito Italiano dall'Unità alla Grande Guerra*, ed. Stato Maggiore dell'Esercito [SME] (Rome: Ufficio Storico dello Stato Maggiore dell'Esercito, 1980), p. 261.

<sup>4</sup> E. De Rossi, *La Vita di un ufficiale italiano sino alla guerra* (Milan: Mondadori, 1927), p. 221.

<sup>5</sup> Del Boca, *Tripoli bel suol d'amore*, pp. 74–5.



enemy largely disregarded all non-Turkish forces.<sup>6</sup> At the same time the humiliating defeat by Ethiopia at Adowa in 1896 weighed heavily on the minds of army authorities and officer corps alike, and professional military men were keen to eradicate this blot on their record with a triumphant and impressive victory over Libya.

The strategic plan was to achieve a rapid simultaneous strike first on Tripoli and Homs, exploiting Italian naval superiority, and then to advance swiftly into the interior, requiring close cooperation between army and navy along with surprise and efficiency. It was initially calculated that a small expeditionary force of some 20,000 men would be sufficient. Operations began with some slow successes, with the capture of Tripoli, Tobruk, Derna, Bengasi and finally Homs, between 3 and 21 October. But on 23 October a joint attack was launched at Shara Shatt in the Tripoli area by a combination of Turkish troops and native Arabs, nearly annihilating the Italian forces in the area.<sup>7</sup> The attack was distinguished by its ferocity, and the Arab irregulars took no prisoners: all were massacred, including the wounded, and lurid atrocity stories about crucifixion, torture and mutilation abounded. At least 21 officers and 482 men were killed. The Italians considered this a 'revolt' against their 'rule', an unexpected betrayal on the part of the Arabs. Their response was equally brutal and considerably more extensive: around 400 women and 4,000 men were executed by firing squad or hanging and many bodies left on display, while several thousand more were taken to Ustica for prolonged detention in appalling conditions. In the aftermath of this rising more troops were hastily called up from Italy and the expeditionary force brought up to around 100,000 men.

The political miscalculation of native Arab support was disastrous, while arrogant assumptions over the low quality of enemy forces left Italy bogged down tactically. Poorly trained conscript troops were no match for the Ottomans' small bands of skilled fighters, and so cautious, hesitant tactics were employed.<sup>8</sup> Gradually the expedition strayed ever further from the original plan, losing any hope of a decisive victory, while the logistics services struggled with the extended and precarious supply lines from the coastal depots into the Libyan interior. The innovative

<sup>6</sup> N. Labanca, 'Discorsi coloniali in uniforme militare, da Assab via Adua verso Tripoli', in W. Barberis (ed.), *Storia d'Italia*, vol. XVIII: *Guerra e Pace* (Turin: Einaudi, 2002), pp. 503–45, p. 537. This served to emphasise Italy's historic claim to Cyrenaica and Tripolitania.

<sup>7</sup> A. Del Boca, *Mohamed Fekini and the Fight to Free Libya* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 19–29.

<sup>8</sup> G. Rochat and G. Massobrio, *Breve storia dell'esercito italiano dall'1861 a 1943* (Turin: Einaudi, 1978), p. 86.

deployment of the Italian air force was a source of national pride but made only marginal impact in military terms, being used as part of the engineering services.<sup>9</sup> The invasion of the Dodecanese islands in the summer of 1912 was part of Italy's efforts to wrap up this unexpectedly lengthy conflict, but the Ottoman Empire finally sought peace less because of Italian naval or military victories than because of financial pressures and the imminence of war in the Balkans.<sup>10</sup> Despite the peace treaty signed at Ouchy in October 1912, much of Libya continued to resist the Italian occupation: Arab and Berber insurrections were ongoing until 'pacification' was finally achieved with considerable brutality by the Fascist regime in 1931.<sup>11</sup>

Understanding the soldiers' experience in Libya is still something of a challenge. This chapter uses letters and diaries to discuss the soldiers' experience in Libya, their views on the war and specifically some views on the enemy they were fighting against. However, any study of Italian soldiers' experience in this era is made difficult by high rates of illiteracy among serving men, meaning that there are fewer collections of letters, diaries or memoirs available than from some other European societies.<sup>12</sup> For the war against the Ottomans there is inevitably a much smaller sample size than with the First World War: between 1882 and 1943 only a few hundred thousand Italians went to colonial Africa compared to 5 million participants in the First World War.<sup>13</sup> An early psychological study of veterans undertaken by Lt-Col. Onorato Mangiarotti of the 77th infantry regiment in 1912 also offers some useful insights into the experiences of officers and men.<sup>14</sup>

### **The experience of combat and of life at war**

When the war began ordinary soldiers shared their leaders' confidence that the war would be easy, short, relatively painless and over soon.

<sup>9</sup> A. Ungari, 'The Italian Air Force from the Eve of the Libyan Conflict to the First World War', *War in History*, 17, 4 (2010), pp. 403–34.

<sup>10</sup> Cruccu, 'L'esercito nel periodo Giolittiano', pp. 261–3, also F. Malgeri, 'La Campagna di Libia (1911–1912)', in *L'esercito italiano dall'Unità alla Grande Guerra*, ed. SME (Rome, 1980).

<sup>11</sup> Del Boca, *Tripoli bel suol d'amore*; also N. Labanca (ed.), *Un nodo: immagini e documenti sulla repressione coloniale italiana in Libia* (Manduria: Lacaita, 2002).

<sup>12</sup> See F. Caffarena, *Lettere dalla Grande Guerra. Scritture del quotidiano, monumenti della memoria, fonti per la storia. Il caso italiano* (Milan: Edizioni Unicopli, 2005).

<sup>13</sup> N. Labanca, *Posti al sole. Diari e memorie di vita e di lavoro dalle colonie d'Africa* (Rovereto: Museo Storico Italiano della Guerra, 2001), p. x.

<sup>14</sup> O. Mangiarotti, 'Un'inchiesta psicologica sui reduci della Libia', *Rivista Militare Italiana*, 59, 2 (1914), pp. 338–49.

Efisio Melis,<sup>15</sup> a young corporal from outside Cagliari in Sardinia, was undertaking his compulsory military service in the town of Ravenna with the Brigata Pavia when rumours of war first reached his ears. He wrote home: 'there is no cause for alarm for it is very unlikely that war will come, since Turkey will never dare to face up to the overwhelming Italian forces, especially at sea because Turkey has basically got no fleet.'<sup>16</sup> Even once the war broke out he felt sure that the initial expeditionary force would be more than sufficient to defeat the enemy. One Innocenzo Bianchi, from Naples, wrote to his father from a troopship on 20 October 1911, 'I believe that it is not real war but little attacks and soon we shall overcome . . . Overall I'm very happy and you'll see that it will be finished very soon.'<sup>17</sup> Bianchi was killed in action just six days later.

This enthusiasm often continued even after men had seen battle. Twenty-one-year-old artilleryman Giuseppe Mariani, born in a small town near Milan, described his own experiences in early October outside Tripoli:

Once we had disembarked, the fortunes of the battle changed . . . Always skilfully distributing our fire . . . we shot with great speed, rhythm and extraordinary determination . . . always with the maximum efficiency of our artillery pieces, though we were surrounded by sand and had no mules, we continued to advance steadily ahead to take up new positions. Battle brings new, wonderful emotions, the days of combat are the best of our lives, the most usefully employed, and we can have no regrets. One day of battle is worth many years of suffering and complaining about life.<sup>18</sup>

This kind of pride in Italian technological superiority along with his own achievements and the skills he and his companions displayed was typical of Italian troops' reactions in the opening weeks of the war. His concluding sentiment echoes the more famous phrase 'better to live one day as a lion than one hundred years as a sheep', a slogan photographed on a ruined building in the aftermath of Caporetto in 1917 and later used as a Fascist slogan.<sup>19</sup> Given that the futurist cult of youth and violence

<sup>15</sup> Names changed to protect living family members; see I. Loi Corvetto, *Dai Bressaglieri alla Fantaria. Lettere dei Soldati Sardi nella Grande Guerra* (Nuoro: Ilisso Edizioni, 1998), p. 23.

<sup>16</sup> All translations my own. Where Italian source texts are idiomatic or ungrammatical, I have attempted to retain some of the original tone. Loi Corvetto, *Dai Bressaglieri alla Fantaria*, p. 70.

<sup>17</sup> S. Bono, 'Lettere dal Fronte Libico (1911–1912)'. *Nuova Antologia*, 2052 (1971), pp. 530–1.

<sup>18</sup> Cited in Labanca, *Posti al Sole*, pp. 89–90.

<sup>19</sup> Widely used under the regime, the phrase appeared on the commemorative 20 lira coin issued in 1928 to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the end of the First World War.

had already emerged in Italy it is not surprising that some young men greeted the war with enthusiasm.

The future Fascist leader Ezio Maria Gray, in his dual role as infantry officer and journalist, wrote that Italy captured Tripoli 'with Garibaldian impatience, indestructible determination and truly Italian gestures of elegance and joyfulness'.<sup>20</sup> It was a repeat of the 'miraculous adventure of [Garibaldi's] Thousand' he added, suggesting a war which would be at once redemptive, heroic and relatively straightforward. The growth in the number of Italian newspapers and in the extent of their circulation meant that the Libyan war was the scene of unprecedented media coverage. Many journalists, like Gray, were either serving officers or else in today's terms 'embedded' with the troops, despite the military authorities' initial efforts to censor them. In general, as one high-ranking officer acknowledged, they displayed 'great zeal and enthusiasm' and played a significant part in boosting popular support at home for the war and the troops.<sup>21</sup>

However, the careless optimism of these early assessments was revealed when the Arab population turned on the Italians with the surprise assault on the oasis of Shara Shatt. The reaction to this was most often a sense of furious outrage, that the Italian 'civilising mission' had been unreasonably rejected. The local Arab population, against expectation, chose to privilege a pan-Islamic vision of the Ottoman Empire over nascent Arab nationalism. The invaders' enormous sense of outrage seems inexplicable unless one considers both the legacy of Adowa and the nature of colonialist discourse in Italy in the years before the Libyan invasion. Discussions of Italian colonial projects had always been based on the assumption that Italian rule would be benevolent and beneficial to the indigenous populations, greatly preferable to British or German (or indeed Ottoman) colonial systems. In this early proposition of the 'italiani brava gente' myth there were also traces of a Risorgimento-style rhetoric of liberation from autocratic foreign oppression (as witnessed by the comparisons to Garibaldi's Thousand, above).<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> E. M. Gray, *La Bella Guerra. Con 30 fotografie dell'autore* (Florence: Bemporad, 1912), p. 9.

<sup>21</sup> L. Nasi, 'Corrispondenti di Guerra', *Rivista Militare Italiana*, 59, 1 (1914), pp. 144–54. Many foreign correspondents were expelled after highlighting Italian brutality. International public opinion was almost universally hostile and even the great Italophile historian G. M. Trevelyan attacked the barbarism of the Italian war effort.

<sup>22</sup> Labanca, 'Discorsi coloniali in uniforme militare', pp. 518–19, 534. On the pervasive cultural ideal of Italian soldiers as essentially good-natured, following the title of Giuseppe De Santis' 1965 film, see A. Del Boca, *Italiani Brava Gente* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 2005).

While positive depictions of combat certainly did not cease after Shara Shatt, descriptions of the more unpleasant elements of the war began to emerge from late October. Facile assumptions of an extremely short war had been proved wrong, and conditions were growing steadily more unpleasant. Letters from soldiers serving in Derna describe the intolerable extremes of temperature and the high rate of casualties caused by disease rather than battle.<sup>23</sup> A cholera epidemic was raging in Tripoli in October and November 1911, killing nearly as many men as died in battle, while Italian troops also suffered heavily from typhus, a crisis which led to considerable public anger (and ultimately to the development of a successful vaccination programme from 1912). As well as a particularly virulent local vacillus, medics blamed the extremes of temperature for the high rates of infection.<sup>24</sup> From late October Libya was afflicted by torrential rains, causing considerable discomfort as well as surprise to the Italian forces. Worse, the trenches the expeditionary force threw up around Tripoli disrupted the city's complex drainage and irrigation systems causing flooding in the city centre. One man wrote home on 5 November 'we sleep on the ground each night, it keeps raining and you have to stay like that in the wet, my bones ache, if you saw me you really would weep for me'.<sup>25</sup> As the war wore on, complaints about climate and living conditions multiplied whatever the season. In August 1912, Antonio Tognella wrote to his fiancée while 'sat upon the burning sands of Tripoli', to describe the effect of the conditions of summer weather on the fighting:

On the morning of 3 August we set off from Tripoli to advance on Zuwarah. We walked for twenty kilometres without water in this heat every now and then you heard cries of pain and they fell down finished in my Regiment five have died, died of thirst. At 8am we arrived breathless in front of the enemy and we had to fight in three sessions and go to the assault with our bayonets but how terrible it is to see a companion fall beside you. And the Arabs began to flee so I can I have the joy of telling you that with God's help I've made it through this time.<sup>26</sup>

Men complained about the sand, which found its way everywhere including into the rations, and about the inescapable lice, flies and other insects. The invasion soon settled down into relatively immobile trench warfare, in which soldiers often had to erect defences of sand and palm branches

<sup>23</sup> Loi Corvetto, *Dai Bressaglieri alla Fantaria*, p. 84.

<sup>24</sup> P. Consiglio, 'Vaccine antitifiche in Libia', *Rivista Militare Italiana*, 59, 4 (1914), pp. 835–40.

<sup>25</sup> Cited in Bono, *Lettere*, p. 532.

<sup>26</sup> Beltrame Menini, *Adorata Luigia*, pp. 49–50. Zuwarah is a port town some 100 km west of Tripoli, whose local Berber population had initially proved welcoming to the Italians before rising in revolt.

with their bare hands.<sup>27</sup> This was not precisely the war which many ordinary soldiers had been expecting, being so far from the experiences and rhetoric of nineteenth-century warfare: some were surprised, even confused by the desert when they first disembarked.<sup>28</sup> Army medic P. Consiglio reported in his study of nervous and psychiatric illnesses among the Italian troops that 'most recorded cases of neuroses were neurasthenic in nature . . . caused by the length of the war, separation from family, moral concerns, prolonged physical discomfort among men who spent many months in the trenches, the effort of continued vigilance, the climate, protracted sexual abstinence and the excessively meat-based diet'.<sup>29</sup>

As well as describing physical conditions, men wrote about combat – often discussing firing on the enemy quite casually, especially after events at Shara Shatt, which were read as confirmation of men's worst suspicions about the enemy. Naval gunner Francesco Scicchitano describes firing on Arab houses: 'We had no intention of damaging the houses, just of pushing the inhabitants into flight so that they offered us a more pleasing target.'<sup>30</sup> This is noteworthy since it is often stated in literature on the First World War that artillery fire was impersonal, reducing killing to an anonymous action where the target could not be seen as a person.<sup>31</sup> However, descriptions of combat in Libya emphasise hand-to-hand fighting and the use of the bayonet – described as 'the most fun'<sup>32</sup> – with far more callous and casual descriptions of killing than in most Italian First World War sources. In February 1912, a Sardinian soldier wrote with ungrammatical enthusiasm to a friend on the mainland from Derna, in north-eastern Libya, describing his experiences in some detail:

Dear Friend now I will tell you a bit about our life here at war where we are always ready to fight for our dear Fatherland. But it is already some time that we aren't fighting any more but here we had a wonderful attack on the 11th of this month which we fought at night we began around 9 and until 3 in the morning with the enemy having many losses from the infantry's guns but the ones that worked the most were the mountain Guns that caused them to have more than 200 dead and wounded. And then in the morning we sent a little patrol on reconnaissance and they found all these bedouins and arabs a few Kilometers away which they then all loaded onto the mules and they brought them to the village so they could be seen but it was really a spectacle because there were some without legs some with no head some with no arms and on many you couldn't even see their belly

<sup>27</sup> Gray, *La bella guerra*, p. 33. <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>29</sup> P. Consiglio, 'Medicina Sociale nell'esercito. Saggi di psicopatologia e di scienza criminale nei militari', *Rivista Militare Italiana*, 59, 10 and 11 (1914), pp. 3078–9.

<sup>30</sup> Francesco Scicchitano. Cited in Labanca, *Posti al Sole*, p. 33.

<sup>31</sup> D. A. Grossman, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* (New York: Back Bay Books, 1995), pp. 97–137.

<sup>32</sup> Cited in Del Boca, *Tripoli bel suol d'amore*, p. 119.

anymore and then there were the arabs who looked at them with such a bad mood as though they had been brothers. And then even though here it's not that hot they were all naked like rats in the end like I say it was frightening but then it's not just them all the others we have already taken were almost naked as well.<sup>33</sup>

The Calabrian naval gunner Scicchitano recounted in his diary that 'most infantrymen' helped themselves to a blood-stained Fez as a souvenir of battle. For himself, he wrote, he had declined since he felt revolted by these blood-soaked garments; he described the horror of seeing 'blood and intestines spilling out onto the sand under the baking rays of the sun' as well as mutilated, diseased or butchered horses around the battlefield.<sup>34</sup> These reactions of horror were not uncommon, yet others greeted such scenes with equanimity, as we shall see when we consider soldiers' views on the enemy.

### **Duty, fatherland, faith: reasons for fighting**

Whether enthusiastic or horrified by what they found there, the Italians who served in Libya did so as conscripts not as volunteers. While compulsory, military service was not necessarily popular, and when the class of 1891 were called up from 1 January 1911 onwards more than 10 per cent of the 500,344 men drafted simply failed to respond. Evaders were overwhelmingly from Sicily and the South – in Cosenza, Catania, Palermo, Messina, Naples, Salerno and Avellino more than 20 per cent failed to respond to the call. In fact only some 123,000 of these drafted men joined their new units in the regular fashion.<sup>35</sup> One was Antonio Tognella, who greeted his call-up with resignation rather than enthusiasm. He observed in November 1911 that 'it's no use despairing, one has to be a soldier, like it or not'.<sup>36</sup> He wrote to his fiancée in January 1912 as he awaited his deployment across the Mediterranean:

there are too many criticisms now of our Fatherland – that is of us poor sons or our dear brothers who are fighting down there winning and dying to defend the Fatherland and to make our religion rule.<sup>37</sup>

Defence of the fatherland and the Church were common elements but perhaps the most frequently cited explanation for the war in soldiers' writings was the idea of a war for civilisation. For the artilleryman Mariani, the Italians were 'demonstrating the powerful means at the disposal

<sup>33</sup> Loi Corvetto, *Dai Bressaglieri alla Fantaria*, p. 40.

<sup>34</sup> Labanca, *Posti al sole*, p. 110.

<sup>35</sup> 'Statistica sulla leva della classe 1891', *Rivista Militare Italiana*, 59, 7 (1914), pp. 2290–300.

<sup>36</sup> Beltrame Menini, *Adorata Luigia*, p. 27.      <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

of modern civilisation for the redemption of an uncivilised and uncouth people'.<sup>38</sup> There are clear signs that some soldiers internalised the patriotic rhetoric that dominated the press. For the first time in Italy the mass media played a critical role in creating popular consensus around war, disseminating not just news reports but a huge diversity of sketches, photographs, letters, poetry and songs aimed at all social classes. Verses written by intellectuals and published in mass-circulation dailies throughout the war could circulate among soldiers and sailors awaiting deployment and acquire genuine popularity.<sup>39</sup> One of the most popular songs sung by Italian soldiers in Libya – and at home in Italy – offers a model of patriotic resignation:

Goodbye mother, brother and friends,  
It's our duty to march now,  
But if the Turks are our enemies  
We must face them with courage.  
Don't cry, Italian mothers,  
We smile as we depart,  
If from the far off beaches of Tripoli  
We will soon see the Sultans appear.  
For the flag we will win victory  
While our lips repeat  
'We want glory for the fatherland,  
We want victory or death'.<sup>40</sup>

For Tognella, 'When we see our tricolour fluttering in the sun over far-off foreign lands, we can truly understand that I have done my duty.'<sup>41</sup> The influence of official patriotic discourse is also clearly visible in the diary of the twenty-three-year-old soldier Giacomo Susani, a countryman from Lombardy. He was left deeply impressed by the inauguration of the new Italian battlefield cemetery outside Tripoli on 27 November 1911:<sup>42</sup>

It was frequented and admired by every thinking person and left impressed in every human thought an indelible record of its precious nature, being dedicated to the sacrifice of the proud and daring youths who have become martyrs of the Italo-Turkish war. We should also add that it is the first Christian cemetery

<sup>38</sup> Cited in Labanca, *Posti al sole*, p. 90.

<sup>39</sup> I. Nardi and S. Gentili (eds.), *La grande illusione: opinione pubblica e mass media al tempo della guerra di Libia* (Perugia: Morlacchi, 2009), see Prefazione, pp. 9–20.

<sup>40</sup> V. Savona and M. Straniero, *Canti della Grande Guerra*, 2 vols. (Milan: Garzanti, 1981), vol. I, pp. 113–18.

<sup>41</sup> Beltrame Menini, *Adorata Luigia*, p. 58.

<sup>42</sup> M. Bizzocchi, 'Luoghi della memoria e culto dei caduti italiani in Tripolitania (1911–1914)', *Storia e Futuro. Rivista di Storia e Storiografia*, 31 (February 2013), online at: <http://storiaefuturo.eu/luoghi-della-memoria-e-culto-dei-caduti-italiani-in-tripolitania-1911-1914/> (accessed 10 May 2013).



created in these lands which lack in humanity, civilisation and everything which stands for well-being.<sup>43</sup>

Susani was very impressed by the patriotic speech made by a military chaplain, which urged the men that

the sacrifice which you are making is in order to bring civilisation, well-being and progress into these lands, to enlarge your own country and bring it glory, and also to allow our holy religion to spread its wings and spread out. In this way, Italy can say to the rest of the civilised world that she has done her part, bringing a good example to those places where it is still unknown.<sup>44</sup>

This is particularly interesting since the war in Libya actually witnessed the creation of a system of army chaplains for the first time in fifty years: the position had been abolished as part of the post-unification military reforms, but was re-instituted for the Libyan war specifically in order to motivate the troops. The fact that Susani noted down the chaplain's speech in such detail in his own diary suggests that this explanation for the war, almost a crusading vision, was indeed successfully conveyed by military chaplains.<sup>45</sup> Bringing 'civilisation' to Libya also meant bringing Christianity, therefore, and a sense of religious mission was not uncommon – however poorly considered. One man recounted taking a small medallion depicting the Madonna and Child in an earnest attempt to convert the locals, but succeeded only in giving the impression that it was an image of himself as a baby with his mother.<sup>46</sup> Another observed, with blithe inconsequence, that he found it laughable that 'the Turks still believe in Mohammed' in an era when there were aeroplanes.<sup>47</sup> The identification of modernity, civilisation and Christianity was here made explicit.

This patriotic Christian complacency was not universal, however. On 4 November 1911 the Sard corporal Efisio observed from Ravenna that 'the Turkish-Arabs, pushed by fanaticism and desperation, are offering a fierce and determined resistance'.<sup>48</sup> His view was based primarily not on newspaper reports but on the letters sent to him by his friends and relatives serving in Libya. This perhaps led him to be somewhat cynical, since he observed that: 'Political and economic reasons, under the pretext of civilisation, have urged us to this conquest: now we found ourselves committed it is better to see it through since it would be dangerous to

<sup>43</sup> Cited in Labanca, *Posti al sole*, p. 35.      <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>45</sup> F. Fontana, *Croce ed armi* (Turin: Marietti, 1956), pp. 12–13.

<sup>46</sup> S. Bono, *Morire per questi deserti. Lettere di soldati italiani dal fronte libico, 1911–1912* (Catanzaro: Abramo, 1992), pp. 66–7.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.      <sup>48</sup> Loi Corvetto, *Dai Bressaglieri alla Fantaria*, p. 72.

stop halfway there.’<sup>49</sup> Meanwhile it is clear that patriotism had its limits among civilians as well. Writing from their home village in Sardinia, Efisio’s sisters informed him in September 1912 that although many local soldiers had already returned from Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, ‘there has not been any demonstration of patriotism here as they do even in the most wretched places elsewhere when their brothers return as heroes, instead here there was nothing, they let them arrive in silence with great indifference as if they were returning emigrants’.<sup>50</sup> In the media, a few brave voices rejected the mainstream militaristic rhetoric to offer mainly socialist-inspired critiques of the war, or denunciations of Italian atrocities based on photographs published in the international press.<sup>51</sup>

Returning home was cause for great anxiety. Another popular song from the Libyan war – this time not drawn from the popular press – offers a particularly depressing vision of the soldiers’ experience:

Goodbye father and goodbye mother,  
I have to go away to war,  
I must go among the rebels,  
They’ll kill me and you’ll never see me again.  
I leave my wife and daughter,  
Please mother take care of them  
When I’m in among those assassins  
They’ll kill me and you’ll never see me again.

From this pessimistic opening the verses continue to recount the singer’s death in battle, and then to imagine a conversation between his widow and his young daughter, who asks her mother where her father has gone. The answer comes ‘Dearest, your father went off to war in the desert against the enemy, yes they killed him, tore him apart, so that no-one could save him.’ The song concludes with the soldier imagining his wife and daughter mourning him at home, kissing his portrait.<sup>52</sup> The killing ability of the enemy was greatly feared: to some extent, their military prowess was respected but even more were they believed to have a racial propensity to violence.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.      <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>51</sup> Nardi and Gentili, *La grande illusione: opinione pubblica e mass media*, pp. 9–20, 353–60.

<sup>52</sup> Savona and Straniero, *Canti della Grande Guerra*, pp. 113–18. This seems to have been especially popular with soldiers from Veneto and the North but it is hard to know the circumstances under which it was sung.

### Views on the enemy: race, religion, violence

It's no coincidence that this song mentions the enemy 'tearing men apart'. The views of the enemy which men offered in their letters are probably the area of greatest divergence from the models of the First World War. Most descriptions of the enemy present both Arabs and Turks as uncivilised, even bestial. Though Italy expected the Arab populations to welcome them, there was also a widespread view from the very start of the conflict that they were not to be trusted. When the first bombardment of Tripoli had been accomplished, a boat was sent under a white flag to negotiate the garrison's surrender, but it was accompanied by a torpedo boat 'imagining that the Arabs might not respect the insignia'.<sup>53</sup> After the 'revolt' of Shara Shatt, this vision of the enemy emerged ever more strongly. Ezio Maria Gray, writing in the aftermath of the insurgency begun on 23 October, wrote that 'The Dark Continent has twenty geographically distinct races but in reality they are all one race, united in thought and action in the face of civilisation's progress: the race of rebellion and of betrayal'.<sup>54</sup> These long-held views were based in part on recollections of the killing of some 7,000 Italians at Adowa in 1896, and in particular the brutal torture of captured Italian Ascaris – though according to contemporary interviews few private soldiers cared much about Adowa or had even heard of it, unless informed by their officers, who were keen to educate their men about the infamy of African enemies.<sup>55</sup>

A well-known humourist and war correspondent, Luigi Lucatelli, described exploring the 'enigmatic' city of Tripoli in November 1911 and asking himself with surprise 'why do they hate us so much?' when the Turks were so oppressive yet the Italians were 'respectful' towards their culture and tradition.<sup>56</sup> In fact there was very little respect shown by institutions or individuals for the local population.<sup>57</sup> Appeals by local community leaders emphasised that the Ottomans had granted citizenship and basic political liberties to the inhabitants of Libya; would the Italians be as generous as the supposed oppressors from whom they claimed to be 'liberating' the country?<sup>58</sup> Most letters home describe the local populations in uncompromisingly hostile and contemptuous terms.

<sup>53</sup> Naval gunner Scicchitano, cited in Labanca, *Posti al sole*, p. 31.

<sup>54</sup> Gray, *La bella guerra*, p. 11. <sup>55</sup> Mangiarotti, 'Un'inchiesta psicologica', p. 340.

<sup>56</sup> L. Lucatelli, *Il volto della guerra* (Rome: Casa Editrice M. Carra & C, 1913), p. 79.

<sup>57</sup> Del Boca observes that the surprise attack at Shara Shatt was most likely the result of unacceptable behaviour from Italian bersaglieri towards local women. *Mohamed Fekini*, p. 24.

<sup>58</sup> Del Boca, *Tripoli bel suon d'amore*, p. 89.

Certain motifs emerge strongly: the natives were repeatedly described as ugly, ill-dressed, all in rags, unwashed, unhygienic, embodying the very opposite of civilisation and all it stood for. Lucarelli disturbingly commented that 'it takes an enormous force of sentimentalism to recognise these bipeds as our brothers in humanity'.<sup>59</sup> Dehumanising language was common: one man wrote that 'you can't tell if it's human flesh or boot-polish'<sup>60</sup> while others compared black enemies to coal. This contempt extended to the enemy's women – ugly – and their religion – barbarous. Interestingly, children were generally excluded from the litany of complaints and instead were seen as an object for pity and charity.

Many soldiers' writings show great enthusiasm about killing the enemy, particularly in the immediate aftermath of Shara Shatt. The enemy were explicitly compared to animals: the single most common adjective applied to the native Arabs and Berbers – between whom very few men distinguished at all – was 'beasts'.<sup>61</sup> The supposed innate violence and bestiality of the enemy justified almost any form of brutality and repression in response.<sup>62</sup> The act of killing them was compared to going hunting, an enjoyable pastime. One man wrote from Bengasi on 4 November 1911 that:

I fired as if they were birds as you all know I have always loved weapons since I was very young and then the Arabs are like animals, killing one of them is like killing a snake so it gave me terrible courage to see them spread out on the ground.<sup>63</sup>

The Tuscan peasant farmer Onorato Corsi wrote on 9 November that 'to see these cowards dead energises me I can't wait to go ahead and destroy them all'.<sup>64</sup> For Corporal Sandro Erogeni from near Bergamo, 'to see the Arab-Turks flung up in the air by the firing of our guns gives one a real satisfaction: here it's as though we were hunting, not at war, and killing a man seems like squashing a fly'.<sup>65</sup> It is interesting that these bloodthirsty comments were widely published in the contemporary press during the war and in collections of letters which were brought out in the immediate aftermath, clearly meeting with public acceptance. By contrast, during the First World War, there was little testimony of savage hatred towards the Austro-Hungarian enemy from front-line combatants, and rather

<sup>59</sup> Lucatelli, *Il volto della guerra*, p. 42.      <sup>60</sup> Bono, *Lettere*, p. 536.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 537; see also Del Boca, *Tripoli bel suol d'amore*, pp. 119–20.

<sup>62</sup> Del Boca, *Tripoli bel suol d'amore*, pp. 147–9.      <sup>63</sup> Cited in Bono, *Lettere*, p. 531.

<sup>64</sup> Published in *La Nazione*. Cited in Bono, *Lettere*, p. 531.

<sup>65</sup> 5 November 1911, cited in Bono, *Morire per questi deserti*, pp. 92–3.

than expressing triumphant celebrations of killing Italian soldiers more commonly described fearing or evading it.<sup>66</sup>

In Sardinia, there was a folkloric incorporation of the new enemy into long-standing traditions that emphasised the idea of the Arab-as-beast. Although Carnival in February 1912 was in many ways a low-key affair in the villages around Cagliari, with no 'zipole' (zeppole) available, 'on the last day there was a bit of movement'. The traditional Carnival 'deer hunt' – a kind of Dionysian ritual of killing and rebirth enacted each year as a masked and costumed deer hunt through the streets – was re-imagined with a new sacrificial victim: 'they did the deer hunt [as] war against the Turks with knives and guns'.<sup>67</sup>

However, men displayed curiosity as well as contempt. Descriptions of houses, streets and the landscape were common. One man tried out some Arabic lettering on a postcard home, to try to show his family what the script was like; he had written a few words using Arabic script which suggests that he had persuaded a local to show him how.<sup>68</sup> The army, meanwhile, hoped to exploit the manpower resources of the newly conquered land by raising indigenous troops. Authorisation was received in February 1912, and recruitment began in May. Under white officers but with NCOs drawn from Muslim Eritrean or Somalian Ascari units, the army made considerable efforts to allay suspicion by guaranteeing religious rights and offering high rates of pay.<sup>69</sup>

### Implications for a study of Italian morale in Libya

How should these testimonies be interpreted in the light of the military difficulties experienced by the Italian forces in Libya? To what extent do they suggest that morale was high or that men were highly motivated for combat? The psychologist Onorato Mangiarotti carried out individual interviews with around 2,000 veterans and found considerable convergence in their views. Most agreed that they had experienced the greatest fear and anxiety at the moment of going into battle for the first time, and that in fact the experience was not as bad as their initial imaginings – in fact, subsequent actions were rarely as terrifying as the first baptism of fire. Mangiarotti was keen to try to identify the

<sup>66</sup> V. Wilcox, 'Weeping Tears of Blood: Exploring Italian Soldiers' Emotions in the First World War', *Modern Italy*, 17, 2 (2012), pp. 179–81.

<sup>67</sup> Loi Corvetto, *Dai Bressaglieri alla Fantaria*, p. 40. On Sardinian Carnival rituals see D. Turchi, *Maschere, miti e feste della Sardegna* (Rome: Newton Compton, 2007).

<sup>68</sup> Beltrame Menini, *Adorata Luigia*, pp. 54–5.

<sup>69</sup> C. Cesari, 'I primi reparti indigeni della Libia', *Nuova Rivista Fanteria*, 7, 3 (1914), pp. 229–36.

motivating force for men in battle, and asked his interviewees: 'As the bullets whistled around you, what was the force, the sentiment which animated you and urged you on?' None was able to answer, and indeed many appeared to find the question incomprehensible. He reports the line of questioning he then followed, along with the 'typical' responses of the men:

Q: You love the nation and you would be ready to sacrifice your life for it; in the heat of battle did you think of the nation?

A: In all honesty, no I didn't think of the nation.

Q: You are religious, you love God; perhaps it was religious sentiment and love of God which drove you on?

A: At that moment I wasn't thinking about anything.

Q: You swore loyalty to the King, was it the thought of him that kept you going?

A: At that moment I wasn't thinking of anybody.

Q: Forgive the question but perhaps it was the thought of the military penal code that obliged you to go ahead?

A: I didn't think of the code at all.

Q: So what was it that made you advance?

A: I advanced when my lieutenant advanced, I stopped when he stopped, I went over the top when he went over the top.<sup>70</sup>

This litany – if reliable – suggests that all the sense of patriotic fervour, missionary zeal or contempt for the enemy faded into the background in the heat of battle, to be replaced with a very simple instinctive reaction to follow one's immediate leader. Indeed, men reported that when combat began they felt 'drunk', 'outside themselves' or more simply that once battle began 'you just don't think any more'.<sup>71</sup> Other army commentators observed that the war revealed weaknesses in Italian training and military education: the momentary enthusiasm of the troops for the war could not suffice alone to sustain men in battle if there was no underlying basis of training and instruction for it to work with. Fear of death, discomfort on campaign, physical sufferings, tiredness all tend against enthusiasm, and without a solid basis of military education in values and patriotic virtues the flurry of patriotic sentiment was worth little in terms of real impact.<sup>72</sup> For these contemporary observers, the unusual aggression mentioned by many men in their views of the enemy appears to be of relatively little moment in determining battlefield performance.

<sup>70</sup> Mangiarotti, 'Un'inchiesta psicologica', p. 348. <sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 346.

<sup>72</sup> G. Pietro, 'Educazione o istruzione militare?', *Rivista Militare Italiana*, 59, 4 (1914), p. 800.

### Conclusion

Reading popular writings from the war of 1911–12 and comparing them to the letters and diaries which come from the war of 1915–18 is illuminating, since the men were largely the same but the war was quite different. Very different attitudes to the enemy are the element that stands out most strongly: hand in hand with the contemptuous attitudes outlined above came a much greater enthusiasm for killing and a much more aggressive outlook. This hostility seems to have been linked with a considerable fear of the enemy's killing power and above all of the brutality that Italians expected the Arabs and Turks to enact on prisoners. The 'betrayal' of Shara Shatt confirmed this reading of Arabs as brutal and primitive, in keeping with the assumptions based on earlier colonial experiences in East Africa. There appears to be a paradoxical need to crush and annihilate alongside surprise and resentment that the native population had not 'appreciated' Italian civilisation or the advantages of Italian rule. Features that were common in the letters of the First World War, such as passive resignation or a sense of fraternal solidarity with the infantrymen on the other side, appear much rarer in the Libyan case. Instead we find a much more vigorous, even bloodthirsty attitude to combat than was common in 1915–18, and interesting evidence of how the idea of technological superiority could be used to try to boost confidence. At the same time, this does not necessarily mean that the Italian army in Libya was a force with high morale and a strong will to win. Hatred of the enemy appears to have been whipped up to some extent by junior officers and the media, reflecting profound fear and anxiety about the conscript force and its chances of success: after the humiliating massacre of Adowa in 1896, the events at Shara Shatt in October 1911 seemed to confirm the vulnerability of Italian forces as well as the savagery of the African enemy. The Italians in Libya fluctuated uncomfortably between colonial arrogance and military anxiety.

## 4 Ottoman diplomacy, the Balkan Wars and the Great Powers

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*Gul Tokay*

This study reassesses the Balkan Wars through the correspondence of Ottoman diplomatic envoys with an emphasis on how Ottoman officials interpreted the Ottoman-Bulgarian conflict and the question of Adrianople [Edirne] during the Balkan Wars. So far, in Turkish historiography, the Balkan Wars have generally been treated as another Ottoman-Bulgarian conflict rather than wars between the Balkan allies and the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, Bulgarian ambitions in Macedonia and Russian support have been over-emphasized in the historical writings of the period. However, it was the escalation of Austro-Serbian tension in the peninsula, especially after the appointment of Leopold von Berchtold as the Dual-Monarchy's Foreign Minister in 1912 – rather than Ottoman mistreatment of its Christian subjects – that provided the impetus for the formation of the Balkan League and, ultimately, war.

The origins of these conflicts date back to the Berlin Treaty of 1878, signed at the end of the Russo-Ottoman war. At Berlin, international tensions were eased temporarily but many regional issues remained unresolved, creating further complications. In particular, European reforms for Christians in the Macedonian provinces, under Article 23, caused problems during implementation, encouraged various Christian communities and became an issue between the Ottomans and neighbouring Balkan States until the end of the Balkan Wars. Similarly, Austrian occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina under Article 25 soon led to discontent among the local inhabitants, especially the Serbs. Still, until 1908, cooperation between the powers and the Ottomans' reform initiatives under the Europeans made a Balkan alliance less likely. However, the Young Turk Revolution of July 1908 followed by the October crisis – Bulgaria's declaration of independence and Austria's annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina – showed that the Berlin Treaty was obsolete, while the last vestiges of the Austrian-Russian Entente of 1897, which contributed to keeping the status quo in the Peninsula, were already gone.

By the spring of 1912, when rumours of the Balkan alliances started to enter European and Ottoman circles, both Berchtold and his Russian



counterpart, Sergei Sazonov, like most interested powers in the region, wanted to avoid European war. However, for Berchtold, the Balkan war was different, as he aimed to restrict Serbian and Montenegrin expansion in the Balkans, especially in the province of Kosovo, including the Sanjak of Novi Pazar. Therefore, for Berchtold, a Serbian defeat in a local war would serve the Dual-Monarchy's future interests. On the other hand, the Russians ideally wanted to see an expansion of the Slavs separating Constantinople and the Straits from Europe under their influence, but the Russian minister had doubts over whether they could keep a war localized and was therefore cautious. Under the prevailing circumstances, any cooperation or intervention by the European powers was out of the question after 1908. The conflicting priorities between the two alliances meant any attempt at cooperation would serve only to widen the gaps, which had opened up between the major powers. This coupled with reluctance on the part of the Ottoman regime for any tangible improvement on behalf of the Christians made war inevitable.

In Turkish historiography, the Balkan Wars are not only studied as another Turco-Bulgarian War but also within the framework of Russian/European controversies and geopolitics. Since the main sources of research have been European archives, there has been a tendency for such studies to have a Eurocentric approach. This was somewhat inevitable given that the political section of the *Hariciye Arşivi* (Ottoman Foreign Ministerial Archives) was closed for a long time and only became available to readers in the last decade.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, with a few exceptions, Ottoman diplomatic relations of the Young Turk Period, as a subject, does not attract many Ottomanist scholars. Until recently, it was mostly studied as a preliminary to the history of Modern Turkey and the Ottoman view was limited in the subject treatment.<sup>2</sup> There are also fundamental problems in the methodology and terminology used in the period's historical writing because of the restrictions of official/national historiography. Nevertheless, some valuable studies have been undertaken on the Young Turks' era in recent decades, but there is still a line dividing patriotic and academic efforts.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed discussion see: M. Hacısalıhoğlu and G. Tokay, 'Turkish Historiography on the Balkans during the "Late Ottoman Period" (1878–1914)', *Balkanistica*, 22 (2009), pp. 181–203; H. Bacanlı, 'A Bibliography of the Balkan Wars', *Journal of Turkish World Studies*, 12, 2 (2012), pp. 265–307.

<sup>2</sup> H. Bayur's *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1943; 1983; 1991) remains the major study. For a recent study see: Ş. Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton University Press, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Hacısalıhoğlu and Tokay, 'Turkish Historiography on the Balkans', p. 197. Also S. Demirci, *British Public Opinion towards the Ottoman Empire during the Two Crises: Bosnia-Herzegovina (1908–1909) and the Balkan Wars, 1912–13* (Istanbul: Isis, 2006); H. N.

The present study with the assistance of Ottoman documents, as well as some unexplored European sources, reassesses the period and hopes to partially fill an existing gap in the historiography of the Balkan Wars.

### Origins of the Balkan Wars

On the eve of war, Alexander Mavreyoni, Ottoman Ambassador in Vienna, wrote to Gabriel Effendi, Ottoman Foreign Minister in Constantinople, arguing that war was inevitable in the Balkans. Firstly, the change in the Constantinople regime after the Young Turk Revolution in 1908 encouraged different communities and the neighbouring Balkan states to fulfil their long-held ambitions in the Peninsula. Secondly, Ottoman unwillingness to implement reforms for Christians contributed to the escalation of the existing tension. Thirdly, for Mavreyoni, under Berchtold, Habsburg involvement in Balkan affairs became more influential. Austro-Hungarian ambition in the Peninsula and their support for the Albanians contradicted Serbian ambitions and the latter started seeing war as the only alternative. In the end, by late September, the triangular relationship between the Europeans, Ottomans and Balkan states reached deadlock, leaving war as the only possible outcome, though all sides hoped that the conflict would remain localized.<sup>4</sup>

Already, by early 1909, the Balkan states had started to overcome their differences, but it was only in the early months of 1912 that Ottoman diplomats started to hear about secret alliances of the Balkan states. Their rapprochement, not surprisingly, coincided with the appointment of Berchtold as Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister following the death of Alois Lexa von Aehrenthal (1906–12) and the Turco-Italian War. For Berchtold, traditional Austro-Hungarian policy was to maintain friendly relations with the Ottomans and support the status quo in the Balkans, but in the case of a Balkan war Austria would maintain a policy of strict neutrality.<sup>5</sup> At the beginning Ottoman diplomats were suspicious of Berchtold as he had a reputation as a Russophile, having served

Akmese, *The Birth of Modern Turkey: The Ottoman Military and the March to World War I* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005); E. Boyar, *Ottomans, Turks and the Balkans: Empire Lost, Relations Altered* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2007); Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914*; N. Hayta, *Balkan Savaşlarının Diplomatik Boyutu ve Londra Büyükelçiler Konferansı, 17 Aralık 1912–11 Ağustos 1913* (Ankara: Ankara Araştırma Merkezi, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> BBA (Prime Ministerial Archives-, Başbakanlık Arşivi-, Istanbul), HRSYS (Ottoman Foreign Ministerial Archives, Political Section) 1957/1, Mavroyeni to Gabriel, Vienna, 13 October 1912. For the full collection on the Balkan Wars see: S. Küneralp and G. Tokay (eds.), *Ottoman Documents on the Origins of World War One*, vol. VII: *The Balkan Wars 1912–1913* (Istanbul: Isis, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> BBA, HRSYS 1096/82, Mavroyeni to Gabriel Effendi Vienna, 28 September 1912.

as the ambassador to St Petersburg (1906–11), but soon a period of increased cordiality began between Ottoman and Habsburg diplomats. No doubt, the Austrian Ambassador in Constantinople, Marquis Johann von Pallavicini, Alexandre Mavreyoni, and Huseyin Hilmi Pasha, his successor, in Vienna had a role to play in this cordiality.<sup>6</sup>

In the meantime, the Serbo-Bulgarian treaty was signed in March 1912 and the Balkan alliance was more or less finalized by May 1912 with the signing of the Bulgarian-Greek Treaty. No written treaty of alliance was signed with Montenegro until October. The most difficult issue on the formation of the Balkan League was between the Bulgarians and the Serbians. The Serbs wanted to include in the agreement the partitioning of European Turkey, which the Bulgarians, dissatisfied over losing Macedonia at the Berlin Treaty, wanted to keep as a single entity.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, Bulgarian and Greek officials insisted that the treaty would not include any aggressive designs and was a defensive alliance.<sup>8</sup> The available material reveals that throughout the negotiations Montenegro did not want to be completely tied up, but they knew that without Bulgarian and Serbian assistance, the Ottomans could easily counter a possible attack by Montenegro.<sup>9</sup> For their part, because of their friendly relations with Austria, the Romanians wanted to steer clear of any formal alliances.

However, on the formation of the Balkan League, most of the powers, including the Ottomans, were not troubled or particularly interested. Only the French Prime Minister, Raymond Poincaré, argued that as the Serbs and Bulgarians overcame their differences, war in the region would be inevitable. For the Austrians, a Bulgarian-Serbian agreement was mainly to preserve the status quo in the Balkans, but they were not comfortable with Russian influence on the alliance, because there were rumours that Russia backed the League mainly to oppose Austrian designs in the Sanjak.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> S. Kunalalp (ed.), *Studies on Ottoman Diplomatic History*, vol. III: *Dépêches D' Alexandre Mavroyeni Bey, Ambassadeur de Turquie A Vienne au Ministre Ottoman des Affaires. Etrangères, Decembre 1911–Octobre 1912* (Istanbul: Isis, 1989).

<sup>7</sup> G. Tokay, 'The Origins of the Balkan Wars: A Reinterpretation', in H. Yavuz and I. Blumi (eds.), *War and Nationalism: The Balkan Wars, 1912–1913 and their Sociopolitical Implications* (Salt Lake City: Utah University Press, 2013), pp. 176–96. For the full collection of Ottoman documents on Macedonia, see S. Kunalalp and G. Tokay (eds.), *Ottoman Documents on the Origins of World War One*, vol. IV: *The Macedonian Issue, 1879–1912, Part 2 1905–1912* (Istanbul: Isis, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> BBA, HRSYS 343/1, Mukhtar to Gabriel, Athens, 21 August 1912.

<sup>9</sup> BBA, HRSYS 345/2, Tevfik to Gabriel, London, 10 August 1912.

<sup>10</sup> TNA, FO 195/2453, Bax-Ironside to Grey, Sofia, 6 January 1913; E. Thaden, *Russia and the Balkan Alliance, 1912* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1965, second printing 1991); S. McMeekin, *The Russian Origins of the First World War* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

The Russians no doubt played an important role in the consolidation of these alliances. Nevertheless, the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Sazonov, insisted that he only mediated between the Serbs and the Bulgarians and not the other powers. For Sazonov, Serbian-Bulgarian cooperation was essential to the Macedonian issue, one he believed was the core of the problems in the Peninsula, but he insisted that war should be the last resort.<sup>11</sup>

The formation of alliances did not cause major anxieties in Ottoman circles. They thought that the alliances were verbal agreements, signed to preserve the status quo in the Balkans and were defensive in nature.<sup>12</sup> Ivan Geshov, Bulgarian Premier, confirmed to Naby Bey, Ottoman Minister in Sofia, that there was nothing in writing between the two states, nor was there a military convention.<sup>13</sup> It was only 'une entente passive' to maintain the status quo against Austrian aggression.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, Fuad Bey, Ottoman Minister in Belgrade, believed that a military alliance could never exist because Russians would not allow that to happen.<sup>15</sup> At the time, the Ottomans were more concerned with the war against Italy and never thought the war with the Italians could activate the Balkan alliance. Still, the available material states that Balkan alliances accelerated the peace talks between the Ottomans and the Italians.<sup>16</sup> However, when the text of the Serb-Bulgarian and Greek-Bulgarian agreements was made public later in 1913, the Turkish press accused the government of diplomatic incompetence.<sup>17</sup> Also, some sceptical Ottoman statesmen of the period argued that the government's reluctance to solve the Cretan issue played a significant role in the finalization of the Greek-Bulgarian Treaty and Macedonian autonomy might have prevented the Bulgarians' tying themselves with the Serbs.<sup>18</sup> It goes without saying that the agreements leaned towards Triple Entente and were favourable to

<sup>11</sup> Tokay, 'Origins of the Balkan Wars', in Yavuz and Blumi (eds.), *War and Nationalism*, pp. 184–7.

<sup>12</sup> H. Bayur, *Sadrazam Kamil Paşa, Siyasi Hayatı* (Ankara: Sanat Basımevi, 1954), p. 319.

<sup>13</sup> BBA, HRSYS 342/7, Naby to Assim, Sofia, 22 June 1912; Fuad Hikmed to Assim, Belgrade, 21 June 1912; also I. E. Gueshoff, *L'Alliance Balkaniques* (Paris: Hachette, 1915); E. Stelova, *The Rough Road to Statecraft: The Life of Bulgaria's Ivan E. Gueshoff* (Sofia: Academic Press, 1994, reprinted Glen Echo MD: Bethesda Press, 2010).

<sup>14</sup> BBA, HRSYS 342/8, 'Bordereau du dossier, Entente Serbo-Bulgarie', Tevfik to Assim, London, 11 June 1912; Rifaat to Assim, Paris, 14 June 1912.

<sup>15</sup> BBA, HRSYS 342/7, Fuad Hikmed to Gabriel, Belgrade, 15 August 1912.

<sup>16</sup> S. Kunalp (ed.), *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents on the Origins of the World War One*, vol. V: *The Turco-Italian War, 1911–12* (Istanbul: Isis, 2011); F. Caccamo, 'The Balkan Wars in the Italian Perspective', in Yavuz and Blumi (eds.), *War and Nationalism*, pp. 230–49, as well as his study in this volume; T. Childs, *Italo-Turkish Diplomacy and the War Over Libya, 1911–1912* (Leiden: Brill, 1990).

<sup>17</sup> Kunalp and Tokay (eds.), *Balkan Wars*, p. 12. <sup>18</sup> Bayur, *Kamil Paşa*, pp. 313–24.

Russia. However, many missed that the Bulgarian-Serbian agreement was defensive in nature to Austria-Hungary but offensive towards Turkey.<sup>19</sup>

Over the summer of 1912, when the Ottomans were mainly concerned with Italian war in North Africa, news of the deteriorating situation in the Balkans reached the Ottoman Foreign Ministry. Most of the Great Powers hoped to prevent a worsening of the situation through some sort of reform, mainly by implementing Article 23 of the Berlin Treaty.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, the government formed under Gazi Ahmed Mukhtar Pasha in July 1912 prioritized ending the war in Tripoli and restoring order in Albania. Ahmed Mukhtar claimed that, despite the slow progress of reforms since the establishment of the constitutional regime, they were trying to take necessary measures, but in three years there was a limit to what they could achieve. Moreover, the Grand Vizier did not pay much attention to European reform initiatives, instead insisting they had to come from within.<sup>21</sup> Another cause of anxiety was the Albanian uprisings and Austrian support for the creation of an autonomous Albania.<sup>22</sup> The fact that the Albanians were receiving actual concessions, whereas the other Christian communities had to be content with vague promises, only contributed to an escalation of existing tension in the region.<sup>23</sup> The core of Austrian Balkan politics was not only the creation of an Albanian state but more importantly to prevent the break of equilibrium in the Adriatic.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, the Serbs and Montenegrins were even more disturbed, knowing that the Austrians' main initiative on the Albanian issue was to prevent Serbian and Montenegrin expansion rather than the Albanian cause itself.<sup>25</sup>

Ottoman diplomats recognized that the Monarchy's Balkan policy was not one of conquest, but this did not mean they did not have vital interests in the region, which they would defend under any circumstances.<sup>26</sup> Ottoman officials believed that Berchtold cooperated with the other powers over Macedonian reforms, while at the same time seeking to keep the region unstable so that he could intervene if necessary.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore,

<sup>19</sup> TNA, FO 195/2453, Bax-Ironside to Grey, Sofia, 6 January 1913.

<sup>20</sup> TNA, FO 881/10224, Buchanan to Grey, St Petersburg, 30 August 1912; Tokay, 'Origins of the Balkan Wars', in Yavuz and Blumi (eds.), *War and Nationalism*, pp. 189–90.

<sup>21</sup> Tokay, 'Origins of the Balkan Wars'.

<sup>22</sup> P. Bartl, *Albanische Muslime zur Zeit der Unabhängigkeitsbewegung, 1878–1912* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1968), pp. 180–3; I. Blumi, *Reinstating the late Ottoman Empire: Alternative Balkan Modernities, 1800–1912* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2011).

<sup>23</sup> BBA, HRSYS 1171/34, Mavreyoni to Gabriel Effendi, Vienna, 27 September 1912.

<sup>24</sup> BBA, HRSYS 171/60, Huseyin Hilmi to Said Halim, Vienna, 19 November 1913.

<sup>25</sup> TNA, FO 881/10224, Marlin to Grey, Constantinople, 20 August 1912; BBA, HRSYS 171/34, Mavreyoni to Gabriel, Vienna, 27 September 1912.

<sup>26</sup> BBA, HRSYS 1866/6, Huseyin Hilmi to Said Halim, Vienna, 19 September 1913.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*; TNA, FO 881/10224, Vaughan to Grey, Bucharest, 29 September 1912.

Ottoman sources reveal that their diplomats thought Berchtold entertained a scenario in which an Ottoman victory over Serbia would benefit Austro-Hungarian security interests. The friendly relations between the Austrians and Ottomans undoubtedly had an influence on Ottomans' minds regarding a localized war and their over-optimism about a war. The Ottomans hoped a victorious war would cancel out any reform efforts over Macedonia.<sup>28</sup> As the other most interested power, the Russians under Sazonov's Foreign Ministry held to their traditional ambitions for Ottoman lands, but under the circumstances they deemed it wise to follow a conservative, status quo policy.<sup>29</sup> Turkhan Pasha, the Ottoman ambassador in Petersburg, with whom Sazonov had good working relations, believed that the Russians were satisfied with the existing status quo as long as their commercial interests, mainly cereal exports, through the Black Sea and Straits were safeguarded.<sup>30</sup>

On the escalation of the existing tension, Sazonov believed that the implementation of Article 23 of the Berlin Treaty was the only option given the prevailing circumstances. Over time, Sazonov, aware of Berchtold's intentions, viewed the situation with increasing pessimism and concern.<sup>31</sup> Berchtold, according to Ottoman sources, was convinced that the official Russian declarations were not sincere and Russia always had in mind a programme only favourable to the Balkan states.<sup>32</sup> During the late summer of 1912, Russian Foreign Minister Sazonov embarked on a European tour in a last attempt to gain some official support from the Powers to prevent a war between the Balkan allies and the Ottomans.<sup>33</sup> Around the same time, Sazonov met with Tefvik, the Ottoman ambassador in London and tried to convince him that Ottoman efforts should be concentrated on attempting to postpone the war in the Balkans through implementing the European reforms, as it seemed the Ottomans could not win under the prevailing circumstances.<sup>34</sup>

However, the reluctance of the powers to take any further steps and the delays by the Ottomans in undertaking reforms for Christian

<sup>28</sup> Kuneralp and Tokay (eds.), *Balkan Wars*, pp. 35–115; G. Tokay, 'Origins of the Balkan Wars', in Yavuz and Blumi (eds.), *War and Nationalism*, pp. 186–9.

<sup>29</sup> BBA, HRSYS 1957/1, Mavroyeni to Gabriel Effendi, Vienna, 13 October 1912.

<sup>30</sup> Kuneralp and Tokay (eds.), *Balkan Wars*, Turkhan to Gabriel, St Petersburg, 18 October 1912, pp. 165–6.

<sup>31</sup> BBA, HRSYS 1957/1, Mouhiddin to Gabriel Effendi, St Petersburg, 20 September 1912.

<sup>32</sup> BBA, HRSYS 171/41, Mavreyoni to Gabriel Effendi, Vienna, 19 October 1912.

<sup>33</sup> S. Sazonov, *Fateful Years, 1909–1916: The Reminiscences of Serge Sazonov* (Bronx: Ishi Printing, 2008, first published 1928), pp. 43–76.

<sup>34</sup> Kuneralp and Tokay (eds.), *Balkan Wars*, Tefvik to Gabriel, London, 21 September 1912, pp. 86–7.

communities showed that solving the crisis by diplomatic means was difficult to achieve.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, many Europeans began to see a localized war as an alternative in early autumn. However, they stated that in case of war, they would not permit any changes in the territorial status of the Balkan states, nor would they allow any intervention in the sovereign rights of the Sultan.<sup>36</sup> For Sazonov this meant that war became unavoidable; whether or not it would remain local depended on the Austrians.<sup>37</sup>

As for the Balkan states, throughout the summer, with the possible exception of King Ferdinand, they were still indecisive about declaring war, but, by September, with Albanian and Macedonian turmoil escalating, more belligerent sentiments started to reach the Ottoman Foreign Ministry.<sup>38</sup> Serbian Prime Minister Pasic was convinced that the Ottomans did not keep any of their promises and Austrian proposals for the Albanians were not acceptable. Pasic still stated that they would not start a war, as long as similar dispositions to the ones in favour of Albanians were granted to all Balkan nationals, but they were more than likely to join the war if it were to break out.<sup>39</sup> Despite these official declarations, one should not forget that for the Serbs this was also a war undertaken for territorial expansion, and Pasic was one of the main architects of the Bulgarian-Serbian alliance.<sup>40</sup>

In Bulgaria, the situation was even more tense, with war considered the only option by many. On the other hand, there were figures in the Bulgarian government, such as Geshov, who believed that pressure had to be exercised on the Ottomans for reforms and he offered a last chance with a final ultimatum to the Porte regarding a series of reforms by the end of September. Geshov's proposals, based on Article 23 of the Berlin Treaty, were hardly radical. However, he stated that the reforms had to be implemented jointly by the ambassadors of Great Powers and the representatives of the four Balkan states in Constantinople. According to the Powers, the Ottomans would never accept participation of the Balkan states in the implementation of the reforms.<sup>41</sup>

In the meantime, with the pressure put on the Ottoman Empire by the Europeans, on 25 September the Porte decided to extend similar

<sup>35</sup> TNA, FO 881/10224, Bertie to Grey, Paris, 22 September 1912.

<sup>36</sup> BBA, HRSYS 1957/1, Mavroyeni to Gabriel, Vienna, 8 October 1912.

<sup>37</sup> Tokay, 'Origins of the Balkan Wars', pp. 188–90.

<sup>38</sup> BBA, HRSYS 1096/82, Mavroyeni to Gabriel, Vienna, 28 September 1912.

<sup>39</sup> BBA, HRSYS 1957, Rifaat to Gabriel, Paris, 21 September 1912; Tokay, 'Origins of the Balkan Wars', pp. 192–4.

<sup>40</sup> TNA, FO 881/10281, Annual report on Serbia 1912, Paget to Grey, 6 June 1913, p. 8.

<sup>41</sup> Stelotova, *Gueshoff*, pp. 54–6; Tokay, 'Origins of the Balkan Wars', pp. 191–2.



reforms granted to the Albanian provinces to all provinces. However, by early October, in the middle of these discussions on reforms, Gabriel Effendi reported to the Ottoman embassies on the mobilization of the Balkan states. This gave the Ottomans the excuse to call off any reform projects. Indeed, as some experienced Ottoman diplomats argued, this was a relief, as reforms implemented by the Ottomans would fully depend on the success of the army.<sup>42</sup>

On 15 October, a peace treaty was agreed with Italy. The following day, the Ottoman Empire broke off diplomatic relations with the three Balkan states and declared war on 17 October. Soon after, Ahmed Mukhtar resigned as Grand Vizir and the pro-British Kâmil replaced him. For Kâmil Pasha the war was pointless. If the Ottomans won, Austria-Hungary would benefit and if they lost Russia would benefit. More importantly, Ottoman diplomats knew that the powers' decision to maintain the status quo would only be operative in the case of an Ottoman victory.<sup>43</sup> On the eve of the war, all the powers may have been in favour of maintaining the status quo but they 'knew' that the Balkans 'belonged' to the Balkan people, and it was their divergent interests which hindered the people of the Peninsula from fulfilling their demands that had been voiced since 1878.<sup>44</sup>

### From the declaration of war to the London Treaty

The mobilization of the Balkan armies on the one hand and the allies' ultimatum with 'unacceptable terms' on the other pushed the Ottomans into war. Despite the poor condition of their armed forces, the Ottomans were ready for war, launching offensive campaigns on the western and Thracian fronts. There was reluctance among some high commanders but experts, such as Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz, whom the government trusted, favoured the offensive, which led to a false sense of optimism.<sup>45</sup> Soon, the Thracian theatre, against Bulgaria, became the main fighting ground for the Ottomans.

By early November, Gabriel Effendi informed Ottoman envoys abroad of the defeat of the Ottoman armies and that the situation was likely to

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* <sup>43</sup> Kuneralp and Tokay (eds.), *Balkan Wars*, pp. 11–13.

<sup>44</sup> BBA, HRSYS 1096/82, Mavroyeni to Gabriel, Vienna, 25 September 1912; Caccamo, 'The Balkan wars in the Italian Perspective', pp. 232–3; 242–4.

<sup>45</sup> F. A. K. Yasamee, 'Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz and Rebirth of the Ottoman Empire', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 9 (1998), pp. 91–128; Abdullah Paşa, *Balkan Harbinde Şark Ordu Kumandam Abdullah Paşa'nın Hatıratı* (Istanbul: Erkan-ı Harbiye Matbaası, 1336/1918); Mahmud Muhtar Paşa, *Balkan Harbi* (Istanbul: İlgi ve Kültür Sanat Yayınları, 2011).



be changed in favour of the Balkan states.<sup>46</sup> On 5 November, the Porte requested a cease-fire and for the powers to mediate to cease hostilities to prevent the Bulgarians from marching to Constantinople, as their army was already at the Çatalca lines. When the powers did not reply to the formal request for an immediate cease-fire and mediation, Kâmil Pasha approached King Ferdinand directly with this request. It was only then that representatives of the powers in the Balkan capitals responded that they were ready to mediate between the Balkan allies and the Ottoman Empire.<sup>47</sup>

However, the Bulgarians took time to respond and only after their defeat at Çatalca did Ferdinand give orders to commence negotiations for a cease-fire. The delay in the Bulgarians' acceptance of the Ottoman proposal for an armistice until late November gave the Ottomans a chance to recover and the exhausted Bulgarian army was defeated at the Çatalca front by late November.<sup>48</sup> The talks, which commenced on 20 November, started formally on 25 November in Çatalca and an armistice with the Balkan allies was signed on 3 December, with the exception of Greece, which wanted to drag the war on to gain Janina. The allies demanded that the Ottomans surrender all European territories west of Çatalca and decided to assemble a Conference ten days later in London.<sup>49</sup> According to Kâmil Pasha, during the war, military gains and losses shaped diplomacy. The Ottomans could not do much except buy time to exhaust the enemy, which is exactly what happened at Çatalca with the Bulgarians.<sup>50</sup> Yet, despite the Bulgarians being defeated in Çatalca, the Ottomans were more or less beaten on all the European fronts by late November. As Abdullah Pasha, the commander of the Ottoman forces in Thrace stated at the time, 'Tout est perdu, *même l'honneur*' (All is lost, even honour).<sup>51</sup>

Two conferences opened on 16 and 17 December in London. These were, respectively, St James' Conference between the Balkan allies and the Ottoman Empire and the Ambassadors' Conference between the signatories of the Berlin Treaty, under the presidency of Sir Edward Grey, British Foreign Secretary. At the Ambassadors' Conference, the powers decided to discuss issues of mutual interest, including the question of Albania, the Serbian outlet to the Adriatic, and the question of the Aegean

<sup>46</sup> Hrant Bey Noradounghian, *Vers la Guerre Balcanique et vers la premiere Guerre mondiale* (Istanbul: La Turquie Moderne, 1950); Noradounghian, *Les Balkans et La Russie a La Vielle de la Premiere Guerre Mondiale: Memoires d'un diplomate Ottoman*, 2nd edn (Istanbul: Isis, 2010).

<sup>47</sup> Bayur, *Kamil Paşa*, pp. 347–70.

<sup>48</sup> R. Hall, *The Balkan Wars 1912–13: Prelude to the First World War* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 32–42.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 69–70. <sup>50</sup> Bayur, *Kamil Paşa*, p. 362.

<sup>51</sup> Yasamee, 'Freiherr von der Goltz', pp. 117–18.

islands, and they agreed to mediate between the belligerents but decided that they would not arbitrate.<sup>52</sup>

Prior to the St James' Conference, the Ottoman delegation were instructed by Gabriel Effendi to seek autonomy for Macedonia and Albania under the Sultan's sovereignty, the return of the Aegean islands and a special status for Adrianople to be administered by a European commission, but there is no record of these proposals in any of the sessions.<sup>53</sup> The sessions at the St James' Conference were very likely to fail from the beginning. By the first week of January 1913, negotiations reached deadlock and they were definitely discontinued by the end of January. On 23 December, the allies proposed the cession of all Ottoman territory to the east of a line running from Enos on the Aegean Sea and Midia on the Black Sea (including Adrianople); the cession of Aegean islands to Greece; and the Porte had to renounce its rights to Crete. The Bulgarian delegate Stoyan Danev (President of the Bulgarian Parliament) insisted that the Bulgarians should have Adrianople while the Greek chief negotiator, Premier Eleutherios Venizelos, insisted on the islands. In response Ottoman negotiators in London were instructed to declare that the Porte was ready to negotiate on all questions, including Albania and Crete, and was willing to leave everything west of Adrianople to the allies on condition that the province of Adrianople and the islands would remain in Turkey's possession.<sup>54</sup>

The Ottomans insisted on retaining Adrianople because of its historic and multi-ethnic structure, and more importantly its geographic proximity to Constantinople.<sup>55</sup> Gabriel even stated that if the Bulgarians were opposed, they would risk a second Balkan war instead of giving up Adrianople. On the other hand, the powers and the allies were convinced that Bulgaria should have Adrianople with Dedeagach. Their reasoning was that it would be easier to reach a consensus between the Bulgarians and the rest of the allies among whom tension was escalating over Macedonia, especially with the Serbs, who already wanted to revise the March 1912 agreement. When Reshid Pasha, the chief Ottoman negotiator,

<sup>52</sup> For details, see: E. C. Helmreich, *The Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars 1912–1913* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1938), pp. 249–80; N. Hayta, *Balkan Savaşlarının Diplomatik Boyutu ve Londra Büyükelçiler Konferansı, 17 Aralık 1912–11 August 1913* (Ankara: Ankara Araştırma Merkezi, 2008); Kunalalp and Tokay (eds.), *Balkan Wars*, pp. 313–434.

<sup>53</sup> Kunalalp and Tokay (eds.), *Balkan Wars*, pp. 14–15. Reshid Pasha (chief negotiator, a diplomat serving as Minister of Commerce since July 1912), Osman Nizami Pasha (ambassador to Berlin, 1908–13, delegate) and Salih Pasha (acting Minister of Marine, delegate).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 340–50; Bayur, *Kamil Paşa*, pp. 370–8.

<sup>55</sup> TNA, FO 195/2248, Lowther to Grey, Constantinople, 10 January 1913.

approached Sir Edward Grey for support, the British Foreign Secretary told him that the Bulgarians had to keep Adrianople because it was the only way to keep the war localized and the door open to the peace talks. In the meantime, the European ambassadors in Constantinople were trying to convince Gabriel Effendi to accept the terms, especially the Russian ambassador, Michel de Giers, who stated that failure to reach an agreement with the Balkan allies might lead to Russia no longer remaining neutral in the conflict.<sup>56</sup>

With both sides insisting on their demands being met direct negotiations between the Ottomans and the allies were suspended on 6 January. Soon after, the Conference of the Ambassadors drafted its own proposals and submitted them to the Porte. The collective note of the powers was delivered to Gabriel Effendi on 17 January, stating that the Ottomans must surrender Adrianople to Bulgaria and leave Europe to deal with the question of the Aegean islands.<sup>57</sup>

The question of the islands was particularly complicated. Once the Italians agreed to evacuate the Dodecanese islands, at least temporarily, in the Treaty of Ouchy (Lausanne, 15 October), it became obvious that if the Ottomans or the powers did not take any precautions the islands would soon be lost to the Greeks. As expected, with the Ottoman defeat, the powers intervened on behalf of Greece, and insisted that all the islands, with the exception of Tenedos and Imbros because of their geographic proximity, were to be handed to the Greeks. Ottoman proposals on the neutralization and demilitarization of the islands, at least the ones near to the Ottoman mainland, were not accepted either by the allies or the powers.<sup>58</sup> However, given the deadlock at the St James' Conference on the question of the islands, the Porte accepted handing the question of the islands to the Ambassadors' Conference, and it became an ongoing issue not only between the states concerned, but also internationally.

After receiving the powers' note, to gain Grey's support, Gabriel corresponded with the Ottoman delegation in London on the alternatives. He stated that the Ottomans would consider turning Adrianople into a free and neutral town with a local government chosen by the signatories of the Berlin Treaty as a last option, but they had to keep the islands because of their strategic importance and the powers had to understand their importance and help in negotiations.<sup>59</sup> Following various correspondences between Gabriel and the delegation in London, to gain time

<sup>56</sup> TNA, FO 195/2248, Grey to Lowther, FO, 30 January 1913.

<sup>57</sup> Hayta, *Balkan Savaşlarının Diplomatik Boyutu*, pp. 34–51.

<sup>58</sup> S. Kunalalp (ed.), *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents on the Origins of World War One*, vol. VI: *The Aegean Islands Issue 1912–14* (Istanbul: Isis, 2011), pp. 11–13.

<sup>59</sup> Kunalalp and Tokay (eds.), *Balkan Wars*, pp. 397–8, 429–30.

before delivering the final reply, Gabriel drafted another note for Grey. This was moderate in tone based on the previous correspondence, including other details related to the war such as war indemnity, the status of the existing commercial treaties and so on. In the meantime, Kâmil Pasha met with his government and other military and civil authorities to discuss solving the question of Adrianople and the islands and to come up with an alternative so as not to restart the war.<sup>60</sup>

But on 23 January a coup (the Babiali Incident) led to Kâmil Pasha's government being deposed and a new government formed under Mahmud Shevket Pasha.<sup>61</sup> On 30 January, the new Ottoman Foreign Minister, Said Halim Pasha, handed over a reply, originally designed by Gabriel Effendi, to the Ambassadors' note of 17 January in Constantinople.<sup>62</sup> However, General Savov, the Bulgarian Commander in Chief, informed Mahmud Shevket Pasha, who was also Minister of War, about the resumption of hostilities.<sup>63</sup>

When the war restarted, Tevfik Pasha, the Ottoman ambassador in London, with the approval of the Porte, asked the powers to negotiate on their behalf. Grey, who had taken the lead in the ambassadorial conference, in concert with the rest of the representatives, accepted this proposal and informed the allies that they were undertaking the role of negotiators in their conflict with Turkey. The allies accepted this with reservations concerning the question of Crete and Adrianople. Although Grey realized that the allies were not totally committed, he also knew that they would be reluctant to oppose the powers' proposals.<sup>64</sup>

Once Ottoman defeat became inevitable, on 22 March, the Great Powers' ambassadors informed the allies about a set of proposals for negotiations between the Ottomans and themselves. This included a new Turco-Bulgarian border, with the Ottomans leaving Adrianople and its surroundings to Bulgaria; the Porte renouncing its claims to Crete; the question of the Aegean islands was to be handed to the Ambassadors' Conference; and an international conference to meet in Paris to discuss

<sup>60</sup> Bayur, *Kamil Paşa*, pp. 389–92.

<sup>61</sup> The coup was organized and led by the radical wing of CUP, which opposed the government's concessions. Nazım Pasha was killed and Kâmil Pasha and his government were deposed. See: *Mahmud Şevket Paşa'nın Günlüğü* (İstanbul: Arba, 1988); *Mahmud Muhtar Paşa Maziye Bir Nazar* (İstanbul: Ahmet İhsan Matbaası, 1341/1925, reprinted by Ötüken, 1999).

<sup>62</sup> Kuneralp and Tokay (eds.), *Balkan Wars*, pp. 428–31; Said Halim Paşa, *Burhanlarımız ve Son Eserleri* (İstanbul: İz Yayınları, 2011); H. Bostan, *Said Halim Paşa, Bir İslami Düşünür* (İstanbul: İrfan Yayıncılık, 1992), pp. 36–8; A. Seyhun, *Said Halim Pasha: Ottoman Statesman and Islamist Thinker, 1865–1921* (İstanbul: Isis, 2010).

<sup>63</sup> TNA, FO 195/2248, Tyrell to Lowther, Constantinople, 28 January 1913.

<sup>64</sup> Hayta, *Balkan Savaşlarının Diplomatik Boyutu*, pp. 54–5; B. Şimşir, *Ege Sorunu-Belgeler, 1912–13* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1989).

the financial issues related to the war. The same proposals were made to the Porte on 31 March after the Ottomans, under commander Shukru Pasha, had to surrender Adrianople on 26 April after a joint assault by Bulgarian-Serbian forces. Said Halim Pasha accepted the proposals of 22 March and on 15 April a Turco-Bulgarian agreement was signed at Çatalca.<sup>65</sup> The London Peace Treaty was finally signed on 30 May. The question of the Aegean islands, the status of Albania and financial arrangements were left to the Ambassadorial Conference to settle but the area west of the Enos-Midia line was left to the allies. The Ottomans renounced the right to Crete.

By the end of the First Balkan War, many believed that responsibility for taking the Ottomans into war, despite the army's physical and moral state being unfit and the reforms being incomplete, lay with Gazi Mukhtar Pasha's cabinet.<sup>66</sup> Mahmud Shevket told the British military attaché, Tyrell, without hesitation, that Nazim Pasha, his predecessor, was to blame for the losses in the first war because of his poor strategy, planning and tactics.<sup>67</sup> More importantly, some Ottoman statesmen believed that with the better political vision and maturity of the government at the time, and the possibility of granting autonomy to Macedonia, war would have been avoided or at least delayed.<sup>68</sup>

### **The Second Balkan War leading to the Treaty of Constantinople**

Immediately after the London Treaty, the deterioration in relations between the Serbs and Bulgarians over Macedonia and the secret treaty signed on 1 June between the Greeks and Serbs stoked anxieties amongst Ottoman officials. Thus, the core issue occupying the government was the loss of Adrianople and its surroundings.

When the Second Balkan War broke out in late June between Bulgaria on the one hand and Greece and Serbia on the other, the powers recommended Turkey to remain neutral.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, in early July, with the success of Serbian and Greek armies against the Bulgarians and more importantly the mobilization of the Romanian forces, the Ottomans began to think about the advantages of joining the war against the Bulgarians. Bulgarian violation of Ottoman territory and the continued brutal treatment of Muslims in Bulgaria led the Ottomans to consider joining

<sup>65</sup> Hall, *Balkan Wars*, pp. 89–91; Kuneralp and Tokay (eds.), *Balkan Wars*, pp. 88–92.

<sup>66</sup> Klinghardt, *Izzet Pascha*, pp. 217–19.

<sup>67</sup> TNA, FO 195/2448, Tyrell to Lowther, Constantinople, 28 January 1913.

<sup>68</sup> Klinghardt, *Izzet Pascha*, pp. 218–20.

<sup>69</sup> BBA, HRSYS 1913, Rifaat to Said Halim, Paris, 3 July 1913.

the war. In the meantime, the Porte sent a note to Sofia demanding the immediate evacuation of the neutral zone of territories still occupied up to the Enos-Midia line and to stop the killing of Muslims in these territories.

Romania's declaration of war against Bulgaria, the defeat of the Bulgarian forces by the Greeks and the Serbs, and Bulgaria's non-evacuation of the territories in question gave the Ottomans the advantage in taking military measures for an advance towards Adrianople.<sup>70</sup> As Ottoman Foreign Minister Said Halim, who also became the Grand Vizier after the assassination of Mahmud Shevket on 11 June stated, this was a new conflict with the success of the Serbo-Greek forces and the Romanian entrance and therefore the Ottomans had to be very careful in order to benefit from the circumstances that arose. The Ottomans declared war on Bulgaria on 13 July.<sup>71</sup> The same day Stoyen Danev's government resigned, replaced by the Russo-phobe government of Vasil Radoslavov, and a period of closer relations with Austria emerged in the Bulgarian political arena.<sup>72</sup> Soon after, Radoslavov initiated a call for a cease-fire to end the war and asked the powers to intervene.

With the Bulgarian army exhausted, victory for the Ottomans was easy and on 20 July, the Turkish forces, commanded by Enver Bey and Ibrahim Bey, entered Adrianople and Kirkkilise. By 23 July Adrianople was recaptured, creating an outcry not only in Bulgaria but in most European capitals as well. Most of the powers wanted an immediate Ottoman retreat from Adrianople, as they were worried about the circumstances.<sup>73</sup> In the international arena, Russia was completely opposed to the Ottoman recapture of the town, threatening entrance into Ottoman Armenia. Berchtold stated that this was a complete violation of the London Treaty. Grey was playing his usual game. On the one hand, he stated that under no circumstances would he give consent to force being employed against the Ottoman Empire and he maintained that if Bulgaria was intervening in the territory remaining under Turkey, then Turkey had the right under international law to denounce the London Treaty. On the other hand, he criticized Turkey and tried to act with the rest of the powers by putting pressure on the Ottomans.<sup>74</sup> However, when Sazonov proposed a naval demonstration or provisional occupation of Armenia, Grey rejected both. On 7 August, the representatives of the powers gave an ultimatum to the Porte stating that the Ottomans should obey the London

<sup>70</sup> For the details see: Kuneralp and Tokay (eds.), *Balkan Wars*, pp. 178–210.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203. <sup>72</sup> Hall, *Balkan Wars*, pp. 118–20.

<sup>73</sup> BBA, HRSYS 1913, Huseyin Hilmi to Said Halim, Vienna, 28 July 1913.

<sup>74</sup> BBA, HRSYS 1913, Tefvik to Said Halim, London, 1 August 1913.

Treaty and offered to guarantee in exchange the security of the borders, in return withdrawing their forces from Adrianople and its surroundings. On 11 August the Ottomans refused the ultimatum of the powers.<sup>75</sup>

Meanwhile, with the deterioration of the situation in the Armenian districts of the Empire, the Russians put pressure on the Ottomans to implement reforms in Armenia and to take measures to control Kurds and other nomads.<sup>76</sup> During the Second Balkan Wars, despite many issues remaining unresolved, the question of the eastern provinces had moved up the agenda of the Great Powers.

In a conversation with the Ottoman ambassador in Berlin, Mahmud Mukhtar, the German Foreign Minister Gottlieb von Jagow, who replaced Alfred Kiderlen-Wachter after his death on 30 December 1912, stated that the Bulgarian atrocities did not have much of an impact on the European capitals and would not really change the attitude of the Europeans towards the Ottomans on the question. Jagow further said that the Austrians were ready to support the new Bulgarian government. England was tired of trying to find a solution to ease the crises, while the sympathies of the Germans lay with the Ottomans, but they could not restrain the Russians for long. According to Jagow, the Russians were ready to get involved in Armenia, which would bring in Germany. The only issue was that the Russians were not ready to act alone, as their fleet on the Black Sea was not ready.<sup>77</sup> The tension over the eastern provinces continued to escalate over the summer of 1913.

Under these circumstances, with the intervention of the European powers and a Romanian invitation, peace talks between the Balkan allies commenced in Bucharest in early August and were finalized on 10 August in the Treaty of Bucharest. Ottoman proposals to take part in the conference were rejected by the Romanian delegation, as it was a conference only between the Balkan allies. This left the Bulgarians with only one alternative, to deal with the Ottomans bilaterally, which they were hoping to finalize with the support of the powers.<sup>78</sup> At the end of August, it became clear that a direct entente would take place between the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria, and that a Bulgarian delegation would soon arrive in Constantinople. Ottoman insistence in Adrianople and ensuring that they would not pass right of the Maritza River, with the exception of certain localities with military importance, put the powers at ease.

<sup>75</sup> TNA, FO 195/2453, Stock to Fitzmaurice, Constantinople, 29 July 1913.

<sup>76</sup> BBA, HRSYS 1866/6, Turkhan to Said Halim, St Petersburg, 2 July 1913.

<sup>77</sup> BBA, HRSYS 1866/6, Mahmud Mukhtar to Said Halim, Berlin, 20 August 1913; BBA, HRSYS 1866/6, Turkhan to Said Halim, St Petersburg, 2 July 1913; BBA, HRSYS 1866/6, Fahreddin to Said Halim, St Petersburg, 21 March 1914.

<sup>78</sup> Hall, *The Balkan Wars*, pp. 124–5.



Furthermore, in Bucharest, it was decided that the Greeks would keep Kavalla but leave Dedeagach to the Bulgarians under pressure from Grey, who insisted that Bulgaria should have at least one port on the Aegean.<sup>79</sup> The Russians, on the other hand, decided to prevent any further complications and therefore did not want to take individual action against the Ottoman Empire. An economic boycott, for Turkhan, Ottoman ambassador in St Petersburg, was not compatible with the prevailing European capitalist interests and nor was a naval demonstration with the tension escalating on the eastern borders.<sup>80</sup>

As a consequence, in early September, direct negotiations with Bulgaria started when Pallavicini, Austrian ambassador in Constantinople, informally used his influence in mediation. The Bulgarian delegation was led by Grigor Natchevitch and the Turkish delegation by Talat Bey (Pasha), Minister for the Interior. In the end, the final treaty was signed on 29 September, with the Ottomans regaining Adrianople, Kirkkilise and Demotika and the Bulgarians keeping Tirnova, Cisir-i Mustafapasha and Ortakoy.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, talks took place with the Greeks. The Treaty of Athens was signed on 14 November but relations did not improve and the question of the islands remained unresolved. The Serbian treaty, the second treaty of Constantinople, was signed on 14 March 1914 to bolster the London Treaty of 30 May 1913. No treaty was signed with Montenegro, as diplomatic relations were not resumed after the Treaty of London. It goes without saying that Bulgaria precipitated the Second Balkan War, but Greece and Serbia provoked it over Macedonian territories. This gave the Ottomans the chance to recapture Adrianople and the Romanians to capture the southern Dobrudzha. Regaining Adrianople was a major victory for the Ottomans because of its historical, strategic and ethnic significance. The loss of most of Macedonia was also a major disaster for the Bulgarians.

### Concluding remarks

For the Ottomans, the only way they could have avoided war would have been by granting autonomy to Macedonia and ceding Crete to Greece in the summer of 1912. More importantly, Ottoman diplomats knew maintaining the status quo would only be possible in the case of an Ottoman victory. Given the regional developments, as discussed in this study, politics on the eve of the war could not be passive, and by

<sup>79</sup> Helmreich, *Balkan Wars*, pp. 380–406.

<sup>80</sup> BBA, HRSYS 1866/6, Turkhan to Said Halim, St Petersburg, 31 August 1913.

<sup>81</sup> Kuneralp and Tokay (eds.), *Balkan Wars*, pp. 20–1; Hall, *Balkan Wars*, pp. 125–7.



the end of the war the problems for European diplomacy were even more severe. Furthermore, Russia had seemingly lost its prestige in the Balkans, while the establishment of a strong Serbia was a serious threat to the Habsburg Monarchy. For the Ottomans, now the biggest danger was a rapprochement between the Austrians and the Russians. With tension escalating in the eastern borders, there was always a possibility that the Russians would try to improve relations with the Dual-Monarchy to safeguard their western frontiers. This was more or less the picture on the eve of the Great War from the point of view of *Hariciye*, the Ottoman Foreign Ministry.

## 5 Mass violence against civilians during the Balkan Wars

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*Uğur Ümit Üngör*

On 17 October 1912, Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Bulgaria declared war on the Ottoman Empire. Out-powered, demoralized, unprepared and poorly equipped, the Ottoman army fought fourteen battles and lost them all, except for one. After the cessation of hostilities, the Empire was heavily truncated for good. The lands wrested from the Ottomans became the object of bitter contestation between Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria. Each of these nations formulated their own nationalist claims on the newly 'available' territory. Although there were clear distinctions between combatants and non-combatants, as the skirmishes unfolded into total warfare none of the armies respected this distinction and defenceless civilians were assaulted too: Muslims under Bulgarian and Greek rule, and Christians under Ottoman rule. Victims and contemporary journalists accused the Balkan armies in particular of systematic maltreatment of civilian populations, but atrocities were committed by all sides in the conflict. Bulgarian, Serbian, Greek and Ottoman forces committed mutual acts of violence including large-scale destruction and arson of villages, beatings and torture, forced conversions and indiscriminate mass killing of enemy non-combatants. This chapter will discuss these atrocities and their consequences, in order to address the overarching question: how did civilians experience the mass violence committed against them during the Balkan Wars? This chapter aims to answer this question by discussing the impact of the Balkan Wars on Ottoman Muslims. It will examine the persecution and expulsion of Ottoman Muslims in the Balkans by Serbian, Greek and Bulgarian forces, and sketch their ordeal as they were expelled to the rump Ottoman state. The chapter will examine how their experiences as refugees influenced them and Ottoman political culture.

In November 1912, the Bulgarian advance pushed the Ottoman army back to the trenches of Çatalca, 30 kilometres west of Istanbul. There, the onslaught was stopped and the imperial capital remained uncaptured. Warfare continued as two other important Ottoman cities were captured: the old imperial capital of Edirne [Adrianople] was besieged and taken by the Bulgarian army, and on 9 November 1912 the Ottoman garrison

surrendered the cradle of the Young Turks, Salonica, to the Greek army. The state of war lasted until the Treaty of London was signed on 30 May 1913, which dealt with territorial adjustments arising out of the conclusion of the war.<sup>1</sup> After the cessation of hostilities, the Empire was heavily truncated for good.

Although there were clear distinctions between combatants and non-combatants, as the skirmishes unfolded into total warfare none of the armies respected this distinction. Atrocities were committed by all sides in the conflict,<sup>2</sup> but contemporary journalists and victims accused the Bulgarian army in particular of systematic maltreatment of civilian populations.<sup>3</sup> The forces commanded by the Bulgarian generals Ivan Fichev (1860–1931), Vladimir Minchev Vazov (1868–1945) and Radko Dimitriev (1859–1918) committed acts of violence including large-scale destruction and arson of villages, beatings and torture, forced conversions and indiscriminate mass killing of Ottoman Muslims.<sup>4</sup> Leon Trotzki, at that time correspondent for the Russian newspaper *Kievskaya Mysl*, reported that the campaigns of ethnic cleansing and massacre were organized in particular by General Dimitriev, a man ‘deeply animated by those features of careerism including careless zeal and moral cynicism’. When his ambition to conquer as much territory as possible as fast as possible was frustrated by stubborn Ottoman defence, he ordered his troops to take prisoners no longer, and to execute all prisoners of war, included the wounded.<sup>5</sup>

For example, on 10 November 1912 Bulgarian *komitadjis* destroyed the villages of Maden, Topuklu and Davud, killing most inhabitants. The conservative Ottoman newspaper protested with outrage: ‘Will civilized Europe not notice savagery of this extent?’<sup>6</sup> In the following days, the carnage continued and gradually became more participatory. At first, Bulgarian civilians who refused to participate in the violence were pressured and threatened by the Bulgarian soldiers, who burnt some farms around

<sup>1</sup> For an analysis of the Ottoman involvement in the Balkan Wars from a military perspective see: Edward J. Erickson, *Defeat in Detail: The Ottoman Army in the Balkans, 1912–1913* (Westport CT: Praeger, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> Richard C. Hall, *The Balkan Wars, 1912–1913: Prelude to the First World War* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 136–8.

<sup>3</sup> George F. Kennan, *The Other Balkan Wars: A 1913 Carnegie Endowment Inquiry in Retrospect with a New Introduction and Reflection on the Present Record* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1993), pp. 109–35.

<sup>4</sup> Momchil Yonov, ‘Bulgarian Military Operations in the Balkan Wars’, in Béla K. Király and Dimitrije Djordjevic (eds.), *East Central European Society and the Balkan Wars* (Boulder CO: Social Science Monographs, 1987), pp. 63–84.

<sup>5</sup> Leo Trotzki, *Die Balkankriege 1912–13* (Essen: Arbeiterpresse Verlag, 1995, transl. Hannelore Georgi and Harald Schubärth), pp. 296–7.

<sup>6</sup> *Hikmet*, 11 November 1912, p. 4.

the town of Çorlu.<sup>7</sup> But popular participation in the expulsions and killings of Muslims increased when the Bulgarian authorities announced that Muslim properties, including farmland, would be distributed among the Bulgarians. This led to a significant rise in popular participation in violence.<sup>8</sup> The Serbian authorities, too, encouraged 'local police officers, secret agents and lawyers, to terrorize the Muslims and to make a calm life for them impossible'.<sup>9</sup> According to one Ottoman gendarmerie report from Ezine, the Serbian authorities confiscated, from 4 individuals, a total of 16,000 kuruş' worth of property and livestock in Priština. The Bulgarian authorities confiscated from only 13 individuals a total of 395,060 kuruş in the towns of Ipsala, Babaeski and Malkara.<sup>10</sup>

Besides confiscation, war crimes were another category of mass violence. According to one contemporary account, whenever Bulgarian forces captured Ottoman prisoners of war, they would frequently set the Christians free but execute certain numbers of the Muslims among them.<sup>11</sup> The violence also came to target culture. When the Greek army occupied Salonica, it prohibited all publications in Ottoman Turkish for an indefinite period of time.<sup>12</sup> Upon entering the town of Drama, the Bulgarian army converted all mosques into churches and took down signs of Islamic culture.<sup>13</sup> Since the fez was widely seen as a sign of Ottoman culture and allegiance to Istanbul, the hat was prohibited. As it was also an ethnic marker for Muslims, when the Bulgarian and Serbian armies invaded their home towns, Muslims hid their fezzes and wore hats instead, for example in Varna and Salonica.<sup>14</sup>

The Ottoman government then set up the 'Association for the Study of Oppression' (*Tetkik-i Mezalim Cemiyeti*), headed by the journalist Ahmed Cevad Emre, whose team was assigned with documenting the atrocities. The association's members in Edirne were a multi-ethnic group, headed by Reşit Saffet Atabinen, and manned by Faik Kaltakkıran, Hamdullah Suphi Tanrıöver, Mahmud Nedim Bey, Kalbiyos Efendi, Orfanides Efendi, the teacher Garabed, the lawyer Abraham Papazian, Hagop Sherbetjian and Chaim Bahores – in other words, four Muslims, two Greeks, three Armenians and a Jew. The committee produced reports that were

<sup>7</sup> *Hikmet*, 14 November 1912, p. 1. <sup>8</sup> *İkdam*, 5810, 25 April 1913, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Katrin Boeckh, *Von den Balkankriegen zum Ersten Weltkrieg: Kleinstaatenpolitik und ethnische Selbstbestimmung auf dem Balkan* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1996), pp. 165, 199.

<sup>10</sup> Ahmet Halaçoğlu, *Balkan Harbi Sırasında Rumeli'den Türk Göçleri (1912–1913)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1995), p. 43, see appendix document 4.

<sup>11</sup> Ahmed Cevad, *Balkanlarda Akan Kan* (Istanbul: Şamil, n.y.), pp. 118–19.

<sup>12</sup> *İkdam*, 5668, 30 November 1912, p. 2. <sup>13</sup> *İkdam*, 5689, 21 December 1912, p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Abdurrahim Dede, *Rumeli'nde Birakılanlar* (Istanbul: Otag Matbaası, 1975), pp. 151–70.

compiled, edited and published by Ahmed Cevad Emre as 'The Blood that flows in the Balkans' (*Balkanlarda Akan Kan*).<sup>15</sup> The plan backfired to some extent when radicals began using the content as propaganda for revenge acts. Victimized groups who fled to their 'ethnic brethren' with their stories of terror kindled counter-terror against populations associated with their victimizers. Thus, whereas Bulgarian army units ignited the campaigns of terror and ethnic cleansing, the responses of Greek and Ottoman forces against Bulgarian villages could be at least as violent.<sup>16</sup>

The territorial erosion of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans and in the Caucasus during the nineteenth century was a process that produced humiliation and refugee streams.<sup>17</sup> The total and permanent loss of the Balkan Peninsula in 1913, however, was a watershed that affected the very existence of the Empire. It is no exaggeration to state that the effect of the Balkan Wars on Ottoman society was nothing short of apocalyptic. The loss of many major Ottoman cities, property, human lives and face was unbearable to a proud Ottoman elite who were dismayed at the helplessness of the imperial army. The shock of the war would have a severe and lasting impact on Ottoman society, culture and identity. From 1913 on, the hitherto viable umbrella Ottoman identity was no longer seen as feasible by hardliners on either side of the political spectrum. Recent research on the Young Turk *coup d'état* of 23 January 1913 reveals a radical and activist Turkish-nationalist core around Dr Bahaeddin Shakir (1874–1922), Dr Mehmed Nâzım (1872–1926), Mehmed Talaat (1874–1921) and İsmail Enver (1881–1922), who definitively gave up hope of the ideal of Ottoman unity and inclusive citizenship after 1913.<sup>18</sup> Without their experience in the Balkan Wars, this radicalization does not seem to have been possible.

### The refugee crisis

The most immediate repercussion of the war was the refugee crisis. In the first half of 1913, Istanbul was bursting with hundreds of thousands

<sup>15</sup> Ahmed Cevad, *Balkanlarda Akan Kan* (Istanbul: Şamil, undated).

<sup>16</sup> Elçin Kürşat-Ahlers, 'Die Brutalisierung von Gesellschaft und Kriegsführung im Osmanischen Reich während der Balkankriege (1903–1914)', in Andreas Gestrich (ed.), *Gewalt im Krieg: Ausübung, Erfahrung und Verweigerung von Gewalt in Kriegen des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Lit-Verlag, 1995), pp. 51–74.

<sup>17</sup> For an introduction see: Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821–1922* (Princeton NJ: The Darwin Press, 1995), pp. 1–22.

<sup>18</sup> M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902–1908* (Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 173–81.

of refugees.<sup>19</sup> Newspaper articles provided vivid descriptions of the state of the refugees:

Refugees from the areas of Macedonia and Kosova are flocking here . . . It is reported that another group of 6000 people has set out from Salonica. Every ferry from Salonica brings 1200–1500 refugees. Most of them do not own anything else than the clothes they wear. The poor souls were forced to flee the calamity and tyranny without a stitch on.<sup>20</sup>

Inevitably, epidemics broke out among the refugees. For example, in October 1912 only, 2,549 cases of cholera were diagnosed; of this group, 1,479 people died, 1,044 recovered and 26 were under treatment.<sup>21</sup> The then mayor of Istanbul, Dr Cemil Topuzlu (1868–1958), wrote:

A few days after the declaration of war refugees came into our city. But what an arrival. All of them were miserable and forlorn (*sefil ve perişan*). These ill-fated people, packed together in clippers and trains, were disembarked at Sirkeci train station, hungry and unclothed. And then those who had taken the road on oxcarriage from their villages and towns. Although Istanbul's Directorate for Refugees would send a part of the Balkan War refugees bit by bit to Anatolia, despite this, we could not prevent that there would be a permanent group of 40–50 thousand sick and ragged in our city.<sup>22</sup>

The locals took pity on the vulnerable refugees. An Armenian man from Istanbul, Armenag Badalian, witnessed a refugee who wanted to buy bread in the central Beyoğlu district, and wrote angrily about the situation: 'With just a compass in their hands, these wretched people arrive at bakeries to buy bread . . . Why do the municipal officials, sitting fifty yards further, not see this? If they are treated like this close to municipal offices, imagine what is happening far away.'<sup>23</sup> But not all Ottomans were happy to receive and shelter refugees. A Greek man, Mikhail Grigoriadis, wrote a letter of complaint to the government to protest the settling of Balkan refugees in his farm in the Sivrihisar district.<sup>24</sup>

The truth was that the state was hopelessly overstretched in its attempt to cover the refugees' needs. The Ottoman government had to allocate an enormous array of resources to transport, house, feed, educate, equip,

<sup>19</sup> The best study on the Muslim refugees remains: Ahmet Halaçoğlu, *Balkan Harbi Sırasında Rumeli'den Türk Göçleri (1912–1913)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1995).

<sup>20</sup> *Alemdar*, 10 January 1913, p. 2. <sup>21</sup> *Alemdar*, 25 October 1912, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> Cemil Topuzlu, *İstibdat-Meşrutiyet-Cumhuriyet Devirlerinde 80 Yıllık Hatıralarım*, ed. Hüsrev Hatemi and Aykut Kazancıgil (Istanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Cerrahpaşa Tıp Fakültesi Yayınları, 1982), p. 124.

<sup>23</sup> *Alemdar*, 19 February 1913, p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi* (Ottoman archives, hereafter cited as BOA), DH.İD 85/41, 18 January 1913.

employ and clothe the refugees. Philanthropic associations such as the 'Association for Muslim Refugees from the Balkans' provided relief for the refugee community, which almost exclusively consisted of Muslims. Empty houses were requisitioned for the refugees, some of whom slept in Istanbul's Sirkeci train station. The government saw no other choice than to transform mosques temporarily into shelters. In Istanbul more than ninety mosques were initially furnished as sanctuaries. The large Nuru Osmaniye Mosque was filled to the brim already on 27 October 1913.<sup>25</sup> According to the Ottoman Red Crescent, the refugees were mainly housed in mosques, for example 125 families in the Edirnekapi mosque, 107 families in the Sultan Selim mosque and 86 families in the Murad Pasha mosque. Prominent mosques such as the Aya Sofia and the Sultan Ahmed (the Blue Mosque) were not spared either. Initially, another 643 families (2,798 people) were sheltered in makeshift huts on the outskirts of Istanbul.<sup>26</sup> Children, with or without parents, were a major concern for the government. Near the Tophane barracks, 60 poorly clad children were provided with shirts, socks, fezzes, handkerchiefs, robes and overalls, as well as alphabets and religious booklets for their education.<sup>27</sup> As Eyal Ginio cogently discusses in his chapter in this volume, the CUP instrumentalized childhood during the crisis by assigning symbolic and practical roles to children. The children's victimization was seen as a baptism of fire through which they would become 'future Turks', members of a future nation hardened by the violent struggle for existence.

If the sight of the refugees was not bad enough, the stories and trauma they brought to the capital added fuel to the fire. The horror stories were met with disbelief and rage in the Ottoman press. One commentator on the refugees' fate bewailed how 'our motherland was trampled on by the muddy boots of the poorest enemies. Our coreligionist brothers and compatriots were slaughtered in the thousands like sheep.'<sup>28</sup> The feminist and nationalist author Halide Edib (1884–1964) wrote:

The spectacle of Moslem refugees, men and women and children, fleeing from the fire and sword of the enemy; the slaying of prisoners of war, their mutilation and starvation; atrocities and massacres perpetrated on the civil population – the first of their kind in twentieth century warfare – inflicted wounds far deeper than the defeat itself.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *Alemdar*, 27 October 1912, p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> *Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1329–1331 Salnâmesi* (Istanbul: Ahmed İhsan ve Şürekâsı Matbaacılık Osmanlı Şirketi, 1915), pp. 220–5.

<sup>27</sup> *İkdam*, 22 September 1913, p. 4.

<sup>28</sup> *Balkan Harbında neden Münhazim Olduk?* (Istanbul: n.p., 1913), p. 95.

<sup>29</sup> Halide Edib, *Conflict of East and West in Turkey* (Delhi: Jamia Press, 1935), p. 80.

The British consul in Salonica witnessed the process of forced migration and reported about the refugees:

The result of the massacre of Muslims at the beginning of the war, of the looting of their goods in the ensuing months, of the settling of Christians in their villages, of their persecution by Christian neighbours, of their torture and beating by Greek troops, has been the creation of a state of terror among the Islamic population. Their one desire is to escape from Macedonia and to be again in a free land . . . They arrive in Turkey with the memory of their slaughtered friends and relations fresh in their minds, they remember their own sufferings and the persecutions of which they have been victims, and finding themselves without means or resources, encouraged to some extent by their own government, they see no wrong in falling on the Greek Christians of Turkey and meting out to them the same treatment that they themselves have received from the Greek Christians of Macedonia.<sup>30</sup>

A major part of the refugee crisis was the catastrophic consequence of the war for women. The Bulgarian forays into the Thracian countryside and the Bulgarian occupation in general spelled persecution and terror, accompanied as it often was by rape of women.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, the large-scale victimization of Ottoman Muslim women, both for being Muslims and for being women, was widely known among the public. For example, Ömer Seyfeddin wrote an essay based on interviews with refugees about the behaviour of the Bulgarian Major Radko Balkaneski, a graduate of Galatasaray Lycée in Istanbul and the Sofia Military Academy. Major Radko raided the town of Serres, disarmed the Muslim population and ordered his men to gather the prettiest Turkish girls. A dozen girls were brought in from the nearby villages of Cuma and Osenova and stripped naked in front of him. Two girls were pretty but they were famished and had contracted malaria. The other girls 'were real village girls, with thick arms, legs, and hips'. Radko fed them wine and brandy and distributed them to his men, who raped the girls until they were no longer of use. Because of shame and guilt, surviving women often committed suicide.<sup>32</sup> Those who did make it to Istanbul awaited a difficult future: poverty, homelessness and exploitation by men were all possibilities. The Ottoman government wanted to make sure that girls' rights were respected and it therefore issued the order on 13 November 1912 'in no way to permit girls to be taken as housemaids under the pretext

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Mark Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims and Jews, 1430–1950* (London: HarperCollins, 2004), pp. 338–9.

<sup>31</sup> *Rumeli Mezâlimi ve Bulgar Vahşetleri* (Istanbul: Rumeli Muhâcirin-i İslâmiyye Cemiyeti, 1913), p. 49.

<sup>32</sup> Nesîme Ceyhan, *Balkan Savaşı Hikâyeleri* (Istanbul: Selis, 2006), pp. 217–20.



of adoption'.<sup>33</sup> What is certain is that Ottoman Muslim women suffered very serious social consequences as a result of the Balkan Wars. Whether the inability of Ottoman men to protect their womenfolk gave rise to a crisis of masculinity remains a subject for future study. As for the children, Eyal Ginio convincingly argues in his chapter that the Ottoman elites' concept of childhood changed as a result of the violence of the Balkan Wars. If we follow this logic, both developments go a long way to explain the fate of women and children during the Great War as both symbols and targets of violence.<sup>34</sup>

### The elites as victims

The effect on the Young Turks in particular was formidable as their families were overrepresented among the Balkan refugees. The Young Turk leadership predominantly originated from three areas: Salonica,<sup>35</sup> the area from Monastir (Bitola) to Ohrid and the area around Pristina in Kosovo, which were now under Greek and Serbian rule.<sup>36</sup> Young Turk leaders such as Mehmed Talaat (1874–1921), Mustafa Abdülhalik Renda (1881–1957), Mehmed Cavid (1875–1926), the up-and-coming officer Mustafa Kemal (1881–1938) and many others now became refugees with their extended families.

Two of these elite refugees merit particular attention for the paramilitary violence that would be unleashed hereafter, starting with Dr Mehmed Nâzım (1872–1926). Born and raised in a prominent and economically successful Muslim family of Salonica, he joined the Young Turk movement in 1889 and made it to director of a hospital in the city. His family had been living in Salonica for generations and ran lucrative businesses in the city. He later became a member of the CUP's Central Committee, and even made it to Secretary-General of the party. When Salonica was surrendered in October 1912, he was arrested for being a Turkish nationalist and jailed without due process for eleven months in a cell in Athens. The guards maltreated Dr Nâzım there, claiming that his family had been exterminated, that the Greek flag was flying over

<sup>33</sup> *Takvim-i Vekayi*, nu: 584, 31 Tesrin-i Evvel 1912, 13 November 1912, p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> Uğur Ümit Üngör, 'Orphans, Converts, and Prostitutes: Social Consequences of War and Persecution in the Ottoman Empire, 1914–1923', *War in History*, 19, 2 (2012), pp. 173–92.

<sup>35</sup> Selim İlkin & İlhan Tekeli, 'İttihat ve Terakki Hareketinin Oluşumunda Selanik'in Toplumsal Yapısının Belirleyiciliği', in Osman Okyar and Halil İnalcık (eds.), *Türkiye'nin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Tarihi (1071–1920): Social and Economic History of Turkey (1071–1920)* (Ankara: Meteksan, 1980), pp. 351–82.

<sup>36</sup> Erik-Jan Zürcher, 'The Young Turks – Children of the Borderlands?', *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, 9 (2003), pp. 275–86.

'Constantinople' and that it was only a matter of time before Anatolia would be a Greek country as well. Only when the Young Turk regime requested the release of their brother-in-arms was Nâzım transferred to the seaport of İzmir. Exile from his home town and the sight of his hapless family, including his baby daughter, deeply upset him. Dr Nâzım began writing newspaper articles, exposing and publicizing Bulgarian atrocities against Muslims and calling for vengeance against the remaining Ottoman Christians.<sup>37</sup> During World War I he became one of the main architects of the genocide of Ottoman Armenians.

Another important Young Turk leader was Dr Bahaeddin Shakir (1874–1922). He was born in Thrace and enjoyed his medical education at the Military Medical Academy in Istanbul. After joining the Young Turk party in 1906 he moved to Paris where he continued his activism, for example by approaching Ottoman students at Sorbonne University's Department of Chemistry for help in making bombs. After returning to Istanbul he became one of the most influential members of the CUP's Central Committee in 1912. During the Balkan Wars he was trapped in besieged Edirne as the head physician of the city's hospital. The Bulgarians arrested and incarcerated him, but he was released later. It is plausible that his personal brutalization and political ruthlessness was a result of his experiences in the Balkans. Shakir's closeness to Talaat quickly allowed him to concentrate power, exemplified by the fact that he was charged with (re-)organizing paramilitary units in 1914. For his pivotal role in the persecution of the Armenians, he was shot dead in Berlin on 17 April 1922 by Aram Yerganian, an Armenian hit man and member of the revanchist organization Nemesis.<sup>38</sup>

The wars had not only accelerated the long-term shift of the empire's demographic composition in favour of Muslims. Their loss also bolstered the myth of the Christian 'stab in the back', as part of a general discourse of non-Muslim treason and disloyalty. Advocates of this emerging doctrine invoked crude generalizations of the conduct of non-Muslim Ottomans during the Balkan Wars, against convincing evidence to the contrary.<sup>39</sup> Revanchism was cast in the crucible of the Balkan Wars. In a letter to his wife, dated 8 May 1913, Enver Pasha wrote, 'If I could tell you of the savagery the enemy has inflicted . . . a stone's throw from Istanbul, you would understand the things that enter the heads of poor Muslims

<sup>37</sup> Ahmet Eyicil, *İttihad ve Terakki Liderlerinden Doktor Nâzım Bey 1872–1926* (Ankara: Gün, 2004), pp. 130–2, 153.

<sup>38</sup> Hikmet Çiçek, *Dr. Bahattin Şakir: İttihat ve Terakki'den Teşkilatı Mahsusa'ya bir Türk Jakobeni* (İstanbul: Kaynak, 2004).

<sup>39</sup> Eyal Ginio, 'Mobilizing the Ottoman Nation during the Balkan Wars (1912–1913): Awakening from the Ottoman Dream', *War in History*, 12, 2 (2005), pp. 156–77.

far away. But our anger is strengthening: revenge, revenge, revenge; there is no other word.’<sup>40</sup> In a personal letter to a German friend, he wrote: ‘Pour sentir plus amèrement toutes les blessures et se préparer pour une vengeance plus cruelle, je veux que toutes les générations prochaines sentent les hontes que nous portons et se venge plus durement envers nos ennemis.’<sup>41</sup> In a discussion with one of his confidants, the Pasha was even more outspoken:

How could anyone forget the plains, the meadows, watered with the blood of our forefathers; abandon those places where Turkish raiders had stalled their steeds for a full four hundred years, with our mosques, our tombs, our dervish lodges, our bridges and our castles, to leave them to our slaves, to be driven out of Rumelia to Anatolia: this is beyond a man’s endurance. I am prepared to sacrifice gladly the remaining years of my life to take revenge on the Bulgarians, the Greeks and the Montenegrins.<sup>42</sup>

The 1914 opening address of parliament was equally rancorous and emotional: ‘Do not forget! Do not forget beloved Salonica, the cradle of the flame of Liberty and Constitutional Government, do not forget green Monastir, Kosovo, İşkodra, Yanya and all of beautiful Rumelia.’ The emotional deputies exclaimed: ‘We shall not forget!’<sup>43</sup>

The emotions of Young Turk elites expelled from their ancestral lands included humiliation, helplessness, anger, loss of dignity, lack of self-confidence, anxiety, embarrassment, shame: a toxic mix that, combined together, contributed to the growth of collective hate and destruction fantasies. Besides these objective effects, the subjective perception of the tragedy in the minds of the Young Turks merits perhaps even more attention. For them, the loss of power and prestige shattered the conventional myth of an Ottoman identity and Islamic superiority. One contemporary commented that for the Young Turks ‘it was especially difficult to be forced to live under the rule of their own former subjects after having been the dominant element for hundreds of years’.<sup>44</sup> The fear of being ruled by historical enemies was a theme even before the Balkan Wars, when the Young Turk press published widely read articles with a deeply defeatist tone:

<sup>40</sup> M. Şükrü Hanioglu (ed.), *Kendi Mektuplarında Enver Paşa* (Istanbul: Der, 1989), p. 242.

<sup>41</sup> Enver to a German friend, 2 April 1913, in *ibid.*, p. 237. ‘In order to feel more bitterly all the injuries and to prepare for a crueller vengeance, I want all the next generations to feel the shame which we bear and to avenge themselves severely against our enemies.’

<sup>42</sup> Hüsamettin Ertürk, *İki Devrin Perde Arkası*, ed. Samih N. Tansu (Istanbul: Batur, 1964), p. 121.

<sup>43</sup> Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasal Partiler*, vol. III, p. 465.

<sup>44</sup> Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, vol. II, part III, p. 250.

Serbia, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Crete were lost. Right now the grand [dear] Rumelia is about to be lost and in one or two years Istanbul will be gone as well. The holy Islam and the esteemed Ottomanism will be moved to Kayseri. Kayseri will become our capital, Mersin our port, Armenia and Kurdistan our neighbors, and Muscovites our masters. We will become their slaves. Oh! Is it not shameful for us! How can the Ottomans who once ruled the world become servants to their own shepherds, slaves, and servants?<sup>45</sup>

After 1913, the Young Turk nightmare indeed came true as many of them became traumatized victims of ethnic cleansing. Their behaviour and political decision-making therefore was based on fear and resentment, and was aimed at gaining security for their families and, ultimately, for their nation and state.

### Defeatism and revanchism

Alongside a ‘culture of defeat’, the wars generated a ‘culture of revanchism’. Istanbul was buzzing with newspaper articles, theatre plays and all kinds of political commentary denouncing both the Balkan nations and the ‘Christian West’ that kept its silence on the violence against Muslims. (The Archbishop of Canterbury, for example, had denounced the 1895 massacres of Armenians but held his peace when the Balkan Muslims suffered a similar fate in 1912.<sup>46</sup>) The defeats were the talk of the day and their consequences were visible in daily life on the streets. The poet Cenap Şahabeddin (1871–1934), for example, wrote a call for ruthlessness:

The reason for our loss of the Great Balkans is . . . because we cherish culture, and we are too courteous and sensitive in the fields of law, humanity, and civilization. The Bulgarian mode of action has taught us that any unit that sets off into the field needs to return to the days of barbarism. We need to internalize the desire for bloodshed. We must be harsh and insensitive in order to chop up children, women, the elderly, the weak. With no respect for the property, life and honour of others. If we follow this path, then we will be accepted in the civilized world, just like the Bulgarian hordes of King Ferdinand.<sup>47</sup>

The resentment expressed in these lines materialized very soon. A new readiness for violence emerged, one that was based on the transgression of existing norms of law, humanity and ‘honour’. The ethical rule was now

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Nader Sohrabi, ‘Global Waves, Local Actors: What the Young Turks Knew about Other Revolutions and Why it Mattered’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 44, 1 (2002), pp. 45–79, p. 64.

<sup>46</sup> Carmichael, *Genocide Before the Holocaust*, p. 76.

<sup>47</sup> Ahmed Emin Yalman, *Yakın Tarihte Gördüklerimiz ve Geçirdiklerimiz*, vol. I: 1888–1922 (Istanbul: Pera Turizm ve Ticaret, 1997), p. 194.

reversed: instead of 'Do to others what you would like to be done to you', the Young Turks were now, more than ever, prepared to 'Do to others what they have done to you.' Chairman of the Ottoman parliament, Halil Menteşe (1874–1948) bitterly concluded at the end of the Balkan Wars: 'In international affairs there is no place for justice and morality. There, only aggressive self-interest dominates. It was like this yesterday, today too, and tomorrow it will be like that as well.'<sup>48</sup>

Resentful reactions like these came to dominate Ottoman political discourse towards the Balkan nations as well as the great European powers. The conservative newspaper *Hikmet* ran a sardonic article on violence and civilization, denouncing the alleged hypocrisy of Europe:

These new 'civilizations' (!) brought to our city are especially applied on Muslims and Jews. The [European] consuls are surprised about whom to complain to regarding the daily Inquisition scenes they are witnessing. It has become impossible to rescue mosques and synagogues from the Bulgarians and Greeks, who are after all, well known for their devotion to civilization.<sup>49</sup>

The tone of these articles turned increasingly acerbic, with dark, even cynical humour, which did not bode well for the future. This depressed resignation about the fate of the country most of all denoted a loss of any willingness to reconcile with enemies later on. But this was not all there was to the victimization process. The conflict also raised existential questions about the nature and future of the country.

The young Ottoman journalist Falih Rıfkı Atay had been through the Balkan Wars and later became a secretary to Minister of Navy Cemal Pasha. In the aftermath of the Balkan Wars, he noted in his diary:

When they took Belgrade from us, the enemy delegations also wanted Niš. The Ottoman delegation stood up: 'That's it, what, you want Istanbul too?' For our forefathers Niš was so close to Istanbul. We thought that the Turkish people would not survive if we would abandon Vardar, Tripoli, Crete and Medina. I did not know Turkey, when I took the train from Haydarpaşa to the most distant provinces . . . Our illusions about Istanbul, Cairo, Jerusalem, Damascus, Aleppo and Baghdad were being abandoned and we began to worry about our own lives. I always wondered, will they also enter Istanbul?<sup>50</sup>

Atay's anxiety reflected a much broader existential problem of the Ottoman state. Where could the Ottoman Empire legitimately rule? If the Serbs, Greeks and Bulgarians shook off Ottoman rule, then this could

<sup>48</sup> Halil Menteşe, *Osmanlı Mebusan Meclisi Reisi Halil Menteşe'nin Anıları* (Istanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı, 1986), p. 158.

<sup>49</sup> *Hikmet*, 133, 13 December 1912.

<sup>50</sup> Falih Rıfkı Atay, *Zeytinadağı* (Istanbul: Dünya, 1957), p. 10.

have been seen as a precedent for the Armenians, Kurds, Arabs – these three being the largest remaining minorities in the Ottoman Empire.

There is sufficient evidence to substantiate the claim that revanchism was not merely an elite affair but was widely disseminated into society. In an autobiography published in 1950, the noted essayist Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar (1901–62) expressed this popularization of vengeance in literary non-fiction: ‘It was that desperately feverish year in which the Balkan Wars came to an end. We children were immersed in the bitterness of a defeat which we could accept no more than the adults, who had learned to bow their heads with their gaze averted. Every song spoke of strange vengeance marches.’<sup>51</sup> Another contemporary Ottoman author summarized the Balkan drama as follows:

The people of the Balkans turned Rumelia into a slaughterhouse for Turks . . . The Turks have not forgotten this pain. By retelling the story to students at school, to children at home, to soldiers in the barracks, Turks have awoken a national spirit, a national grudge. They have infected people with a spirit that longs one day to settle accounts for the humiliation and oppression suffered by Turkdom. On maps Rumelia now appears in black. The entire army is urged to avenge its besmirched honour. Soldiers went to training every day singing the song: ‘In 1328 Turkish honour was sullied, alas. Alas, alas, alas, revenge!’ Soldiers returning to their villages would sow more seeds by singing this song.<sup>52</sup>

These were more than just words as a severe crisis raged within Ottoman society. At that time, non-Muslim religious leaders of Eastern Thrace were petitioning the Interior Ministry to complain about the harassment they were constantly enduring from Muslims exacting revenge for their losses. These petitions reported an unprecedented atmosphere of hatred and revenge reigning in Thrace.<sup>53</sup> German diplomatic and military personnel, present in the Ottoman interior, were keenly aware of this backlash. A month after the outbreak of hostilities, Ambassador Wangenheim wrote to Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg: ‘The Turkish provocative activity has increased lately. Since the Balkan war, a great number of agents has been sent into various regions of Asia Minor, where they are carrying on a violent propaganda against the Christians.’<sup>54</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *Sahnenin Dışındakiler* (Istanbul: Dergâh, 1973), p. 54. For an analysis of this novel from the perspectives of historiography and literary theory see: Erdağ M. Göknar, ‘Ottoman Past and Turkish Future: Ambivalence in A. H. Tanpınar’s *Those outside the Scene*’, *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 102, 2/3 (2003), pp. 647–61.

<sup>52</sup> Mehmet Cemil Bilsel, *Lozan* (Istanbul: Ahmet İhsan, 1933), vol. I, p. 126.

<sup>53</sup> *BOA*, DH.ŞFR 39/163, Talaat to Edirne, 5 April 1914.

<sup>54</sup> *Politisches Archiv Auswärtiges Amt* (German National Archives, hereafter cited as *PAAA*), R14082, Ambassador Wangenheim to Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg, 15 November 1913.

As the crisis deepened, some Ottomans foresaw the looming cataclysm. The Armenian newspaper *Azadamard* not only summarized the sentiments of many Ottoman Armenians but also provided a fairly accurate account of the impact of the refugee crisis:

If it is imagined that they will be sent to towns populated by Armenians, it is conceivable that, because they attribute the causes of the disaster of the Balkan war and the disaster they were subjected to on the Balkan Christians, they may attempt to exact revenge, and because they may not understand the difference between Bulgarians and Ottoman Armenians, and if they are nevertheless sent to places inhabited by Christians, we declare that this could cause a new set of difficulties.<sup>55</sup>

After the conclusion of the Balkan Wars, the CUP stepped up from behind the political scenes and gradually imposed a ruthless authoritarian regime upon the empire. By the end of 1913, the CUP government had firmly established itself as a dictatorship. Enver Pasha promoted himself to general and became Minister of War. The new cabinet stood under the auspices of Talaat Pasha, who went from party boss to Interior Minister. This lent these revolutionaries legitimacy and transposed the severely depacified political culture to Anatolia, causing what may be called 'the Balkanization of Anatolia'. Their experience of warfare in the Balkans was transplanted into the offices of the Ottoman government. By the beginning of 1914, the CUP regime launched a large-scale expulsion programme of the Ottoman Greeks in the west of the country. As a test case for large-scale nationalist expulsion, the 1914 campaign restructured the horizon of the Young Turks. It made realizable the politically unrealizable and unimaginable. In this period, the liberal politician Lütü Fikri Bey wrote in his diary:

Despite the battle fought, alliance with Greece is necessary, because our common enemy is Bulgaria. Therefore, we need to forget our history for the security of the fatherland. Furthermore, we will benefit from this agreement, because we will achieve a good relationship with our Greek population. Approximately two million of them will still remain with us. Surely they cannot be all expelled into the Aegean Sea? It is obvious that the Unionists cannot continue with this policy.<sup>56</sup>

But Fikri was wrong, as much more than that expulsion was possible. In his 1913 book on the Balkan Wars, Aram Andonian (1875–1952) wrote with considerable concern that 'the principle of nationality' had spelled disaster in the Balkans and was utterly untenable in the eastern provinces,

<sup>55</sup> Quoted in *Alemdar*, 93–158 (14 November 1913), p. 3.

<sup>56</sup> Yücel Demirel (ed.), *Lütü Fikri Bey'in Günlüğü* (Istanbul: Arma, 1991), p. 78.

where most Armenians lived.<sup>57</sup> Andonian had planned to write a second volume to his book. He was never able to do so, because he was deported in April 1915 along with one million Armenians.

### Discussion

The consequences of massacre and expulsion on the Balkans strained the relationship between Muslims and Christians at all levels. From the political elites down to the ordinary people on the ground, polarization sharpened as extremists were keen on driving the groups apart. Young Turk radicals broadcast propaganda to spread fear and hatred towards Ottoman Christians. Social interaction between Muslims and Christians decreased in major cities, provincial towns and villages. The extremists also targeted moderates, intimidating and silencing the political centre.<sup>58</sup> This propaganda signalled to Ottoman Muslims, including the refugees, that acts of revenge would be overlooked or tacitly condoned. As a result, there was a sharp rise in anti-Christian violence in the remnant territories. For example, the Greek bishop of the Eastern Thracian town of Çorlu complained that Balkan refugees had attacked the Greek church, stolen clothes and oil lamps, and violated women. In order to soothe the situation, the refugees were moved to a Muslim village, where they were provided with basic necessities.<sup>59</sup> But the relative deprivation of the refugees and the resentment of the elites simmered. Most of all, the Young Turk elite's perception that the catastrophe of the Balkans should never be allowed to happen to the remaining territories of the Ottoman Empire, especially the eastern provinces, would give birth to unprecedented forms of violence. One major outcome of these processes was a deep fear, or perhaps a complex, of loss. The fear of losing territory became a veritable phobia of late Ottoman political culture.

With the luxury of hindsight, many Turkish historians have dubbed the period 1912–23 the 'Ten Year's War' (*on yıllık harb*). They drew little or no distinction between the Balkan Wars, the First World War and the 'War of Liberation', although each was divided from the others by a break of at least a year.<sup>60</sup> For them, the unifying motive in these wars was the 'salvation' of the Ottoman Empire, which was struggling in an existential battle for its very existence. When the Balkan Wars erupted, however,

<sup>57</sup> Aram Andonian, *Balkan Savaşı* (Istanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 1999, transl. Zaven Biberian).

<sup>58</sup> George W. Gawrych, 'The Culture and Politics of Violence in Turkish Society, 1903–14', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 22, 3 (1986), pp. 307–30.

<sup>59</sup> BOA, DH.EUM.EMN 72/39, 16 April 1914.

<sup>60</sup> İsmet Görgülü, *On Yıllık Harbin Kadrosu 1912–1922 (Balkan-Birinci Dünya ve İstiklâl Harbi)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1993).



not even the most astute commentators were able to foresee the imperial apocalypse that was looming over the empire. Contemporary observers such as Ottoman intellectuals, the officer corps and rank-and-file soldiers did not perceive that apparent single continuum of conflict and crisis. Many Ottomans believed that the Balkan Wars and ensuing violence against and humiliations of Muslim civilians were the worst things that had ever happened to the empire. They believed that the inevitability of separatist nationalism had now caught up with the empire that finally had to face these realities. Within five years, the Ottomans would witness a series of events that were experienced as even more apocalyptic and shocking: the fall of the historical city Erzurum, the loss of the holy cities of Jerusalem, Mecca and Madina, as well as the occupation of the major cities Istanbul, Baghdad, Aleppo and Smyrna/İzmir.

## 6 War, civic mobilization and the Ottoman home-front during the Balkan Wars: the case of children

*Eyal Ginio*

On 29 Kânun-ı Sâni 1328 (11 February 1913), a petition arrived at the Municipal Committee for the Settling of Refugees (*İşkân-ı Muhacirin Komisyonu*) in Istanbul.<sup>1</sup> The applicant was a youngster named Tahsin. In his petition he described his plight since the outbreak of the First Balkan War. He recounted that he was a native of İpsala, a small town situated in the province of Edirne, and mentioned that he was a primary school graduate. When the Bulgarian enemy conquered his native town two months previously, he continued, his family hastily left their native city with the general flight, hoping to reach safety in Anatolia. On the way, his father passed away while he lost his mother in the general confusion that reigned among the desperate refugees.

Tahsin was able to reach Istanbul with his younger brother, Ziya. As his brother had been a student in the high school (*mekteb-i sultanî*) in Edirne prior to the outbreak of war, he was sent by the local authorities to a similar school in Bursa. Tahsin was left all alone. He applied to the Ministry of Education and Forestry to be enrolled, free of charge as a boarding student, in one of the schools in Istanbul or in the industrial school. However, his application was turned down on the basis of his age and lack of sufficient previous education. We learn from the subsequent correspondence between the committee and the Ministry of Education that the reason for this refusal was the fact that he had not graduated from a secondary school.

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<sup>1</sup> This committee was founded by the municipality of Istanbul following the outbreak of the Balkan Wars. Ahmet Halaçoğlu, *Balkan Harbi sırasında Rumeli'den Türk Göçleri (1912-1913)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1995), p. 108. The Ottoman official gazette, the *Takvim-i Vekayi*, published lists of abandoned or orphaned children who arrived in Istanbul because of the ongoing war and were sent by the same committee to the Poorhouse (Darül'aceze) until their legal guardians could collect them. See, for example, the name of İsmail ibn-i Hasan, aged four, who arrived from Kırkkilise (Kırklareli in Turkey): *Takvim-i Vekayi*, 7 Kânun-ı Evvel 1328/ 20 December 1912.

Tahsin, the applicant, decided at this stage to involve the committee that dealt with the refugees' ordeals: 'Only three months previously, I was a member of a rather big family. Now, because of the war, I am in a state of ruin and distraction.' He implored the committee to find him a suitable school that would take charge of his education and his daily needs, signing his application as 'Tahsin, one of the refugees of İpsala; an orphan from his father and forsaken by his mother and one who was left with no relative to protect him; one that needs compassion and assistance.'<sup>2</sup>

His ordeal as recorded in administrative correspondence is rare testimony given by an adolescent, describing suffering during the Balkan Wars (October 1912–August 1913). His petition reminds us of the grim effects of the war and its resulting consequences, including extensive displacement and loss of parents, on the young. It also indicates his ingenious survival strategies and his attempt to influence his own fate positively by approaching the state and charitable organizations asking them for compassion and help. Tahsin's ordeal was shared by many other children living in regions devastated by the Balkan Wars.<sup>3</sup> This chapter aims to explore the Ottoman literature for and of children as part of the Ottoman literature of defeat that appeared during and after the Balkan Wars. By studying this literature we gain access to contemporary debates and discourses not only about the changing images and roles of children and childhood, but also regarding the future of Ottoman state and society following the unprecedented defeat in the Balkan Wars.

Jo Boyden and Joanna de Berry claim that 'it is now a fairly well established axiom of sociology and anthropology that childhood and youth are social rather than biological constructs'.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, the expectations and understanding of children's roles in society went through various changes in the late Ottoman period as part of the modernization process in Ottoman urban societies.<sup>5</sup> As in the belligerent nations during the First World War, children – symbolic and real – were central to adults' assessment of war and their own situation. Because of their assumed vulnerability, purity, innocence and promise for the future, children were perceived as symbols of war; both as victims of the enemy's brutality and

<sup>2</sup> Başbakanlık Arşivi, DH-MTV 40/2/76, 28 Kânun-ı Sâni 1328 [11 February 1913].

<sup>3</sup> On the treatment of refugees during the Balkan Wars, see the contribution of Uğur Ümit Üngör in this volume (Chapter 5, pp. 76–91).

<sup>4</sup> Jo Boyden and Joanna de Berry, 'Introduction', in Jo Boyden and Joanna de Berry (eds.), *Children and Youth on the Front Line: Ethnology, Armed Conflict and Displacement* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), p. xxi.

<sup>5</sup> See Fruma Zachs, 'Towards a Children's History in Ottoman Syria in the 19th Century: Debates on Parenthood and Education', in Eyal Ginio and Elie Podeh (eds.), *The Ottoman Middle East: Studies in Honor of Amnon Cohen* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 113–28.

as future citizens who, through their sacrifice and participation in the war effort at home, represented the greatness of the mobilized nation, its cohesiveness and its future.<sup>6</sup>

The Balkan Wars drew attention to the needs of children and fostered the development of governmental and civil organizations dedicated to providing relief for children in need. Providing assistance to refugees became one of the main stimulations shaping the Ottoman home-front during these conflicts. However, before turning to describe children's tasks as they appeared in Ottoman writings during the Balkan Wars, a brief introduction on the changing perceptions of children and childhood during the late Ottoman period is needed.

### **Perceptions of childhood and children's welfare prior to the Balkan Wars**

The emergence of a new state's policy towards children was already evident during the Hamidian period (1876–1908), when paternal imagery representing the incumbent sultan and charity bestowed upon children were perceived as an efficient tool to reach wider sections of society, to achieve legitimacy and to strengthen the regime's influence over the domestic sphere.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, childcare became a contested arena in which opposing players attempted to gain supremacy. Nadir Özbek argues that the charitable activity of Sultan Abdülhamit II became one of the main arenas in which the Hamidian regime was constantly condemned and challenged by growing domestic opposition and from foreign organizations (mainly European missionaries). The latter often criticized the newly founded institutions, claiming that they were corrupt and poorly administrated. To fend off what was perceived as meddling by Western missionaries, the Ottomans endeavoured to shape and to expand their own infrastructure of charity aimed at Muslim children.<sup>8</sup>

Following the overthrow of Abdülhamit II in 1908 by the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) (also known as the Young Turks), domestic politics in the Ottoman Empire radically shifted. In addition to the emerging of a parliamentary system based on elections, a free press

<sup>6</sup> Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in World War I* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 213–14.

<sup>7</sup> Nadir Özbek, 'The Politics of Poor Relief in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1876–1914', *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 21 (1999), p. 18.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*; Nazan Maksudyan, 'Modernization of Welfare or Further Deprivation? State Provisions for Foundlings in the Late Ottoman Empire', *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 2, 3 (2009), pp. 361–92.

flourished and, to popularize the new regime's ideology and vision and to expand its popular support, various voluntary charitable societies were founded.<sup>9</sup> These societies were instrumental in mobilizing civilians to the national cause as defined by the regime. In addition, following the abrogation of Hamidian censorship by the new revolutionary government, the new and unprecedented freedom of the press created a vibrant public sphere served by a plethora of publications. Some of these were designated for children and their education. Publicists debated how children were to be raised and educated in order to become productive and loyal citizens.<sup>10</sup>

The need to mobilize the civilian population emerged almost immediately after the Young Turk Revolution to meet external threats. The regime used various methods: public demonstrations, fund-raising for sundry war-related activities and economic boycott campaigns were all used to mobilize society, including children. In addition, the Ottoman state assumed new roles in the lives of its citizens. This change reflected the Young Turks' modernization project. Tahsin's appeal to the state for assistance reflects a growing awareness of the Young Turk regime having introduced measures for child protection as part of its stated mission to bring about the modernization of the state according to 'universal principles' (labelled by the Ottomans *medeniyet*). For the late Ottoman elites, protecting needy children was portrayed not only as a religious obligation to the poor, but also as a patriotic and civic duty that could testify to the Ottoman Empire's capacity to conform with Western standards and, therefore, be considered modern and 'civilized'.<sup>11</sup>

Prior to the Balkan Wars, the incumbent government attempted to tackle issues such as child labour, illiteracy, epidemics, high infant mortality and pauperism among children, especially orphans. In locating children at the centre of the state's concern for those in need, the Young Turk regime followed pre-existing patterns of Ottoman state charity, at the same time serving their message of constructing a modern society and nation.

In the new atmosphere of freedom and hope for the future, children were at first mainly required to devote themselves to acquiring modern education and manners. As members of the Ottoman nation, they were also expected to demonstrate publicly their national zeal, and

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>10</sup> See Johann Büssow, 'Children of the Revolution: Youth in Palestinian Public Life, 1908–1914', in Yuval Ben-Bassat and Eyal Ginio (eds.), *Late Ottoman Palestine: The Period of Young Turk Rule* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), pp. 55–78.

<sup>11</sup> On similar thinking in Egypt, see Mine Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor and the Politics of Benevolence, 1800–1952* (Princeton University Press, 2003), pp. 99–100.

consequently to urge their fathers to act in support of the CUP regime. By depicting children's enthusiasm in support of the nation and the regime, the state hoped to mobilize civilians in various national missions, defined by the CUP. Protecting one's child was made equal with offering protection to the nation. The state endeavoured to manipulate parents' concern to protect their own children in order to convince adults that the nation deserved their parental attention as well. To convey this message, the CUP staged through its local branches various public performances that were aimed at airing children's seemingly authentic voices loud and clear.

One illustrative example of this manipulation can be found in an article from the Turkish-Arabic bi-lingual weekly *Kudüs-i Şerif – al-Quds al-Sharīf* that appeared in Jerusalem following the Young Turk Revolution. Published on 4 August 1325/17 August 1909 the report described a play organized by the local branch of the CUP. At its centre was the recent one-sided proclamation of *enosis*, the unification of Crete with Greece. The actors were local Arabic-speaking children from the city's secondary (*idadi*) schools, both Muslim and Greek-Orthodox. The modest entrance fees for those wishing to attend the play were donated to the Ottoman navy. According to the report, children gathered in the *Vérité* Theatre situated adjacent to Jaffa Gate to perform some 'very exemplary national plays'. The reporter described the general patriotic enthusiasm of the public that prevailed that evening: 'All the nation's children – big and small – filled the theatre hall and its surroundings to capacity, to show their desire to assist the navy.'

While the reporter did not provide us with further information on the type of plays that were presented, he quoted in full a speech given by one of the boys. This speech was a public plea directed towards the fathers who attended the spectacle, inciting them to act. While evoking the greatness of Ottoman seafarers from previous generations and their ability to unite through their patriotic sentiments to defend the Ottoman realms at sea, the schoolboy bemoaned the incapacity of the Ottomans to face even their smallest foes during the period of *istibdat* ('the despotism' – the term used by the CUP to describe the Hamidian regime). Now, under the benign rule of the CUP, the youngster continued in his speech, was the time to defend the fatherland. He asserted the children's determination to make the greatest sacrifices to defend the fatherland's rights. However, he also emphasized his hope of seeing adult men take a full part in the effort to safeguard the fatherland. When referring to what the speaker describes as the fathers' indifference to the patriotic mission of saving the fatherland, he uses childish language to

incite the parents to act as their ‘small *yavru*<sup>12</sup> were tormented by pangs of conscience in the face of the current reality’. The boy continued: ‘We expect you to fill any deficiency! Every sacrifice that you put in this direction will certainly increase our thankful sentiments in our tender hearts!’ The speaker carried on to incite the adults by referring to the conflict with Greece: ‘As we heard, our neighbour, Greece, aims to detach the island of Crete from our homeland and to annex it into its own domains. We have not yet seen any initiative from your part to prevent such aggressions that are totally devoid of any legal right! If you remain powerless, it is us who are ready to defend [the island] as the Ottomans are not willing anymore to relinquish any part of the fatherland’s domains! The Ottoman lands will always remain Ottoman!’<sup>13</sup>

As this report reveals, one task entrusted to children was to incite their fathers to act. It was believed that children’s innate vulnerability could inspire a sense of patriotic duty in adults. Typical of this approach are two short stories written by Ömer Seyfettin, one of the most prolific authors of the late Ottoman period. These stories recount the transformation of Primo, the child of a cosmopolitan and mixed family (his mother was Italian while his father was a Turkish engineer who had studied in Paris where acquired his Western manners and perceptions) from Salonica, into a patriotic adolescent wholeheartedly devoted to the Ottoman cause against the background of the war in Tripolitania against Italy (1911–12) and the subsequent Balkan Wars.<sup>14</sup>

The children’s role and their image as integral members of the nation became even more potent during the Balkan Wars. In the context of these conflicts, we can discern a shift from previous discussions of children emphasizing the state’s and society’s obligation to protect children and to provide them with education and welfare to a new emphasis that mobilizes the children themselves to assist the nation and the fatherland in times of acute need.

<sup>12</sup> Literally, the young of an animal or bird. It serves also as an affectionate term for children.

<sup>13</sup> ‘Havadis-i Mahalliye: İane-yi Bahriye’, *Kudüs-i Şerif al-Quds al-Sharîf*, 4/17 August 1909.

<sup>14</sup> The titles of these two stories are ‘Primo: Türk Çocuğu – Nasıl Doğdu’ (‘Primo: a Turkish Child – His Birth’) and ‘Primo: Türk Çocuğu – Nasıl Öldü’ (‘Primo: a Turkish Child – His Death’). On these stories, see Nadav Solomonovich, ‘The Shaping of Pan-Turkish Discourse in the Short Stories of Ömer Seyfettin between the Young Turk Revolution (1908) and the Outbreak of WWI’ (Unpublished MA thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2011). For other short stories of Ömer Seyfettin in which he depicts the horrors of the Balkan Wars, see Nesime Ceyhan, *Balkan Savaşı* (Istanbul: Selis, 2006), pp. 207–48.

### Children in Ottoman literature on the Balkan Wars

The Balkan Wars had a tremendous impact on Ottoman society, especially in Turkish-speaking provinces. Firstly, as part of the regime's attempt to mobilize civilians for the war effort on the home-front, it exploited new modes of mass communications, primarily the press and public gatherings.<sup>15</sup> In addition to censored daily reports on the course of the war, the daily press published short historical accounts on the Balkans along with patriotic stories and poems written by leading authors and poets.<sup>16</sup>

Indeed, leading intellectuals, some of whom were reserve soldiers serving on the various fronts, fought with the pen as well, publishing patriotic poems and short stories in the press. Many of them addressed children. By doing so, they contributed to the shaping of a distinct Ottoman war culture that revolved around the themes of defeat, revenge and renewal. Indeed, the notion of defeat stood at the centre, thus providing Ottoman war literature with ingredients similar to those described by Wolfgang Schivelbusch when coining the term 'Culture of Defeat'.<sup>17</sup> Like intellectuals in other defeated nations, Ottoman publicists and authors debated the consequences of their own defeat by reflecting on the cause of defeat, the ensuing internal crisis and possible new directions for achieving transformation, revenge and regeneration. This Ottoman 'culture of defeat' represented the complete crushing of Ottoman self-confidence and the deep disillusionment of long-held convictions, but also evoked hope for crucial reforms, change and national renewal. Various cultural products (press, prose, short essays, memoirs, postcards, plays, children's press and literature) endeavoured to present the war experience to the public and to instil in it the need to accomplish swift and profound changes.

As an integral part of this war literature, a whole genre of children's literature flourished through specially designed magazines and books. Particular publications, aimed at reaching children who frequented the state schools and therefore were able to read in Ottoman Turkish, were published in the fledgling children's press. Consequently, the Balkan Wars brought about a wide variety of publications designed for children or depicting children's experiences during the war. In both cases, the main motivation in publishing such accounts was to document atrocities inflicted on civilians and to reflect on the new role given to children in the framework of the rejuvenated Ottoman nation that would appear

<sup>15</sup> On the press before the Balkan Wars, see Palmira Johnson Brummett, *Image and Imperialism in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press, 1908–1911* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000).

<sup>16</sup> Ceyhan, *Balkan Savaşı Hikâyeleri*, pp. 18–23. <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*



from the ashes of defeat. As such, these accounts exemplify the contemporary perceptions and discussions of children's role – like other new members of the national community – as active members of the nation. Indeed, as Arthur Marwick demonstrated, one of the characteristics of modern wars is the participation of hitherto underprivileged groups in the community.<sup>18</sup>

The line between adulthood and childhood, as imagined in the nineteenth century, became blurred in this literature.<sup>19</sup> This, of course, was not just an Ottoman phenomenon, but an integral part of modern warfare.<sup>20</sup> What does this multifarious literature tell us about the changing images of children and their role as they evolved during the Balkan War?

### Children as powerless victims

Bernard Grant, a photographer for the British newspaper the *Daily Mirror*, produced many of the iconic images of the Balkan Wars showing Muslim refugees staggering away from the Thrace front to Istanbul. Some of his written impressions concerned child refugees. Observing the columns of refugees making their way near the Çatalca line, the Ottomans' last defensive line before Istanbul, he observed that 'the children were on the bundles in the carts, staring with wondering eyes at all the scenes of flights, the older ones more terrified, and all of them suffering from hunger and exposure'.<sup>21</sup>

In the context of the Balkan Wars, reports on the suffering of children, women and the elderly indicated that the boundaries between 'civilian' and 'combatant' were often blurred, with devastating consequences for civilians. Disruption, displacement and destruction were the common experience of Muslims and others in the Balkan Wars. While contemporary conventions of warfare upheld the separation of civilians from situations of armed combat, this value became increasingly difficult to maintain as campaigning quickly intensified and the safety of women, children and the aged could not be guaranteed or even was intentionally breached. Furthermore, as observed by many contemporaries, the quick

<sup>18</sup> Arthur Marwick, 'Problems and Consequences of Organizing Society for Total War,' in N. F. Dreisziger (ed.), *Mobilization for Total War* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1981), pp. 3–21.

<sup>19</sup> Borrowed from Guillaume de Syon, 'The Child in the Flying Machine: Childhood and Aviation in the First World War', in James Marten (ed.), *Children and War* (New York University Press, 2002), p. 116.

<sup>20</sup> James Marten, 'Introduction', in Marten (ed.), *Children and War*, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> Philip Gibbs and Bernard Grant, *Adventures of War with Cross and Crescent* (London: Methuen, 1912), p. 218.

retreat of the Ottoman army often left a political vacuum which was filled by irregulars. This lull between the Ottoman army's retreat and the entry of the organized army of one of the Balkan allies opened the way for abuse of civilians.<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, the lost Ottoman territories in the Balkans set the stage for the 'totalization' of the war. Pillage, deportations, forced conversions, systematic atrocities and sporadic killings were committed against those Muslims who came under the rule of the Balkan States, blurring the line between soldiers and non-combatants.<sup>23</sup> Reports of acts of extreme brutality and violence perpetrated against civilians prevailed in the Ottoman press, with daily accounts describing Bulgarian atrocities against women and children. Reporters emphasized the suffering of children in the context of conflict, on the assumption that they were a particularly vulnerable group. Following the recovery of Eastern Thrace in the brief Second Balkan War, new testimonies were revealed and published in gruesome detail. Thus, for example, the daily *Tanin* (The Echo) reported on a massacre that took place in the village of Şirva, not far from Edirne. In this village, inhabited prior to the war by 320 people, all the buildings were destroyed; about 100 women and children were crammed in the local mosque and gassed by the Bulgarians (*camî derununda tıkları ve üzerlerine gaz dökülerek*).<sup>24</sup> This is one example of many similar reports of mostly Bulgarian atrocities that appeared in the Ottoman press.

Organizations such as the 'Philanthropic Association of the Muslim Refugees of the Balkans' (Rumeli Muhacirîn-i İslâmiye Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi) were instrumental in diffusing further the images of suffering that had befallen the refugees, especially the children. Their main aim was to increase the population's awareness of the refugees' plight and suffering and thus to mobilize them to donate to philanthropic associations that offered assistance to the refugees. Such philanthropic organizations often invoked the vulnerability of children to vilify the enemy. In their messages, children, together with women and the elderly, embodied war victims to be saved. As will be shown below, the association of Muslim refugees also separately addressed its messages to children.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, a testimony of a local Jew regarding the harassment of civilians by Bulgarian irregulars following the Ottoman retreat from Kavala (Eastern Macedonia): Refael Y. Florentin, *Kozas Pasâdas: Epizódios delos Akontesimýentos ke se passaron en Kavala del 1912 al 1918* (Kavala, 1929), pp. 8–13.

<sup>23</sup> On the term 'totalization of war', see Leonard V. Smith, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *France and the Great War 1914–1918* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 42–3.

<sup>24</sup> 'Mühim bir Vesika', *Tanin*, 26 July/8 August 1913.

One example of the association's publications was a booklet entitled 'The Atrocities of the Balkans and Bulgarian Barbarism'.<sup>25</sup> This booklet was intended to awaken Muslim public opinion everywhere and the 'world of humanity and civilization' to the plight of the Muslim victims of Bulgarian atrocities. The booklet presented in gruesome detail various atrocities performed against Muslim civilians. Graphic drawings accompanied the text. Atrocities against women and children dominated the booklet. The booklet's ability to influence public opinion is reflected by the reissuing of some of the drawings in later publications. One of the drawings, later republished in various publications, was an image of the mass killing that took place in a Friday mosque in Dedeağaç (Alexandroupoli) where, following execution of the men, defenceless women, girls and children were incarcerated in the Friday mosque and burned alive.<sup>26</sup>

Greetings cards were one of the most efficient modes of diffusing patriotic messages during the Balkan Wars among all the belligerent parties,<sup>27</sup> illustrated here by a greetings card designed for the Ramazan festival. Clearly bemoaning the agony of the city's residents and calling upon the potential observer to act swiftly, the card included a brief written message, *Edirne'yi Unutma* ('Do not forget Edirne!'). Two major symbols were selected to express the ordeals of the city conquered by the Bulgarians: the imperial Selimiye mosque and the figures of a despondent woman and her small children. A woman is depicted holding a baby in her arms while another small child clutches at her clothes, with a third looking in vain for food in the barren soil. The picture is framed by a metal chain that encloses the city, and imprisons the woman and her children. Only one of her hands, outstretched and begging for alms and assistance, is able to break through the thick chains.<sup>28</sup>

For many, children's distinctive agonies contrasted with their innocence to reflect the misery endured by the nation as a whole. The children's abysmal situation was aimed to incite men to perform their innate role of protecting their protégés – women and children, and by extension the nation. Women were expected to use their maternal skills and to offer their compassion to the suffering children. An assortment of

<sup>25</sup> *Rumeli Mezalimi ve Bulgar Vahşetleri* (Istanbul: Mehmed Bey Matbaası, 1329 [1913/14]).

<sup>26</sup> The drawing was first published in a booklet distributed by the charitable Committee of the Muslim Refugees from the Balkans. According to the report in this booklet, about 300 women and children were murdered in the mosque. See *ibid.*, pp. 24–5.

<sup>27</sup> Güney Dinç, *Mehmed Nail Bey'in Derlediği Kartpostallarla Balkan Savaşı (1912–1913)* (Istanbul: YKY, 2008).

<sup>28</sup> See Kazancıgil, *Hafız Rakım Ertür'ün Anılarından*, in the unpaginated index.

philanthropic associations was founded to cope with the flow of refugees from the Balkans who arrived in Istanbul and other major cities like Salonica and Edirne. The hasty establishment of an orphanage (*Dar-ül-Eytam*) in Edirne to shelter war orphans highlights this philanthropic activity in the midst of the war.<sup>29</sup>

The depiction of children as the miserable victims of the enemy's atrocities was one image that the war publications diffused in order to mobilize the adults. Other images of children attempted to enlist the young in the war effort. Indeed, although many children were safe from the actual fighting and its consequences, they were plunged into the war spirit – to use Marten's phrase<sup>30</sup> – that infused many aspects of their lives, thus making them an integral part of the experiences of the war on the home-front. Children's magazines, schools and paramilitary organizations specially targeted child audiences, and endeavoured to instil in them, as the future citizen-soldiers, their messages of revenge and rejuvenation.

### **Children as active members of society at the front and on the home-front**

In literature intended for a young audience, children were shown to be not merely victims, but also loyal members of society who contributed to the war effort, mainly in performing various tasks in the home-front and, sometimes, as volunteers serving in the army ranks. As in many other cases, the Balkan Wars did not trigger the appearance of new social and cultural phenomena, but rather strengthened, popularized and intensified existing perceptions. As part of their attempt to expand the social basis of their supporters, the Young Turks implemented a programme of indoctrination aimed at children prior to the Balkan Wars. Such new topics appeared in the new school programmes and in the activities of youth organizations.<sup>31</sup> Following the Balkan Wars, paramilitary youth organizations, like the *Türk Gücü Cemiyeti*, were founded in June 1913 to mobilize adolescents to the national mission as defined by the regime and to prepare them for military service.<sup>32</sup> A similar task was bestowed upon the newly established Scouts movement. The *Talebe Defteri* published the Scouts' hymn (*Keşşaflerin Türküsü*) written by Ahmet Cevad [Cavad], an Azerbaijani poet who would later be the author of the Azerbaijani

<sup>29</sup> Oral Onur, *Edirne Hilal-ı Ahmer ve Himaye-i Etfal Cemiyetleri – Kızılay ve Çocuk Esirgeme Kurumları* (Istanbul: Dinç Matbaacılık, 2004), pp. 20–4.

<sup>30</sup> Marten, 'Introduction', pp. 6–7.

<sup>31</sup> Cüneyd Okay, *Meşrutiyet Çocukları* (Istanbul: Bordo, 2000), pp. 15–20.

<sup>32</sup> On this youth organization, see Zafer Toprak, 'İtihat ve Terskki'nin Paramiliter Gençlik Örgütleri', *Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Dergisi*, 7 (1979), pp. 96–113.

national anthem. Cevad volunteered to serve in the Ottoman army during the Balkan Wars. His version of the Scouts' hymn extolled the youth's commitment to taking revenge for the Ottoman defeat. An accompanying drawing showed an adolescent, clad in a uniform reminiscent of the Ottoman military outfit, standing next to a flagpole.<sup>33</sup>

Generally speaking, children were not required to take an active part in combat. However, the elevation of one child, Nuri, to the status of a military hero, demonstrates that such a 'soldier boy' was deemed a role model for both adults and children. The discrepancy between his relatively tender age and his bravery in the battlefield emphasized the notions of self-sacrifice and gallantry. Indeed, the Balkan Wars required the embracing of widely accepted identities and the adoption of symbols that would be meaningful to broad sections of Ottoman society. Most of the 'new heroes' came from the army ranks. Ottoman war literature attempted to 'discover' its new images of heroes among these citizen-soldiers.

The military adventures of Nuri, a twelve-year-old orphan from Karahisar in Anatolia, illustrate this point starkly. Nuri volunteered in the Ottoman army and subsequently excelled at the battle of Kırkkilise in Eastern Thrace. Later, he was injured by shrapnel at the battle of Karaağaç. Following a medical operation, he rejoined the army to take part in the defence of the capital in the trenches of Çatalca, where he was infected with cholera. His picture and story appeared on the first pages of *Tanin*<sup>34</sup> as well as in the children's press<sup>35</sup> – a rare example of a story that appeared both in the adult and children's literary arenas.

Indeed, in addressing boys as future soldiers, it is perhaps not surprising that Ottoman war writing went one step further to the actual depiction of a specific child as a heroic warrior. Nuri was cast as a figure for youth to emulate. His image was designed to inculcate children at the home-front with a stronger sense of patriotic duty and sacrifice. The integration of children into the adult world of war indicates that no age group, however young, was left out from ideological mobilization.

Nuri's heroic adventures during the war were unique as was his story's ability to cross the boundaries between the children's press and the adult one. However, many other children sacrificed their childhood following their fathers' fall in combat. As bereaved children, their stories were published mainly in the children's press and literature. Through reading

<sup>33</sup> Ahmet Cavad, 'Kaşşafelerin Türküsü', *Talebe Defteri*, 10, 26 September/9 October 1913.

<sup>34</sup> *Tanin*, 21 February 1328/6 March 1913.

<sup>35</sup> *Çocuk Dünyası*, 18 April 1329/1 May 1913.

such accounts, children were taught about the sacrifice of Ottoman soldiers and the pride that their acts of heroism instilled in their children who, although orphaned, were still the cherished children of the fatherland. In his book *Şehid Evladları* ('The Martyr's Children'), Edhem Ruhi [Balkan] recounted the story of two war orphans, Atif and Enver, whose father was killed in action in the battle of Lüle Burgaz. The children who read this book learned that those orphans, although poor, were the dearest children of the nation.<sup>36</sup>

The bereavement of children was a repeated theme in the children's press. The poet Aka Gündüz [Hüseyin Avni] published a poem in *Çocuk Dünyası* ('The World of Children'). This children's weekly, aimed at assisting 'children to develop their minds' was one of several new periodicals that intended to spread national messages among children through what it labelled 'national' stories and poems. In the poem 'Redif' ('Reserve Unit') a child looks in vain for his father, who enlisted 'last winter' to serve in a reserve unit. Nothing has been heard of him since then. Asking for a clue from the clouds above, the flowing rivers and the setting sun, he remains without an answer.<sup>37</sup>

Children were not yet required to perform military service – this was left for the future. However, children, alongside women, were expected to contribute their share to the home-front. The Ottoman daily press often reported on civilians' contributions – in money and jewellery – to the war effort. Here again the highlighting of children's donations was meant to encourage adults to give their due share to the organizations that supported the war: the Ministry of War mentioned contributors' names, their places of residence and the amounts given in its daily reports of donations. In one case, the journal quoted a conversation that took place between a certain Hacı Mehmetzade Mehmet Ali Efendi, a dyer, from Alaca Hamam neighbourhood in Istanbul, and his seven-year-old daughter, Fatima. According to the report, the father told his daughter that he had donated his horse to the soldiers and asked her about her contribution. The daughter kept her head and gave her father a small bag containing her savings: the modest sum of 53 kuruş. She told her proud father that she wanted to donate it to the war effort. The reporter summarized this short anecdote by proclaiming that this modest gift 'should be an example of the small ones for the adults'.<sup>38</sup> Similar announcements regarding children's contributions appeared daily in the Ottoman press. Some of them related to contributions coming from Muslim children

<sup>36</sup> Edhem Ruhi, *Şehid Evladları* (Felibe: Balkan, 1913).

<sup>37</sup> *Çocuk Dünyası*, 18 Temmuz 1329/31 July 1913.

<sup>38</sup> 'Balkan Harbi İanesi', *Tanin*, 26 September/9 October 1912.

living outside the Ottoman borders, mainly Egypt and India, where public subscriptions were opened to assist the Ottoman war effort.

A particular task for children (and women) was the construction of a national economy. It was hoped that defeat in battle could nevertheless produce benign and lasting changes in the national economy, which would eventually decide the outcome of a future conflict reversing Ottoman misfortunes in the Balkan Wars. Among the Ottomans' flaws that caused their poor performance in the Balkan Wars and often mentioned in Ottoman literature on the defeat was non-Muslim domination of the Ottoman economy. According to Ottoman authors, such supremacy enabled the non-Muslims, especially the Greeks, to channel considerable funds to supporting the Greek navy in its war against the Ottomans and to deprive the Ottoman economy of most of its rightful resources. Ottoman publicists sought to find a remedy for their economic weakness by bolstering a new group of Muslim entrepreneurs. Ottoman authors described this initiative as an act of revolt against foreign oppression and enslavement. They portrayed the local economy as a major battlefield in which the future of the Ottoman nation would be determined. Ottoman publicists also indicated the identity of the soldiers who would serve in the front line of the economic revolution: women, the elderly and children. Following the defeat in the Balkan Wars, the weapon of boycott was directed against local non-Muslims. Boycotting non-Muslims' enterprises in some major Ottoman cities was not a spontaneous activity that reflected impulsive outrage, but rather a well-organized campaign.<sup>39</sup>

Its major promoters were women's organizations that aimed to encourage the use of local products at the expense of foreign items and to develop Turkish crafts. The organizations likewise used nationalist slogans to encourage poor young women and girls to seek work in textile workshops. To achieve their goals, these organizations prepared exhibitions of local products, opened ateliers and shops and scheduled special excursions for women to observe the quality of local crafts.<sup>40</sup>

The children's role in the construction of a national economy was a long-term investment: instilling in them a love of commerce and economic initiative was perceived in the press as a means to create a future generation of Muslim merchants.<sup>41</sup> The Ottoman children's press promoted the importance of commerce among its readers of 'future Ottomans'. The *Talebe Defteri* (The Students' Notebook), a bi-monthly

<sup>39</sup> Zafer Toprak, *Millî İktisat – Milli Burjuvazi* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1995).

<sup>40</sup> Şefika Kurnaz, II, *Meşrutîyet Döneminde Türk Kadını* (İstanbul: MEB Yayınları, 1996), pp. 214–17.

<sup>41</sup> Cemil Sülyeman, 'Bugünkü Genç', *Tanin*, 31 March/13 April 1913.

founded in 1913 and catering for older children, called upon its child-readers to eschew Nestlé milk, to shun dressing up in clothes purchased in foreign department stores like Stein or Tring and to avoid frequenting shops whose owners were foreigners.<sup>42</sup>

The *Çocuk Dünyası*, another example, published a lullaby in which the mother urges her little child to become a merchant when he grows up and not an official like his forefathers.<sup>43</sup> The imagination of consumption as an arena of combat created a gendered front, in which women and children could demonstrate their affiliation to the nation while still preserving gender and age boundaries. Their weapons consisted of boycotting and individual initiatives aimed at marginalizing non-Muslim merchants and producers. The creation of a 'gendered battlefield' safeguarded gender boundaries in a time when these boundaries became blurred because of the circumstances of the ongoing war and its aftermath. By reason of their tender age and innate vulnerability, children, including boys, were still perceived as being part of the female sphere. This, of course, changed when they became adolescents preparing themselves for military service. The children's literature and press exerted efforts to accomplish the transformation from children to citizens as well.

### Children as future citizens and soldiers

Against the horrifying dimensions of the defeat, children were often perceived as the nation's sole hope for rejuvenation and revenge.<sup>44</sup> The poet Emin Hâkkî Bey compiled a six-part *manzume* (a composition in rhyme) under the title *İkaz* (A Warning) on the occasion of the national celebration of 10 July [23 July], the anniversary of the proclamation of the second constitution in 1908. One part of the *manzume*, titled *Baba öğütü* (Father's Advice) was dedicated to the 'fathers of the future'. In this poem, he urged children to work hard to reverse the misfortunes of the fatherland. Once, the author lamented, the Ottomans stood at the gates of Vienna forcing the routed enemy's units to escape; the Ottomans used to spread their light all over the world like the sun. Nothing remained of this abundant blessing of God. However, he consoled himself, there was still hope lying in the children.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56. See also Cüneyd Okay, *Eski Harfli Çocuk Dergileri* (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 1999), pp. 119–122.

<sup>43</sup> This children's poem 'Ticaret Ninnisi' (The Commerce Lullaby) – is quoted in Okay, *Meşrutiyet Çocukları*, p. 55.

<sup>44</sup> On the shaping of the 'culture of revanchism' among Ottoman elites, see the contribution of Uğur Ümit Üngör to this volume (Chapter 5, pp. 86–91).

<sup>45</sup> Emin Hâkkî Bey, *İkaz* (Istanbul: Artin Asauryan Matbaası, 1329 [1913]).



And the children replied, at least through the mediation of other poets. The poet and author Celâl Sahir [Erozan] published his poem 'Türk Kızı Diyorki' ('A Turkish Girl Says') in the *Talebe Defteri*. It is worth quoting here some illustrative lines from this poem: 'All the time there are only catastrophes, everywhere there is only moaning. Oh my fatherland! Is this your fate? No! and [another] no! / Your last catastrophe / this last tearing to pieces, this last grasping with violence / comes to an end. To give land away is a curse / I am a Turk, my faith, my hope are firm; there is no word in Turkish for despair. / Tomorrow a new generation will grow / I am a daughter of this [generation!] Let the enemy know well / the gun will suit well my hand as well.'<sup>46</sup>

The rejuvenation discourse turned the self-pitying victim narrative of defeat into an empowering one of overcoming difficulties and restoring Ottoman might. While attempting to make sense of the defeat, some Ottoman authors were not deterred from pondering their enemies' success. The Bulgarians, while perceived as the worst and most brutal enemy, were nevertheless regarded with some admiration for their performance in the battlefield. Many Ottoman publicists assigned this success to the Bulgarians' ability to shape a new generation of patriots ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of the nation. They did not refrain from comparing the education given to children in Bulgaria and that given in the Ottoman state – a comparison from which, they believed, the Ottomans could learn a lesson.

Interestingly, the Ottoman author, translator and lexicographer Raif Necdet [Kastelli] dedicated the publication of his war memories to the 'youth' (*gençliğe ithaf*). Published under the provocative title *Üfûl* (Extinction), this collection of memories and warnings was one of the most popular and poignant testimonies of the defeat.<sup>47</sup> This was not by chance. The author, who was a reserve officer, served in Edirne during the siege. Following the city's capitulation, he became a POW, spending his captivity in Sofia where he was able, as an officer, to move quite freely around the city. This forced sojourn enabled him to study the Bulgarians from up close and to assess their success in the Balkan Wars. While he condemned what he described as the Bulgarians' savagery and boorishness, and he was quick to mock what he saw as the 'shepherd's soul' that still characterized most of the Bulgarian inhabitants of Sofia, he nevertheless admitted the contribution of Bulgarian primary education to promoting a nation of citizens who were devoted to the national cause from early

<sup>46</sup> Celâl Sahir, *Talebe Defteri*, 16, 19 December 1329/1 January 1913.

<sup>47</sup> Raif Necdet, *Üfûl* (Istanbul: Resimli Matbaası, November 1329 [1913]). On this book, see Halûk Harun Duman, *Balkanlara Veda* (Istanbul: Duyap, 2005), p. 288.

childhood. For him, it was the Turks' ignorance and lack of a national ideal and education that brought the defeat upon them.<sup>48</sup>

Sitting in a public garden, for example, he came to understand one of the reasons behind the Bulgarian victory. He exchanged a few words with a Bulgarian from a lower class, a social status that was important enough for him to notify. Language, apparently, was not a barrier as 'most of the Bulgarians know Turkish'. This was, at least, the author's impression. Looking for an opportunity to exchange words with the Ottoman prisoner, the Bulgarian exclaimed when a running girl fell down: 'These gardens are very important for children . . . here, they are taking air, they are running around and they are falling . . . However, they are always gaining strength.'<sup>49</sup>

For the author, the significance of this remark was clear. The introduction of abundant public gardens (he reported that Sofia was enviably endowed at the time with two such gardens), open freely to all, created a nation of healthy children who would become robust citizens. Furthermore, even that 'shepherd', as the author labelled his interlocutor, praised the significance of education as the major achievement of the Bulgarian nation and the main explanation for Bulgarian military capability.<sup>50</sup>

Also telling is a short prose piece (*mensûre*) that Raif Necdet wrote during his captivity in Sofia and dedicated to his son, Şefik Necdet. The title of the composition was *Mukaddes Ana* (Holy Mother), expressing the youth's unconditional commitment to preserving the mother, symbol of the sacred nation, from the misery of defeat and submission.<sup>51</sup>

References to the enemy's success in raising a generation of patriotic citizens were not rare; the Bulgarians were frequently presented as an example of a totally mobilized society in which every member did his utmost for the national cause and was ready for all sacrifices. One author described the full mobilization of the Bulgarian nation, including its children, for the war effort. He claimed that wealthy Bulgarians donated money generously while villagers brought provisions for the soldiers. Even women and children provided the army with provisions in the frontline. All Bulgarians adhered to the same national aims, he argued, as they shared the love of the motherland and the same national sentiment. In contrast, the Turks presented a totally different character. They understood the term 'fatherland' through the local prism that did not extend beyond their village horizons; for them the term 'nation' merely consisted of the people they encountered in the coffeehouse. Before providing the villager with weapons, the author argued, it would be

<sup>48</sup> Necdet, *Üfûl*, pp. 143–6. <sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149. <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154–5.

<sup>51</sup> Raif Necdet, *Mukaddes Ana* (Istanbul: Resimli Kitab Matbaası, 1329 [1913]).

necessary to insert those words – *vatan* ('fatherland') and *millet* ('nation') – into their hearts.<sup>52</sup>

The lesson taken from the Bulgarian model was clear. Consequently, Ottoman intellectuals endeavoured to instil patriotic sentiments among Ottoman children. Reflecting the traditional gender roles of the warlike male and the nurturing female, boys and girls received different missions in rejuvenating the nation. First of all, this task was given to schools. 'Revenge Corners' were placed in classrooms to bolster vengeful feelings among the children. These corners included 'revenge posters' (*intikam levhası*) that introduced the children to Bulgarian atrocities and encouraged them to remember these acts of brutality against Muslims.<sup>53</sup> These posters were distributed by 'The Philanthropic Association for Muslim Refugees from the Balkans' mentioned above. By providing horrible images that presented acts of sheer cruelty and violence, the association aimed to spread feelings of horror and revenge against the Balkan states, 'those twentieth-century crusaders' (*yirminci asrın ehil-i salibi*), among schoolchildren.

One important duty assigned to the children – the soldiers of the future – was the future infliction of revenge on the Balkan states. The physician Dr Cemil, a low-ranking governor who had served as a chief physician in the reservist division (*fırka*) of Ankara, published one of the most explicit calls for revenge addressed to the Muslim 'children of Anatolia'. His wish, as presented in his introduction, was to offer a textbook that, following its reading and inculcation, would enable schoolchildren to develop a solid and emotional mind devoted to revenge and to patriotism. To do so, he implored the children to read his book until they knew it by heart. Consequently, he hoped, they would fully comprehend the reasons behind the defeat. He likewise asked them to watch carefully the images of atrocities even 'if only for few seconds without winking the eyes' so they could absorb the full horror of the atrocities inflicted on the Muslims by the Bulgarians, Greeks, Serbians and Montenegrins. Consequently, he anticipated, those of the children who were imbued with religious zeal, national honour and patriotism would never neglect the message of revenge.

Dr Cemil divided his book into forty-four short lectures. Each one presented the defeat and Bulgarian atrocities in elegies, gruesome words and horrid drawings – the latter were provided to him by the same 'Philanthropic Association of Muslim Refugees from the Balkans'. Each lecture

<sup>52</sup> Cemil Süleyman, 'Bugünkü Genç', *Tanin*, 31 March 1329/13 April 1913.

<sup>53</sup> See, for example, the poster published in H. Yıldırım Ağanoğlu, *Göç: Osmanlı'den Cumhuriyet'e Balkanlar'ın Makûs Talihi* (Istanbul: Kum Saati, 2001), p. 372.

was designed to foster one aspect of his three-word message: Awakening (*intibah*), Caution (*ikaz*) and Revenge (*intikam*). The first lecture, for example, was dedicated to Russia, 'our greatest old enemy and the nightmare of our destruction', and its role in inciting the Balkan peoples against their Ottoman rulers.<sup>54</sup> Addressing his readers as 'my children', the author reiterated his messages of victimization and future revenge achieved by rejuvenation. Thus, as one example, he attached a drawing of the burning alive of women and children in the mosque of Dedeâğaç mentioned above. The author implored his young readers to look carefully at the image, to remember that those victims were once living people like themselves and to take revenge in the name of all of those innocent victims.<sup>55</sup> He cautioned them against indifference and living a life bereft of ideological meaning: 'Therefore, my children, if a nation lacks a sense of religious zeal, national spirit, love of the fatherland and sacrifice, it is doomed to a wretched and abject life, being subject to such calamities and catastrophes.'<sup>56</sup> Like many contemporary authors, Dr Cemil put his trust in children to bring about the needed revenge. At the end of the fifth lecture, the author exclaimed: 'Oh new generations! Learn the lesson! Do not be like us. Love always the fatherland. Also, it is obligatory that you assist and love each other since it was ruled that "the believers are brothers."<sup>57</sup> However, do not ever forget the word revenge!<sup>58</sup> Revenge would be achieved through hard work: 'My children: In the meanwhile you have one mission: to strive hard day and night! Do not be angered by the disaster and the calamities that Europe inflicted on us. Their friendship is essentially counterfeit. Those of yesterday are just people. Look at the future while remaining vigilant as the nights are full of events!'<sup>59</sup>

As part of their indoctrination and preparation for inflicting revenge, children were likewise acquainted with the lost Balkans, its landscape, its Muslim people and their history. Maps, pictures and short histories were presented to the children. The children's press played a major role in spreading the notion of the lost provinces of the Balkans and the vow to return them to the fatherland in the near future. France's unconditional commitment to avenging her defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 and to regaining Alsace and Lorraine, the provinces lost in that war, was seen as a model to be imitated. Ottoman victories from the past were likewise presented as a telling testimony of Ottoman military capacities. The *Talebe Defteri*, for example, presented a photo of a panorama (*manzara*) constructed by pupils of the Şemsülmekatib school in Istanbul. The panorama showed the sultan's tent of Sultan Murad Hüdavendigâr

<sup>54</sup> Cemil, *İntikam* (Istanbul: Kadar Matbaası, 1330 [1913/14]). <sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 58–60.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56. <sup>57</sup> *İmmā al-mu'minūn ikhwā.* <sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52. <sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

during the battle of Kosovo (1389), a paragon of Ottoman military victory. The panorama commemorated the famous battle and the fall of the sultan following the battle. The photo accompanied an article extolling the significance of such panoramas, historical plays and history classes for the formation of patriotic pupils.<sup>60</sup>

The conviction of children's ability to reverse the poor Ottoman performance in the Balkan Wars was an often-mentioned theme. An illustrative example is a poem written by the Ottoman poet Faik Ali and published in the *Talebe Defteri* under the title *Ben Büyüyeyim de* ('Just Let Me Grow Up!'). In this short poem, the speaker addresses a boy promising him the return of the Balkans to the Ottoman realm, thanks to the efforts of boys like him who were securing the future by putting all their efforts into studying. The boy was likewise notified that the return of the Balkans was a sacred mission given into the hands of contemporary children. It was up to them to take revenge on the enemies: 'Yes my boy, the places you are watching were lost and devastated because of treachery. Oh! Today they are all in the enemy's hands / However, there is no doubt that they return / with an effort, strong will, education, knowledge / and endless devotion.'

The call for revenge found expression in painting as well. Faik Ali's poem was accompanied by a drawing by Prince Abdülmecid ibn-i Abdülaziz (1868–1944). This prince, who later reigned as the last Caliph of the Ottoman Empire (1922–4), was an enthusiastic painter who held several exhibitions in Istanbul and abroad and was the founder of the 'Ottoman Artists' Society'. The editors modestly expressed their gratitude for the 'illustrious present' that the prince 'bestows on the Ottomans through the mediation of this insignificant journal'. However, it is important to stress the significance allocated by a senior representative of the imperial family to a children's journal as shown by the prince's consent to dedicate a drawing to it. The drawing showed a schoolboy standing next to a girl. The boy is examining a map of the lost provinces of the Balkans while his hands are stretching open wide. The girl is looking at him attentively.<sup>61</sup> Thus, the drawing offered clearly defined gender roles, as giving inspiration rather than acting was the accepted lot of girls.

Finally, another genre that appeared in the children's press aiming to instil confidence in the future was futurist stories. The relevance of this kind of literature is evident, as it could tell children of a better, utopian future as envisioned by the adults. The *Talebe Defteri* dedicated the first article in its very first issue to sharing with its children-readers its vision

<sup>60</sup> *Talebe Defteri*, 8, 29 Ağustos 1329/11 September 1913.

<sup>61</sup> Faik Ali, 'Ben Büyüyeyim de', *Talebe Defteri*, 19 December 1329/1 January 1914.

for the future – for roughly the year 2013 or in its words: *Yüz Sene Sonra . . .* (One Hundred Years later . . .). As we are at the time of writing in 2013, the limits of the adults' imagination seem amusing – one of the author's daring speculations about the inventions available in the distant future was the ability of scholars in Istanbul to send an invitation for a conference on the 'famous Turkish poet' Fuzûlî (d. 1556) to colleagues at Baghdad University by telegraph a mere four days prior to the conference. The four Baghdadi professors, in this imaginative invention, could reach the academic gathering in Istanbul by boarding the express night train that would bring them to their destination the following morning. . . .<sup>62</sup> Probably more daring was the author's guess about the manner of presenting a lecture in the future. He imagined two big white boards positioned on either side of the lecturer's podium in the main lecture hall. The author emphasized that Ottoman engineers were the ones who constructed the hall and provided the electronic accessories needed for lectures. During the conference, he further speculated, a machine, called a *cinematograph*, would project running lines from Fuzûlî's poetry, written in *kufî* letters, on the big boards.

However, while some of the author's speculations about the future were quite limited, his visions regarding the future of the Ottoman state are relevant to our discussion as they reveal his vision for a future in which everything was imagined to be resolved to the benefit of Ottoman society and its modernization from within. In this imaginary description, the author presented his own utopian vision for the future. His vision for the Ottoman state was very clear: it would be endowed with sophisticated technology and advanced education that would attract students from far-away Islamic and Asian destinations, such as Japan, China, Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Bukhara and Turkestan, who would come to study in the university of Istanbul (*darülfünun*) in search of advanced and qualified learning. In this utopian future, Ottoman society would share a collective identity based on Islam, Ottomanism and Turkism. Significantly, the West and its civilization are totally absent from this utopian vision of the future.

### Conclusion

For the Young Turk regime, a modern state was to be achieved by expanding governmental programmes for health, education and social assistance and encouraging the emergence of voluntary associations to assist in filling gaps not covered by the state. The Balkan Wars served

<sup>62</sup> 'Yüz Sene Sonra . . .', *Talebe Defteri*, 1, 23 Mayıs 1329/3 June 1913.

as an opportunity to expand governmental intervention into a so-called 'private sphere' and to foster the emergence of civil organizations that aimed to bring relief to the war's victims – among them children. In this way, these conflicts gave rise to new interpretations and meanings for the role of citizens on the home-front. Providing assistance to the children of refugees or to those whose fathers were mobilized was one of the major tasks entrusted to philanthropic organizations and served as a means to mobilize adults to play a part in the war effort. This reshaping of social roles and functions created a vital Ottoman home-front in which children had their own symbolic and practical roles. This was an important part of their inclusion as members of the national community.

In addition to their 'traditional' image as powerless victims subject to the enemy's cruelty, children were perceived in the war literature as future citizens who would reconstruct – militarily and economically – the nation from scratch. To achieve such goals, children were required to study those subjects that would prepare them to become loyal and productive citizens. The children's press idealized notions of fighting and sacrifices in the name of the nation. Children represented the future of the nation itself. Believing that the next generation might be able to restore Ottoman military might, the various voluntary associations and the fledgling children's press attempted to indoctrinate children directly, through school curriculums, newly founded youth movements and philanthropy. Their message was clear: against the adults' total failure in the Balkan Wars, children were given the role of the future citizen-soldiers who would transform the Ottoman defeat into a glorious future by reversing the poor performance of Ottoman soldiers during the Balkan Wars.

## 7 Civil and military relations in Serbia during 1903–1914

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*John Paul Newman*

Throughout Europe, the history of the First World War has overshadowed that of the Balkan Wars, and to a certain extent the situation is the same in Serbia. The victories of 1912–13 have been threaded together with the war of 1914–18: the entire period is known as a single, continuous conflict for the ‘liberation and unification’ of all South Slavs (that is, liberation from imperial rule, and unification into a single state). Yet for many Serbians, the victory of 1918 is marred because it led to the creation of Yugoslavia, a failed political project which many Serbs now believe to have been their undoing in the twentieth century. No such stigma attaches itself to the victories of 1912–13: these were largely Serbian affairs, and the Balkan Wars mark the apogee of the Serbian state’s prowess before the outbreak of the First World War.

According to Serbian patriots, the victories against the Ottoman army (in the First Balkan War) ended centuries of national slavery and avenged ‘Tsar’ Lazar’s epoch-making defeat at the Field of Blackbirds (Kosovo polje), 1389. Upon victory in the second war, Serbia asserted its maximalist territorial claims over much-coveted lands in Macedonia and Thrace, thereby supplanting Bulgaria as the most powerful political and military force in the region. As Nikolai Vukov shows in his chapter in this volume, Bulgaria’s defeat in the Second Balkan War (its first ‘national catastrophe’, the second being its defeat of 1918) marked a decisive turning point in the state’s history, determining its revisionist status for much of the first half of the twentieth century. However, for many Serbs, the victories of 1912 and 1913 were depicted as the final stage in the long war of national emancipation ignited in the First Serbian Uprising of 1804.<sup>1</sup> In reality the all-conquering Serbian army of

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Béla Király, ‘East Central European Society and Warfare in the Era of the Balkan Wars’, in Béla Király and Dimitrije Djordjević (eds.), *East Central European Society and the Balkan Wars* (Boulder CO: East European Monographs, 1987), p. 6.



1912–13 was utterly removed from the peasant militias of Djordje Petrović ('Karadjordje'), the rag-tag guerrillas and mercenaries responsible for (temporarily) driving the janissaries out of Serbia at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Since then, the Serbian army had become a force to be reckoned with: although still largely a peasant army, it was headed by a professional officer corps; modern, well-equipped and trained in line with cutting edge European military sciences.<sup>2</sup> The Serbian army mobilized over 400,000 soldiers in 1912 (from a population of 2,945,950).<sup>3</sup> The impressive military performances of the Serbian army during 1912–13 (and, for that matter, during 1914–15) are a testimony to the fairly rapid and successful process of modernization and development that had transformed the armed forces of Serbia from a network of ad-hoc guerrilla bands into a highly effective instrument of war. Given the importance of mobilization and organizational matters throughout Europe in the weeks before and after the outbreak of the First World War, there were perhaps many important lessons to be learned from the case of Serbia in 1912.

The period of the wars before the war was remembered fondly by many Serbians: a spell of unbroken military victories from which the country emerged relatively unscathed and with its prestige greatly enhanced, a great contrast to the harrowing 'Golgotha' of the Serbian nation during 1914–18. Živojin Mišić, a colonel of the Serbian army who was promoted to general for his conduct in the Balkan Wars, interpreted the successful mobilization of 1912 as a *levée en masse* which proved that 'In the whole of our nation, particularly in the army, there prevailed a great spirit [veliko raspoloženje] for this war. Nobody doubted its successful outcome.'<sup>4</sup> The author Isidora Sekulić claimed that the victories of 1912 and 1913 had 'resurrected' the Serbian nation, that her people were no longer mired in a 'slave mentality' brought on by centuries of Turkish rule.<sup>5</sup> Natalija Zrnić, a Serbian woman living in Vranje, a town in the south of Serbia, wrote these words in her diary, following her country's victories in the First Balkan War:

<sup>2</sup> 'Vojska', in Stanoje Stanojević (ed.), *Narodno enciklopedija srpsko-hrvatsko-slovenačka*, 4 vols. (Zagreb: Bibliografski zavod, 1925–9), vol. IV, p. 1140.

<sup>3</sup> Borislav Ratković, 'Srpska vojska u balkanskim ratovima 1912–1913 i u prvom svetskom ratu 1914–1918', *Vojnoistorijski glasnik*, 43, 1–2 (1993), p. 56.

<sup>4</sup> Živojin Mišić, *Moje uspomene* (Belgrade: Fondacija 'Vojvoda Živojin Mišić' Institut za suvremenu istoriju, 2010), p. 220.

<sup>5</sup> Isidora Sekulić, *Zapisi o mome narodu* (Novi Sad: Stylos, 2001), pp. 66–7.

We ran out on the street... Then the Royal Guard started playing near the monument... Everybody was running towards the monument happy and excited. The band first played the Serbian national anthem, then *Hej Sloveni*, followed by the Bulgarian, Russian and Montenegrin anthems.<sup>6</sup>

As Jeffrey Verhey has shown in his insightful study of popular responses to the outbreak of the First World War in Germany, images of national euphoria and national unanimity are potent centripetal forces.<sup>7</sup> The defining image of the Balkan Wars in Serbia is of a unified nation rising up triumphantly and wholly against its enemies. Yet just like the notion that Germans were uniformly enthusiastic about the outbreak of the First World War, the idea that Serbians and Serbia were unified in the era of the wars before the war is to a large extent a myth, one that elides the fissures within the country at the time. And these fissures must be exposed if we are to understand fully the Serbian state and its behaviour during the period of the Balkan Wars.

The victories of 1912–13 are but an episode in a period of Serbian history; beginning in 1903 with the ascension of the Karadjordjević dynasty to the Serbian throne and ending with the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, this period has become known (both popularly and, until quite recently, within the scholarship) as the ‘Golden Age’. According to the adherents of the ‘Golden Age’ interpretation, the end of Obrenović rule in 1903 introduced Serbia to a period of liberal democracy, with a functioning parliamentary system elected from a broad franchise and presided over by a liberal monarch, Petar Karadjordjević (Alexander’s successor as Serbian king). It was supposedly a time of liberalization and political modernization in Serbian history cut short by the Austro-Hungarian attack of 1914. The perception has been remarkably persistent, and its formulation began soon after 1918, when many Serbians, disappointed with the failures of the common South Slav state, looked back upon an idealized, almost mythic past in which the Serbs had supposedly been united behind a common purpose and goal.

And yet the brilliance of the Golden Age obscures the darker realities of the Serbian state during 1903–14. We need to approach this period with caution: like a Holbein masterpiece, Serbian history during 1903–14 conceals a hidden *memento mori*, a death’s head which is crucial for understanding the true nature of the Serbian state on the eve of the First

<sup>6</sup> Jill A. Irvine and Carol S. Lilly (eds.), *Natalija: Life in the Balkan Powder Keg 1880–1956* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2008), p. 149.

<sup>7</sup> Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth, and Mobilization in Germany* (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

World War. The 'Golden Age' is framed by two spectacular acts of regicide against two royal couples: that of Alexander Obrenović and Draga Mašin in the Belgrade palace coup of 1903, and that of Franz Ferdinand and Sophie Chotek in Sarajevo, June 1914. It is telling that the same militarist clique, that is, the Serbian army officers informally led by Dragutin Dimitrijević 'Apis', a group latterly known as 'Unification or Death' (more commonly, the 'Black Hand'), were involved in both acts of violence. Apis and his allies were representative of a strain of militarism that was most prominent in Serbia in the first decade of the twentieth century: a militarism that was largely unrestrained by constitutional checks, whose adherents had a proprietary attitude over the state's domestic and foreign matters and who vied for supremacy in national affairs with the country's elected politicians. This militarism tends to be erased from the picture of the Golden Age, and yet it was a decisive influence in Serbia during our period.

### **The origins of militarism in Serbia, 1804–1903**

The origins of the hypertrophied militarism and civil-military tensions so prominent in Serbia at the beginning of the twentieth century can, to an extent, be traced back to the very origins of the Serbian state itself. The Serbian state of the nineteenth century was born in an armed uprising against the Ottomans, and it was thus in armed struggle that the Serbian national revolution found its purest form. It was only natural that the military would enjoy a privileged position in the institutional and national culture of Serbia. The exalted role of the Serbian army was to deliver the people from the purgatory of imperial slavery and into national emancipation, via armed struggle, and its officers were cognizant of their important role in the nationalizing mission.

Because of this heritage, the Serbian army as an institution came to define itself through its anti-imperial traditions – the *hajduk* bands, the peasant uprisings of the early nineteenth century, Karadjordje (in fact a veteran of the imperial Austrian army) and his fellow insurgents: these were the supposed tributaries of the Serbian army. However, this nativist institutional culture obscured the Serbian army's numerous foreign debts: like nationalism itself, modern military science in Serbia was largely an import from Western Europe, adapted to suit local circumstances. The historian Dimitrije Djordjević has outlined a four-stage process of modernization and development to which Balkan armies of the nineteenth century adhered, and this schema can be usefully applied to the Serbian case. The first stage, typically lasting from the end of the eighteenth century until the 1830s, saw the beginning of revolutionary

national armies in the Balkan peasant uprisings that were a feature of this period. The second period, from the 1830s until the 1860s, saw the installation of professional standing armies in the region; followed by a 'double standard' of development in both territorial, popular army units *and* standing armies (the third period). Finally, the period lasting from the 1880s until the beginning of the First World War, during which Balkan armies were organized, equipped and trained to (Western) European models and standards.<sup>8</sup>

In Serbia, Djordjević's first period began with the First Serbian Uprising of 1804 and continued until the end of the Second Serbian Uprising in 1817, during which time most able-bodied men were armed and fought.<sup>9</sup> Miloš Obrenović, leader of the Second Serbian Uprising (1815–17) and first Prince of Serbia, initiated the second phase of development, establishing a small army of paid soldiers recruited from across the land.<sup>10</sup> Then, in 1861, the 'Law on the Organization of the National Army' of 1861 created a large popular national army to complement the existing standing army (thus ushering in Djordjević's 'fourth period'). By 1883 the Serbs had a large standing army in which every Serbian male between the ages of twenty and fifty was required to serve for a period of two years. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Serbian army could mobilize between 250,000 and 300,000 men.<sup>11</sup>

There was an important corollary to the professionalization of the army: the emergence of a military elite, the army's officer corps, sufficiently well organized to rival the country's political elite.<sup>12</sup> In fact, the ultimate goal of both military and political elites in Serbia was the same: to recruit the peasant masses to the Serbian cause and to reclaim national lands from the Ottomans and the Habsburgs. Serbia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a 'nationalizing state' whose institutions were committed to inculcating people with a sense of national identity and loyalty.<sup>13</sup> The task ahead had been set by Ilija Garašanin, Serbia's Minister of Interior, later Prime Minister, in his secret *Načertanije* ('Outline' or 'Blueprint', drawn up in 1844, but not widely disclosed until

<sup>8</sup> Dimitrije Djordjević, 'The Role of the Military in the Balkans in the Nineteenth Century', in Ralph Melville and Hans-Jürgen Schröder (eds.), *Der Berliner Kongress von 1878: Die Politik der Grossmächte und die Probleme der Modernisierung in Südosteuropa in der Zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1982), pp. 318–19.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Boro Petrovich, *A History of Modern Serbia 1804–1918* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), p. 204.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 206–8. <sup>11</sup> Djordjević, 'The Role of the Military in the Balkans', p. 324.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 328.

<sup>13</sup> See Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 79–106. See also Diana Mishkova, 'Modernization and Political Elites in the Balkans Before the First World War', *Eastern European Politics and Societies*, 9, 1 (Winter 1995), pp. 63–89.

much later), a policy document that called for the unification of all Serbs into one state, creating a 'Great Serbia' whose realization would complete the process of national liberation begun with the First Serbian Uprising of 1804.<sup>14</sup>

Such agendas were quite typical of all Balkan states before the First World War: as Mark Biondich has noted, the Balkan countries had in common 'a commitment to the nationalist project, the homogenization of their societies, and the ideology of irredenta'.<sup>15</sup> There were, however, important differences between civil and military elites over the tempo of the proposed national revolution: civilian leaders tended to be more patient and flexible, willing to bend to the expediencies of diplomacy; the military was frequently bullish and uncompromising in its pursuit of the nationalizing mission. Importantly, the military was ready to act decisively and aggressively if internal or external opponents threatened this mission. The Serbian military elite, represented by the army's officer corps, came to regard itself as the guardian of state interests; for many professional soldiers in Serbia the country's civilian leadership was answerable to the army, not vice versa. It was a kind of 'institutional extremism' wherein the officers of the Serbian army demanded an ever-accelerating drive towards national liberation, a goal to which all other concerns were subordinated.<sup>16</sup> This institutional extremism impinged upon the civilian leaders of Serbia, who were unable fully to tame the army and its officers in the years before the war.

### The May Coup, 1903

The palace coup that began the critical period in Serbian history at the start of the twentieth century was a sensational demonstration of a self-confident and largely autonomous military acting as watch-dogs over national life. Its details are well known: on a May night in 1903, a small group of army officers, who enjoyed broad support throughout the officer corps of the Serbian army, invaded the royal palace of Alexander Obrenović with the intention of finding and killing the king.<sup>17</sup> After some

<sup>14</sup> On Garašanin, see David MacKenzie, 'Serbian Nationalist and Military Organizations and the Piedmont Idea, 1844–1914', *Eastern European Quarterly*, 16, 3 (September 1982), pp. 323–44.

<sup>15</sup> Mark Biondich, *The Balkans: Revolution, War, and Political Violence since 1878* (Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 62.

<sup>16</sup> See Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> The best accounts of the palace coup are Dragiša Vasić, *Devetsto treća: prilozi za istoriju Srbije od 8. jula 1900 do 17. januara 1907* (Belgrade: Izdanje i štampa štamparije 'Tucović', 1925) and Wayne S. Vucinich, *Serbia between East and West: The Events of 1903–1908* (Stanford University Press, 1954).

hours of stumbling around the palace's corridors and rooms, the army officers discovered the king, along with his wife, Draga Mašin, hiding in a bedroom closet. The royal couple was set upon by the officer conspirators with sabres, whereafter the mutilated corpses were defenestrated and left to lie in the palace courtyard until the following morning.

The immediate trigger for this bloody business, the so-called 'May Coup', was King Alexander's marriage to Draga Mašin: a commoner, a widow and a society woman with a past. Alexander was also the army's chief of staff, so for the officer conspirators, known as the 'regicides', the king's unseemly marriage and his impolitic behaviour was damaging to the prestige of their institution. In addition to Alexander's embarrassing marriage, there were other concerns that underpinned the regicides' actions and shored up support for their conspiracy. Alexander was a despot whose autocratic rule was becoming increasingly unpopular throughout the country, especially following his abrogation of the constitution and his curtailment of free speech. The May Coup was thus a vivid demonstration of how the army and its officers were prepared to remove and replace Serbia's leaders if they deemed it necessary. They themselves defined the national interest and acted in its name, and in the name of all those who opposed Alexander's rule.

But there was more at stake than this: Alexander, like his father King Milan, had been apathetic about claims on Serbia's national *irredenta*, preferring instead to cultivate good relations with the country's imperial neighbours, especially Austria-Hungary. This un-ambitious foreign policy meant that by the beginning of the twentieth century Serbia was looking less and less like a dynamic force of national revolution. Such lethargy was at odds with the regicides and with the officer corps of the army in general, since they were fully committed to maintaining the momentum of Serbia's national emancipation. The institutional extremism of the Serbian army tolerated no obstacles, even when they came in royal form. The May Coup clearly showed what fate awaited those who were indifferent or opposed to the national cause.

This, then, was the curtain-raiser of Serbia's 'Golden Age'; 'golden' because of the apparent contrasts between pre- and post-coup national and political affairs in the country. Petar Karadjordjević, the exiled claimant, replaced Alexander Obrenović on the Serbian throne, the last switch in a century of rivalry between the two dynasties. Petar was a man of liberal and libertarian tastes (he was responsible for translating John Stuart Mill's essay *On Liberty* into Serbian) who ruled as a constitutional monarch. Under Petar, party political life was suffered to thrive: post-1903 Serbian governments were dominated by the People's Radical Party (*Narodna radikalna stranka*), a powerful and well-organized political

force with mass electoral support, whose programme was rooted in the traditions of Serbian agrarian socialism. Radical party doctrine called for the political and constitutional freedoms supposedly enjoyed by Serbians within Serbia to be extended to all Serbs living under foreign rule.<sup>18</sup> The urgency of the nationalizing mission was restored; Serbia's post-1903 rulers had an appetite for aggrandizement that their predecessors lacked: soon after the coup, the Radicals and Petar steered Serbia away from the Austrian tutelage cultivated so assiduously by the Obrenovići and moved the country into the orbit of tsarist Russia. This was a fateful re-alignment indeed, not just for Serbia and Austria-Hungary, but ultimately for the whole of Europe. There was at this stage nothing inevitable about a showdown, military or otherwise, between the two states; nevertheless, as Jonathan Gumz has shown, the differences between Serbia, the nationalizing state, and Austria-Hungary, the a-national, bureaucratic empire, were now more clearly delineated than ever.<sup>19</sup>

The liberal and constitutional trappings of Karadjordjević's Serbia concealed some less than decorative facts about the sources of power in the country. Despite benefiting from its consequences, neither Petar nor the Radicals had been involved in the May Coup, and when the regicides handed over the reins to the parliament and the new king, they made sure to maintain their own autonomy and, potentially, their ability to act against the new regime. The regicides' interests were enshrined in Serbia's new constitution of 1903, which acknowledged them as the 'saviours of the nation'.<sup>20</sup> The democratic and liberal institutions of the Serbian state thus bore the scars of their violent birth: militarism remained the country's primal curse. The lurid details of the coup and the continued influence of the regicides in Serbian national life prompted outrage in the chancelleries of Europe, especially on the part of British observers, who were shocked that a monarch – even a Balkan monarch – could be thus abused while his assassins escaped without punishment.<sup>21</sup> Power struggles between the civilian and military elites of post-coup Serbia became an important feature of the country's political landscape. On the one hand, the country's new government curbed the influence of the regicides and their allies by retiring a number of their most prominent

<sup>18</sup> See Vladimir Stojančević, 'Pašičevi pogledi na rešavanje pitanja Stare Srbije i Makedonije do 1912. godine', in Vasilije Krestić (ed.), *Nikola Pašić: Život i delo: Zbornik radova* (Belgrade: Kultura, 1997), p. 281.

<sup>19</sup> Jonathan Gumz, *The Resurrection and Collapse of Empire in Habsburg Serbia, 1914–1918* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 7.

<sup>20</sup> See Olga Popović-Obradović, *Parlamentarizam u Srbiji 1903–1914* (Belgrade: Logistika, 2008).

<sup>21</sup> Vucinich, *Serbia between East and West*, p. 80.

supporters from the army. On the other hand, from 1906 onwards, the Ministry of the Army was continually headed by a regicide or by one of their allies, meaning that the influence of the conspirators reached into the very heart of democratic politics.

These rivalries (which were in fact three-cornered, between the regicides, the government and indeed the king, who realized that his own fate could match that of his predecessor) played out in the context of worsening relations between Serbia and Austria-Hungary. We have seen how the Serbian state's change of dynasty and its new foreign alignments after 1903 caused concern in Vienna. After the May Coup, antagonisms between Austria-Hungary and Serbia had flared up repeatedly; indeed, the two countries were in a state of economic war during the period 1906–11, waging a battle over tariffs known as the 'Pig War'. Later, in 1909, Austro-Hungarian authorities accused members of the Croat-Serb Coalition, a South Slav political party in the Croatian *Sabor* (Assembly) of spying for Serbia in two sensational trials: the 'Zagreb High Treason Trial' and the 'Friedjung Trial'. The most serious confrontation between the two states, however, occurred in 1908, following the Austria-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia.

### **The annexation of Bosnia and the proliferation of militarism in Serbia**

The domestic reactions to the annexation crisis in Serbia throw into sharp relief the differences between the country's civilian leaders and their militarist counterparts. After some protest and sabre-rattling, the Radical government resigned itself to the Austro-Hungarian *fait accompli*, at least for the time being. The annexation of Bosnia caused a shift in Serbia's official foreign policy aims. While the eventual incorporation of Serb-populated Habsburg lands into Serbia remained a long-term goal, the immediate realization of that goal seemed impossible. It was now expedient for Serbia's civilian leaders to re-direct nationalist energies southwards, towards the more tangible Ottoman lands, since Ottoman control in the Balkans at this time was far weaker than Habsburg control in Bosnia. For years groups of Christian bandits had operated in these parts; known to the Ottomans as *komitadji*, they referred to themselves as Chetniks, a name derived from the Serbian word *četa*, meaning troop or military unit.<sup>22</sup> At the beginning of the twentieth century, activists

<sup>22</sup> Milan Mijalkovski, 'Četničke (gerilske) jedinice Kraljevine Srbije – borci protiv terora turskog okupatora', in Momčilo Pavlović, Tetsuya Sahara and Predrag J. Marković (eds.), *Gerila na Balkanu: Borci za slobodu, buntovnici ili banditi –Istraživanje gerile i*



in Serbia, hoping to coordinate and strengthen the national character of such banditry, had organized a Chetnik 'executive committee', based in Belgrade but with sub-branches in other parts of Serbia (the largest of which was in Vranje), which recruited young men into the *čete* and organized their activities in the south.<sup>23</sup> Soon, the Serbian government was giving financial and material support to these groups. The change of dynasty and government in Belgrade after the May Coup of 1903 created more amenable conditions for the Chetnik executive branch. Expediency sometimes dictated that official Serbia distance itself from such guerrilla groups; nevertheless, the Serbian state shared the committee's interest in turning acts of banditry into more concerted anti-imperial guerrilla action, and the Chetniks came to serve as an auxiliary of the Serbian state's nationalization drive in the Ottoman Balkans.

The regicides took the annexation far less lightly than their civilian counterparts, and Vienna's perceived encroachment on Serbian *irredenta*, along with the persistence of rivalry with the civilian government and with ever-worsening relations within Bosnia, prompted the regicides to create their own association. This was 'Unification or Death', or, more commonly, the 'Black Hand', formed in May 1911. The Black Hand was a clandestine organization which took as inspiration the secret German and Italian societies of the nineteenth century (the Black Hand's journal was titled *Piedmont*), societies that were instrumental in realizing German and Italian unification. The leaders of the Black Hand, including, Apis, cloaked their society in a mantle of arcane symbols and secret underground meetings. The Society's seal comprised of a skull and crossbones, a knife, a bomb and a vial of poison. Initiates of the Black Hand stood in front of these latter three items while swearing fealty to the organization's primary goal: the incorporation of all Serbs currently living under imperial rule into the extended borders of an enlarged Serbian Kingdom: the 'Unification' of Unification or Death.

According to Wayne Vucinich, the Black Hand was a 'powerful and nefarious influence' in Serbia, increasing the existing power of the regicides in the royal court, the parliament and the various post-1903 governments.<sup>24</sup> Such was the concern caused by Apis and his allies that Alexander Karadjordjević (King Petar's son, crown prince from 1909 and

*paramilitarnih formacija na Balkanu* (Belgrade: Institute of Contemporary History, Faculty for Security Studies, 2007).

<sup>23</sup> On the *četnici*, see Aleksa Jovanović, 'Četnički pokret u južnoj Srbiji pod Turcima', in Aleksa Jovanović (ed.), *Spomenica dvadesetpetogodišnjice oslobođenja južne Srbije* (Belgrade, 1937). See also MacKenzie, 'Serbian Nationalist and Military Organizations and the Piedmont Idea', p. 334.

<sup>24</sup> Vucinich, *Serbia between East and West*, p. 104.

holder of the royal prerogative from 1914) began to cultivate a rival militarist clique of his own. This was the so-called 'White Hand', a loosely organized cabal of officers loyal to Alexander and headed by Colonel (later General) Petar Živković. The White Hand was Alexander's bulwark against the ever-powerful officers of the Black Hand, a means of securing himself should Apis and his cohort decide to act against the Karadjordjević dynasty as they had against Alexander Obrenović. Although lacking the formal organization and constitution of the Black Hand, the White Hand exerted a powerful influence of its own: its members were well positioned both in the army and in the royal court. Živković was especially close to Alexander, and would remain so until the monarch's death in 1934.

As David MacKenzie has shown, there was a proliferation of militarist societies and groups in Serbia in the years before the outbreak of the First World War. The Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia in 1908 caused a surge in patriotic and nationalistic sentiment throughout the Serbian lands.<sup>25</sup> Along with the Black Hand, the annexation prompted the creation of societies such as National Defence (*Narodna odbrana*, formed in 1908), a patriotic association committed to protecting Serbian interests in the annexed provinces. National Defence's central committee was located in Belgrade, but the society also had around 220 local committees in villages and towns throughout Serbia. Its goal was to awaken Serbian resistance to the annexation, to recruit volunteers for guerrilla and terrorist actions in the annexed lands and, ultimately, to unify all the Serbs into one state.

### **The Balkan Wars**

Civil-military rivalries in the Serbian state were most serious in the wake of the victories of 1912–13. Despite the myth of the 'Golden Age' and the stories of national euphoria and unity, the architects of Serbia's victories were far from unified: there were deep inter- and intra-party divisions within Serbia's political classes, and deep divisions between those classes and certain sections of the army. The divisions between Serbia's military and political leaders, inscribed into the constitutional and institutional makeup of the post-1903 state, now came to a head. During 1913–14, a struggle for mastery in the newly won territories broke out between the army and the government. It was a conflict that went straight to the crux

<sup>25</sup> MacKenzie, 'Serbian Nationalist and Military Organizations and the Piedmont Idea', p. 334.

of civil-military relations in Serbia, threatening to topple the king and his government.

At its centre was the question of whether the regions won by Serbia in the Balkan Wars should have a civil or a military administration. In the immediate aftermath of the fighting, Serbian army officers enjoyed priority in the ‘newly associated territories’. But this situation changed in April 1913 when the Interior Minister Stojan Protić issued a decree that called for the establishment of an interim civil administration, effectively ‘demilitarizing’ authority in the regions and passing it into the hands of the civilian government.<sup>26</sup> It was a move that brought the regicides, including Apis, back into the heart of Serbia’s domestic politics. For many of the regicides, retired following the May Coup, were now back on the army’s active list, having served during the Balkan Wars. They were once again ready to assert themselves in Serbian politics, standing their ground over the matter of civilian or military control in the new territories, violently denouncing Protić’s decision in the pages of their journal, and strategically allying themselves with politicians who opposed the Radical government. Once again, Apis cast a long shadow over Serbia’s domestic affairs: he and other Black Handers were fearful that their restored prominence, gained in the military victories of the Balkan Wars, was to be taken away from them. It looked too much like a reprisal of the drama following the May Coup, when Apis and his co-conspirators, having served their purpose, were sidelined in favour of civilian authority. No doubt the ghosts of 1903 haunted all sides, for just as the Black Hand feared that the government was once again denying them a central role in the nationalizing mission, civilian leaders looked back nervously at the fate of Alexander Obrenović (indeed, the Black Hand’s journal needled Protić by claiming he ‘saw praetorians in his sleep’<sup>27</sup>). The civil-military tug of war was just as fierce now as it had ever been; at stake was far more than just the administration of Serbia’s new territories: the outcome of the conflict between the Black Hand and the government would go some way to deciding who really controlled the Serbian state.

As of May 1914, the civil-military struggle had assumed greater dimensions and shifted into the sphere of democratic politics. This was partly because Apis and his officer supporters had courted (or perhaps were courted by) opposition figures who hoped to use the question of administration in the south to bring down the Radical government of Nikola Pašić. Pašić, for his part, had enlisted the support of Crown Prince

<sup>26</sup> See David MacKenzie, ‘Stojan Protić’s Final Decade and Serbia’s Radical Party’, *East European Quarterly*, 42, 3 (September 2008), p. 223.

<sup>27</sup> *Pijemont*, 5 January 1914, cited in *ibid.*, p. 224.

Alexander Karadjordjević, a more powerful ally than the ailing King Petar who, in any case, passed on the royal prerogative to Alexander in June 1914. Pašić, who only had a slim majority in the Serbian government, was practically forced to call a general election, though steadfastly refusing to rescind Protić's decree on the interim administration and hoping that the post-election cards would fall in his favour. Had the elections taken place, the question of the civil or military administration of the new territories would have been central to the electoral campaigns of all parties.

Of course, the elections were never held. The wars before the war had set into motion a chain of events that would plunge the Serbian state into yet another conflict, albeit one far more deadly than the Balkan Wars. Serbia's spectacular military successes and her territorial aggrandizement also convinced a number of Habsburg South Slav youths, mainly students of the monarchy's universities and gymnasia, that Serbia could and should liberate them from imperial rule.<sup>28</sup> Even before the conflicts in the Ottoman Balkans, the youth movement – in reality only a small section of the Habsburg South Slav educated elite, which was itself a tiny section of the population – had come to the attention of nationalist associations in Serbia. In April 1912, Croat students of Zagreb University visited Belgrade, where they were courted by prominent Black Handers, including Apis, Vojislav Tankosić and *Piedmont* editor Ljuba Jovanović 'Čupa'.<sup>29</sup> According to the publicist Josip Horvat, the students knew little about whom they were associating with, as the Black Handers 'chatted with them amicably, as if they were amongst peers'.

The majority of them [students] certainly did not know that these people were the ringleaders of the group of so-called conspirators of 1903 who got rid of the Obrenović dynasty. Still fewer could have known that those conspirators were in a latent conflict with the Serbian government and dynasty, who loved them not, but who feared them.<sup>30</sup>

The years and months before the outbreak of the First World War were marked by a series of terrorist attacks and *attentats* on Habsburg officials,<sup>31</sup> and it was in this context of sporadic anti-Habsburg terrorism and support for unification with Serbia that Gavrilo Princip, a Bosnian-Serb schoolboy and a member of a revolutionary youth group, later known as 'Young Bosnia', succeeded in assassinating Archduke

<sup>28</sup> See Mirjana Gross, 'Nacionalne ideje studentske omladine u Hrvatskoj uoči I svjetskog rata', *Historijski zbornik*, 21–2 (1968–9) and Vladimir Dedijer, *Sarajevo 1914*, 2 vols. (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1966).

<sup>29</sup> Josip Horvat, *Pobuna omladine 1911–1914* (Zagreb: SKD 'Prosvjeta', 2006), pp. 149–51.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150. <sup>31</sup> On these attacks, see *ibid.*

Franz Ferdinand (along with the archduke's wife, Sophie Chotek). Princip and his group were armed by officers associated with the Black Hand, who had also arranged for their passage over the border between Serbia and Bosnia. Once again, militarist groups were pushing harder towards unification than their civilian counterparts; the Radical government of Nikola Pašić, in the middle of a closely fought election campaign, was caught largely off guard by the events in Sarajevo and the subsequent Austro-Hungarian ultimatum.<sup>32</sup> This, of course, was a moot point for Austria-Hungary, whose leaders – and especially its military leaders – had been at odds with Serbia since 1903, and had been on a collision course with the state since its victories in the Balkan Wars.<sup>33</sup> The assassination of Franz Ferdinand was the *casus belli* of the Habsburg-Serbian war, but Austria-Hungary's underlying aim was to confront and defeat an ascendant enemy.

### Conclusion

This chapter has concerned the 'Golden Age' in Serbia's history, from 1903 to 1914. On this timeline, the Balkan Wars are seen as a culmination of the Serbian state's political and military grandeur, a moment of unity and euphoria in which the Serbs successfully extended the constitutional and democratic freedoms of their state into unredeemed Ottoman lands. In this regard, the Austro-Hungarian attack of 1914 is seen as a sudden and violent rupture in Serbian history, a cruel curtailment of the country's Periclean age. In order better to understand the direction of the Serbian state during this period, it is necessary to trace also the militarist sources of power and the fraught relations between military and political elites. The May Coup was less a transition from autocracy to democracy than it was a continuation of the militarist influence in Serbia's national affairs. Because of this powerful influence, the country's politicians were unable fully to direct the trajectory of the state in the years before the First World War. It is likely that the civilian government of Serbia would have been satisfied to pause the national revolution following the victories of 1912–13, in order to consolidate territorial gains in newly acquired

<sup>32</sup> Christopher Clark's recent study of the origins of the First World War, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (London: Allen Lane, 2012), offers a different interpretation of civil-military relations in Serbia on the eve of the First World War, claiming a close relationship existed between the Serbian government and militarist groups such as the Black Hand. The responses to *The Sleepwalkers* shows that the debate is far from settled.

<sup>33</sup> As Samuel Williamson has noted, by the end of the Balkan Wars, Serbia had become the 'most persistent threat' that Austria-Hungary faced. See Williamson, *Austria-Hungary and the Origins of the First World War* (London: Macmillan, 1991), p. 103.

territories and, perhaps more importantly, to deal with the militarist factor, represented most threateningly by Apis and his allies. But certain militarist groups demanded that the momentum of the national revolution be maintained, pushing for immediate satisfaction in Bosnia. The wars before the war, therefore, are not a moment of unity and common purpose among Serbia's rulers: quite the contrary, the Balkan Wars and their aftermath, on closer inspection, reveal the deep divisions within the country, divisions which would shortly push the country into a far more perilous and costly war.

## 8 The great expectations: political visions, military preparation and national upsurge in Bulgaria at the onset of the Balkan Wars

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*Nikolai Vukov*

Alongside the social, political and cultural developments, the first decades after the reestablishment of the Bulgarian state in 1878 were marked by various attempts to overcome the consequences of the Berlin Congress that left substantial parts of the Bulgarian population within territories of the Ottoman Empire. While protests in different parts of Macedonia and Thrace resulted in uprisings of local Christian inhabitants against Ottoman rule (the Ilinden uprising of 1903 being the peak), the Bulgarian state also undertook action against the persecutions and facilitated struggle through visions of future integration of these areas into Bulgaria. Accumulated over three decades, the expectations and determination to unify the Bulgarian population intensified in the three years after Bulgaria's proclamation of independence in 1908, gaining momentum with the outbreak of the First Balkan War. The military developments, negotiations with Balkan allies and the evolution of the conflict during the Second Balkan War demonstrated the utilization of the national ideal for political and territorial ends, its complicated position among Bulgaria's neighbour states and ultimately its collapse, termed in Bulgarian historiography as 'the first national catastrophe'. The trajectory of these expectations shows the decisive role in consolidating the ideas of nation and nationhood for the preparation and carrying out of military action, as well as for promoting unity between the population and its rulers.

The aim of this chapter is to present the expectations of Bulgarian society in the war against the Ottoman Empire, contrasting them with the limited enthusiasm and perception of disaster during the Second Balkan conflict when Bulgaria was fighting against its neighbours. Taking as a starting point Reinhart Koselleck's ideas on the role of expectations and visions of the future in shaping modern politics,<sup>1</sup> the chapter will

<sup>1</sup> See R. Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1985), pp. 69–70. For a fruitful utilization of Koselleck's approach, see Jon Cowards, 'Visions of the Postwar – The Politics of Memory and Expectations in 1940s France', *History and Memory*, 2 (Fall 1998), pp. 102–17.

draw attention to the mobilizing power of the national ideal in Bulgaria, the evolving lack of reality about the changing political contexts and the collapse of these expectations in the Second Balkan War. The chapter analyses diplomatic arrangement, army mobilization and public activity on the home-front.<sup>2</sup> Special attention will be paid to the position of the Bulgarian case within the general context of the changing constellation of power in Europe. The main emphasis in the chapter is that the Bulgarian experience of the Balkan Wars was of central importance in shaping politics until 1915 and it appeared crucial both for the country's participation in the Great War and for its development thereafter.

### Political constellations, 1908–12

In attempts to explain the conditions that led to the First Balkan War, historians have often emphasized its inevitability (in contrast to the Second Balkan War, which is generally considered as having been possible to prevent).<sup>3</sup> For the states in the Peninsula and for the Great Powers, a war for the redistribution of the territory of the declining Ottoman Empire was expected. If in the late nineteenth century the possibility for reforms in Ottoman territories was still entertained, in the early twentieth century – particularly after the Ilinden uprising of 1903 and after the political developments in 1908 – few observers on the European political scene believed that the status quo in the Balkans would continue much longer. Yet, despite the efforts of the Great Powers, which episodically took turns to avoid a military conflict, it was clear that the restraining of military interference and the failed attempts to impose reform in Ottoman territories would not last long and that a war would be the

<sup>2</sup> See I. Geshov, *Prestapnoto bezumie i anketite po nego: Fakti i dokumenti* (Sofia: Balkan, 1914); S. Ikonov, *Osvoboditelnata vojna na Balkanite: Istoria. Vpechatlenia. Kartini* (Sofia: Napred, 1913); M. Madjarov, *Diplomateska podgotovka na nashite voyni: Spomeni, chastni pisma, shifrovani telegrami i poveritelni dokumenti* (Plovdiv: Hr. G. Danov, 1932); L. Miletich, *Razorenieto na trakiyskite bulgari prez 1913 g.* (Sofia: BAN, 1918).

<sup>3</sup> I. Despot, *The Balkan Wars in the Eyes of the Warring Parties: Perceptions and Interpretations* (Bloomington IN: iUniverse, 2012); R. C. Hall, *The Balkan Wars 1912–1913: Prelude to the First World War* (London: Routledge, 2000); M. Mazower, *The Balkans: A Short History* (New York: Random House, 2001). For Bulgarian historiography, see particularly P. Deliradev, *Balkanskite voyni i bulgarskiat pogrom: Prichini, razvitiie, posleditsi* (Sofia: Liberalen klub, 1914); N. Kolarov, *Ocherk varhu diplomateskata istoria na balkanskite voyni* (Sofia: Svoboden universitet, 1938); N. Stanev, *Vojna za osvobodavaneto na Makedonia. Istorieski, ikonomicheski i kritichen pogled* (Sofia: S. M. Staykov, 1914); A. Toshev, *Balkanskite voyni*, vol. I (Sofia: Hudozhnik, 1929); vol. II (Plovdiv: Hr. G. Danov, 1933); G. Markov, *Bulgaria v Balkanskia sayuz sreshu Osmanskata Imperia, 1912–1913* (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1989); M. Semov, *Obrecheni pobedi. Bulgaria v Parvata svetovna vojna* (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo 'Sv. Kliment Ohridski', 1998).



likely option. The collapse of the idea of autonomy for Macedonia and Thrace (promoted by Britain already in 1908), the disappointment with the Young Turks' revolution and the violent suppression of several uprisings and expanding chetnik movements in the eastern provinces made it evident that previous diplomatic and 'peaceful' attempts to preserve the Empire's territorial integrity were no longer viable. War became the obvious solution.

This perception of inevitability was clearly apparent for the Ottoman Empire's neighbour states in the Balkans, which harboured no illusions about the good intentions of Ottoman reforms, the equality of the Christian population or the Great Powers' capacity and will to trigger policies that would work in favour of the Balkan states' attempts for 'national unification'. The latter was a leading factor in the foreign policy of the Balkan states and determined most of their political activities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>4</sup> The achievement of national unity was particularly important for Bulgaria, which – since its formation on the European map in 1878 – was involved in efforts to overcome the 'injustices' of the Berlin Congress and to integrate territories with a substantial ethnic Bulgarian population. The unification of such lands was the focus of the state's politics in that period, determining the act of unification between the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia in 1885, the ensuing Serbian-Bulgarian war, the support for the struggles in Macedonia and Thrace against the Ottoman rule and, ultimately, the participation of Bulgaria in the First Balkan War. As is often pointed out by Bulgarian historians, since late nineteenth century the Bulgarian state examined two major paths for the solution of the national question – firstly, the continuation of the struggle in Ottoman territories and, secondly, diplomatic efforts to force the Ottoman Empire to implement autonomous rule in its European regions and equality for its citizens, in accordance with Articles 23 and 62 of the Berlin Treaty. As these efforts proved futile, a war with the Ottoman Empire appeared inevitable. With the execution of structural reforms in the army and additional resources for military equipment and ammunitions, the proclamation of independence in 1908, and the various agreements that it sought to establish, Bulgaria was unalterably preparing for war, as were many of its neighbours. The authorities in Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia and Montenegro were well aware, however, that none of them separately had the necessary resources to win a war with the Empire and that they had to unite. This not only largely determined the negotiations and the alliances at the onset of the Balkan Wars, but also public expectations in the Balkan states.

<sup>4</sup> See Paul Newman's contribution to this volume ([Chapter 7](#), pp. 119–23).

The war, however, was not only about the distribution of 'Ottoman heritage' in south-eastern Europe (understood exclusively as 'territorial heritage'), or about the 'unification' of national groups within the borders of respective nation-states. It was also a war for political domination in this part of the continent and, as such, it raised concerns among the Great Powers about the control on the Straits, the trade relationships in the eastern Mediterranean and political domination in this part of Europe. A war and the ensuing redistribution of territories would cause more uncertainty about the spheres of influence in the region than the Great Powers seemed ready to accept. Until the late nineteenth century, the two big European states that were most interested in the situation in the Balkans – Russia and Austro-Hungary – were guided by their global interests and jealously protected the status quo, energetically blocking the revolutionary, diplomatic and military tendencies in solving national questions in the Peninsula. But in the early twentieth century the Great Powers no longer shared common views about the future of the region, leading to a series of crises, starting in Bosnia in 1908–9. These created a specific background where a union between the Balkan states could be formed, largely with the support of the Entente, especially Russia.

The formation of the Balkan League was marked from the very beginning, however, by an ambiguous and double-sided perception. Whereas for the Balkan states such an alliance was designed for the approaching war and actually facilitated and prefigured the onset of military activities, the Entente chose to regard the league mainly as a tool in its geopolitical interests, a military and political structure that could facilitate Britain, Russia and France in opposing the Balkan policy of the Central Powers. Russian diplomats initiated the anti-Ottoman negotiations between Bulgaria and Serbia from 1909, which culminated in the agreement of friendship between the two states of 13 March 1912, including a secret annex and a subsequent military convention. The agreement, with a clause hostile to Austria-Hungary, demonstrated Russia's renewed political influence in the Balkans, particularly with the statements about its role as an arbiter after the war's end. Although participating directly in the formation of the alliance, the countries of the Entente were resistant towards ideas of a war against the Ottoman Empire and insisted on the maintenance of the status quo, thus aiming to preserve the league for their future global intentions. Encouraged to establish agreements and military alliances among themselves, the Balkan states were warned to avoid war with the Ottoman Empire, and informed that even if they were victorious, the Great Powers would not allow territorial changes in the region. Particularly notable were the efforts of Austria-Hungary, which insisted on the peaceful solution of the Balkan problems and, in a note to

the Great Powers on 23 August 1912, suggested discussing the situation in the Balkans, so as to prevent the impending war.<sup>5</sup>

The governments of the Balkan League, however, viewed war as the sole means by which they could achieve their national aims. Experience demonstrated that it was hardly possible to rely on diplomatic or military support from any of the Great Powers, as the latter often switched positions. In the context of the emerging Balkan War, the ambiguous position of the Great Powers was yet again a clear sign that the Balkan allies could hardly expect unyielding support from any of the big European states at the time, and nor could they count on a coordinated and unanimous position before, during or after the war. This situation had advantages, opening ample space for the Balkan allies to take the initiative for war. While the idea of a local war seemed largely satisfactory to most of the Great Powers, for the Balkan states (and particularly for Bulgaria) it was the only reasonable decision with regard to their own claims and interests.

Together with a complicated set of diplomatic steps and considerations, the Balkan Wars were expected, prepared for and accelerated by circumstances in 1911 and 1912. The intensification of the armed struggle led by VMORO in Ottoman territories and the expansion of the chetnik movement in Macedonia and Thrace, the terrorist acts against Ottoman rule in Macedonian towns and mass repression of the local population by the authorities, several Albanian uprisings and the taking of Kosovo and Skopje by Albanian rebels in the summer of 1912 hastened the Balkan allies' military preparations and enhanced public pressure on their governments to declare war. In Bulgaria, the opposition and a significant part of the officer corps accused the government of Ivan Geshov of cowardice for not grasping the moment and starting the war. The Bulgarian public was convinced that the country had twice missed the opportunity to liberate Macedonia and Thrace – in August and September 1908 and in April 1909, when the Salonica corps left for Constantinople to dethrone Abdul Hamid II. Popular opinion warned the government not to miss a third chance.<sup>6</sup> During negotiations with Serbia, the public in Bulgaria frequently sent appeals to politicians and diplomats to make concessions and speed up the military arrangements. After the brutal actions of Ottoman authorities against the Bulgarian

<sup>5</sup> See Radoslav Mishev, 'Mezhdunarodnata obstanovka prez 1912 g. i izbuhvaneto na Balkanskata vojna', in *Balkanskite voyni, 1912–1913. Sbornik statii i studii*, ed. I. Todorov, I. Stoyanov, R. Mishev and K. Penchikov (Veliko Tarnovo: Universitetsko izdatelstvo 'Sv. Sv. Kiril i Metodiy', 1995), p. 18.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

population in Shtip, Kochani and Doyran, there were vehement protest meetings in cities and a nationwide call for war against the Ottomans. On an international level, the Italo-Ottoman war of 1911 not only served as an example of how one of the Great Powers violated with impurity the principle of sovereignty of the Ottoman territories, but also, through the numerous battles that the Ottoman Empire lost in this war, strengthened the belief that a similar attempt in the Balkans would also be crowned with success.

### **The preparation for the war and Bulgarian expectations**

Enthusiasm for the approaching war was particularly strong in Bulgaria, because of the agenda for national unification since the Treaty of Berlin in 1878. Historian Nikola Stanev, author of the first Bulgarian monograph on the Balkan Wars, remarked with regard to the psychological atmosphere in Bulgaria in 1912, 'this generation had for 500 years known the Turk as a master and tyrant of its grandfathers and ancestors. It felt very keenly the freedom now and it was this reason that created an urge to help its enslaved brothers.'<sup>7</sup> The favourable circumstances gave hope to many Bulgarians that they could be successful in a war against the Ottomans and might finally achieve the national ideal of San Stefano Bulgaria. The order of King Ferdinand on 17 September 1912 for a general mobilization and the announcement of the readiness of Greece, Serbia and Montenegro to fight together against the Ottoman Empire was met with enthusiasm across the country. Turning subsequently into one of the key motifs for the Bulgarian historiography on the Balkan Wars, this exhilaration was concentrated mainly in the large cities of the kingdom, where the reception to political messages and national fervour were the strongest. It did, however, resonate among the peasant population, who demonstrated a readiness for mobilization and fighting. In the capital, the exaltation appeared immediately after the proclamation of the news: people filled the streets shouting patriotic slogans and singing the national anthem. Several hours after the proclamation, more than 50,000 people gathered in the square in front of 'Sveti Kral' Church in Sofia to express support for the decision. As it was reflected in the newspapers, 'the enthusiasm turned into delirium, which took hold of everybody – from 80 year olds to little children – all continued to demonstrate in the streets to express approval of the governmental act for army

<sup>7</sup> Stanev, *Voyna za osvobodavaneto na Makedonia*, pp. 15–16; Vera Boneva and Petko Petkov, 'Parvata bulgarska istoricheska Monografia za Balkanskite voyni', in *Balkanskite voyni, 1912–1913*, ed. Todorov *et al.*, pp. 137–47.

mobilization'.<sup>8</sup> A procession was made to the Serbian Legation, where it was expressed that the Slavs had joined hands together against a common enemy, and that shoulder to shoulder the two brotherly peoples would succeed. A similar visit was also paid to the Greek Legation.<sup>9</sup>

The collective enthusiasm continued in the following days, involving diverse parts of the population and to the approval of the various political parties. On his way to a special session of Parliament on 22 September, King Ferdinand was hailed by Sofia citizens, who filled the streets and squares; in the National Assembly he was met with a loud 'Hurrah' and praise.<sup>10</sup> His short speech was followed by that of Prime Minister Ivan Geshov, who claimed the alliance of the four Christian states created conditions for a 'good life together with the neighbours' in the Balkans and that it was 'an epochal and historical event'. As the main advocate in Bulgaria for the Balkan League, Geshov expressed the hope that 'a dawn will appear for a new era in the Balkan peninsula'. It was notable that, in the usually split National Assembly, approval for mobilization was favourably received by almost all political parties in the Parliament. Only the socialist party expressed reservations, disapproving of war as a means to settle arguments and insisting that the future of the Balkan people was in their unification within a common Balkan federal republic. Emphasizing the supreme feeling of duty to the fatherland, the leaders of the other parties in Parliament approved the decision for mobilization and declared confidence in a future success, guaranteed by the unanimous spirit and readiness of the Bulgarian people to fight, as well as by the unity of the different Balkan states. The emphasis on the full concord of the allies turned into a motto in all military and political activities until the end of the First Balkan War. It was only after the London Treaty in May 1913 that the refrain turned into its opposite – the 'brigand neighbours'.<sup>11</sup> Another point raised in speeches on mobilization was that the war did not have aggressive intentions and was not actually 'sought' by Bulgarian politicians and society; rather it was 'unavoidable' because of the stubbornness of Ottoman authorities and the national duty of Bulgaria to protect fellow nationals in the Empire's European territories.<sup>12</sup> The idea that Bulgaria was not a motor of the military conflict, but had no option

<sup>8</sup> P. Kishkilova, *Balkanskite voyni po stranitsite na bulgarskia pechat, 1912–1913* (Sofia Akademichno izdatelstvo 'Prof. Marin Drinov', 1999). All press material used in the text below is quoted from this book.

<sup>9</sup> *Mir*, 3660, 20 September 1912. <sup>10</sup> See Kishkilova, *Balkanskite*, p. 6.

<sup>11</sup> Y. Konstantinova, 'Allies and Enemies: The Balkan People in the Bulgarian Political Propaganda during the Balkan Wars', *Etudes balkaniques*, 1 (2011), pp. 108–48.

<sup>12</sup> See in this respect the speech by D. T. Strashimirov (from the Agricultural Union) on 22 September 1912, *Mir*, 3664, 25 September 1912.

to avoid it – that it did not have aggressive intentions, but rather rose up in defence of national dignity and as a guardian of human rights – was promoted as the framework for interpretation and justification of the war, thus becoming a recurrent theme in subsequent Bulgarian historiography on these wars.

The unprecedented enthusiasm for the war found expression in the mass movement of soldiers from the reserve to army units. In addition to the regular soldiers and officers (which numbered around 366,000), a large number of volunteers responded to the mobilization appeal, and the Bulgarian army peaked at around 600,000 people. Parallel to that, the Ministry of War was inundated with requests and applications from Bulgarians in Thrace and Macedonia. Over 14,600 people were enlisted as volunteers from these areas and fifty volunteer units were formed, growing to ninety during the course of the war. Mobilization ran in parallel with the other Balkan states, and the efforts of the Great Powers, notably Russia and Austro-Hungary, to prevent war were in vain. In response to warnings that the Balkan allies would start the war at their own risk, the Bulgarian Prime Minister said that there was no way back. Similar statements emanated from Athens, Belgrade and Cetinje. On 5 October, telegraph agencies announced the manifesto of the Bulgarian king, in which he stated the sacred character of the war and ordered the Bulgarian army to cross into Ottoman territories.

### **Battles, victories and rising expectations**

Less than a week after the allies commenced military action against the Ottoman Empire, the Bulgarian army won a series of battles and on 11 October took the formidable Lozengrad fortress. Victory at Lozengrad was followed by military success on 18 October when the defence line of Lyuleburgaz-Bunarhissar fell, leading to the defeat of the Ottoman Eastern Army's main forces and opening the path to Constantinople. News of these quick victories spread across Europe. Foreign correspondents lauded the astonishing speed of the assault operations, the well-prepared military plan and the unity of the Bulgarian people.<sup>13</sup> Bulgarian victories represented the emergence of a new military factor in Europe – one that could hardly be controlled by the Great Powers.

The quick surrender of the Ottoman Empire was a disappointment for European military and political circles, a fact that is shown clearly

<sup>13</sup> I. Shipchanov, 'Chujdestrannite korespondenti v Turtsiya za Balkanskata vojna (1912–1913)', *Voennistoricheski sbornik*, 4 (1982), pp. 101–4; on the European press, see Keisinger's contribution to this volume ([Chapter 19](#), pp. 352–6).

in diplomatic reports, especially those of the Central Powers. The Bulgarian victories helped overcome the reservations of Britain, France and Russia about the potential of Bulgaria, but the prospect that this state could take control of the Straits and become a significant factor in their strategies in the Middle East was not met with enthusiasm. This possibility was even more unacceptable for Germany and Austro-Hungary, which overtly considered the Bulgarian victories in Thrace as a blow to their geopolitical intentions in south-eastern Europe. The capture of Lozengrad and the successful operation at Lyuleburgaz-Bunarhissar deeply shook the previous insistence on keeping the Balkan status quo, rendering it untenable. The surprise at the speed of military action and the lack of predictability about future military developments prompted new attempts by the Central Powers to save the Ottoman Empire from complete military defeat.

These successful battles had an enormous psychological effect on Bulgarian society, confirming the expectations of success against the former oppressor. Despite the patriotic exhilaration and the confidence in the capacities of the military troops, operations in Thrace also brought astonishment in Bulgaria, strengthening the belief that the state's national mission would be accomplished. In political terms, however, the quick victories blurred the sense of reality among the chief commander, King Ferdinand, and his advisors. The swift defeat of the Ottoman troops in Thrace stimulated new expectations that far surpassed the original aims. The undisguised goal was an assault on the Ottoman capital, Constantinople, with the aim of accomplishing a historical dream dating back to medieval times. With the victory at Lyuleburgaz-Bunarhissar, the Bulgarian army had actually achieved the goals of the war in Eastern Thrace. Despite this, however, King Ferdinand rejected the proposal of the Grand Vizier on 30 October 1912 for discussing the 'preliminary conditions for peace' and, missing a historical chance to establish peace, ordered the continuation of military action. With an unnecessary attack on the fortified positions at Çatalca (4–5 November 1912), the chief commander and his advisors cast doubt on the entire military enterprise and threw thousands of Bulgarians into the slaughter of battle and human destruction, with serious consequences for the rest of the war.

The next major military success of the Bulgarian army, the capture of Adrianople on 13 March 1913, had similar psychological effects. Viewed as one of the most impressive military achievements in modern European history, the taking of the Adrianople fortress, in the words of the Viennese *Reichspost*, was 'an honorary wreath for the exploits of Bulgarians near Lozengrad and Lyuleburgaz-Bunarhissar, a new proof

of the exceptional military capacities of the Bulgarian army'.<sup>14</sup> This success was expected to exercise enormous influence not only upon the negotiations for peace, but also in the distribution of conquered territories and the solution of the Balkan crisis. The European press hailed the capturing of Adrianople, emphasizing that with the falling of this fortress, the most important hurdle for establishing peace was overcome. Among the most exalted reactions abroad were those in St Petersburg, where the Russian Parliament held a special celebration to mark the falling of the fortress. As the newspaper *Svyat* reported in its introductory article: 'Hurrah! Adrianople is ours! . . . The taking of Adrianople puts European diplomacy in front of a *fait accompli* and opens new wide perspectives for the future development of the Balkan alliance and the remaining Slavic world; wreathed with victories, the alliance will become a very impressive power for maintaining the political equilibrium that was broken by the Central Powers.'<sup>15</sup> The capture of the Adrianople fortress (as well as the other successful battles of the Bulgarian army) were celebrated widely by Russian society, which – regardless of the ambivalent position of Russian diplomacy – provided generous military, economic, technological and logistical support to Bulgaria.<sup>16</sup> The capture of Adrianople – promoted as the 'peak of Bulgarian military glory'<sup>17</sup> – turned into a major pillar of public mythology surrounding the Balkan Wars in Bulgaria and enhanced the rising expectations about an ultimate victory, Bulgaria's military power and national unity.

### Clouds of distrust and alarm

The expectation that the taking of Adrianople would lead to an end of military activities and would play a crucial role in the establishment of peace in the region appeared baseless. Neither the situation of the defeated Ottoman Empire nor the evolving attitudes of the other Balkan states were signs for hope in this direction. While opinion in Constantinople was that the fall of Adrianople would serve as a stimulus for continuing the war and for regaining what was taken, statements coming from Bulgaria's neighbours gradually raised worries about their actual intentions in the peace negotiations. Particularly troubling was the position of Romania, which insisted on the rectification of its border with Bulgaria

<sup>14</sup> Kishkilova, *Balkanskite*, p. 140.      <sup>15</sup> Kishkilova, *Balkanskite*, p. 141.

<sup>16</sup> P. Goranov, 'Ruskite voenni dostavki za bulgarskata voyska prez Balkanskata vojna' [The Russian Military Supplies for the Bulgarian Army during the First Balkan War], in *Balkanskite voyni, 1912–1913*, ed. Todorov *et al.*, pp. 43–56.

<sup>17</sup> I. Iliev, 'Ovladyavaneto na Odrinskata krepost – vrah na bulgarskata boyna slava', *Izvestia*, 37 (1984), pp. 137–8.



as compensation for its declared neutrality. Alarmed by the prospect of a European conflict, the Great Powers satisfied Romania's demand for Silistra through the Petersburg protocol of 26 April 1913, an act interpreted as treacherous and unjust by Bulgarian society. Ironically, the 'reward' for carrying out military operations in Thrace, for taking Adrianople and for defeating the Ottoman Empire turned out to be a seizure of a part of Bulgarian territory, with hardly any restraint from the Great Powers. In addition, the relationship between the allies also started to deteriorate. While until the beginning of March assurances of 'unbreakable unity' were constantly reproduced in political speeches and the press in the Balkan states, soon after the battle for Adrianople, when the war's end was already visible, the allies' visions about the distribution of Ottoman territories plucked dissonant strings. The previous declaration that there was no enemy that could withstand the power of the allied Balkan states and that no treachery could destroy their unity<sup>18</sup> rapidly dissolved when, after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, they lacked a common enemy and intrigue crept in among the states of the league.

The resolute position of the Ottoman authorities, Romanian pressure for compensation and evolving intra-allies disagreements prevented Bulgarian diplomacy from utilizing the beneficial situation that was created through the military success at Adrianople. Moreover, it led to the interference of the Great Powers not only in solving the Romanian-Bulgarian argument, but also in the negotiations for peace among the warring sides. What the allies so fervently sought to prevent at the onset of the war – the interference of the Great Powers in a conflict – became inevitable towards the war's end, when the Great Powers had a decisive input in concluding the military conflict. Taking care to preserve what they saw as the general European peace, they pressed the Balkan allies and the Ottoman Empire to sign the peace treaty on 17 May 1913. Although providing benefits for Bulgaria, the treaty was seen as a disappointment – both in terms of expectations prior to the war and with regard to the spoils that Bulgarians felt they deserved for their military victories and for suffering the largest number of casualties.

Actually, to the extent that the major focus of Bulgarian attention in terms of national unification was directed at Macedonia, hardly any territorial achievement would have been able to satisfy the Macedonian question. The capture of Adrianople was instrumental in raising the ambitions of Bulgarian politicians, but during the fighting in Thrace, the

<sup>18</sup> *Mir*, 3733, 4 December 1912.

Bulgarian army had only one military unit (the Seventh Rila division) that fought in Macedonia under Serbian command, leaving this area mainly to Greek and Serbian troops. Yet, aside from raising the reservations and defensiveness of the Balkan allies, Bulgarian successes in Thrace and the ensuing pretensions of the Bulgarian state put an additional strain on the predominantly favourable attitude that the Entente had to Bulgaria during the First Balkan War. After the attack on Çatalca and the pressing claims of Bulgarians for territory beyond the Midiya-Enos line, Russia, Britain and France withdrew their benevolent attitude to Bulgaria. What was already interpreted by Bulgarians as a failure of its own diplomacy to defend the achievements won by military might was largely a result of an inflexibility to the changing situation in Europe, an inadequate strategy and excessive aims. In many respects, during the First Balkan War, Bulgaria's allies turned out to be both much more pragmatic in military and diplomatic efforts, and nurtured fewer illusions that every side could be satisfied.

Accepted ambiguously by Bulgaria's allies as well, the treaty further sharpened the contradictions about the distribution of Ottoman territory. The neglect of the Bulgarian-Greek dispute on South Macedonia and the rejection of the principle of the area's inseparability during the negotiations that formed the Balkan League led to the latter's dissolution immediately after signing the London Peace Treaty. On 19 May 1913 (two days after the treaty), a Greek-Serbian pact was signed, with which the two states guaranteed their common boundary in Macedonia, and new preparations for military actions began. Less than a month after the peace treaty, on 16 June, the Second Balkan War began, despite the efforts of the European diplomacy to prevent it. It is not necessary to go into the details of this second military clash, but it is worth emphasizing that the events that led to or occurred in this war were again largely 'unexpected' by Bulgarian politicians and by the Bulgarian public in general. The insistence of Serbia on revising its prewar agreement with Bulgaria, to keep most of Macedonia; the invasion of Romanian forces into Bulgarian territory (approved by the Great Powers as helping to bring equilibrium and peace in the region); the Ottoman crossing of the Midiya-Enos line and taking back most of Thrace; and the lack of support for Bulgaria from any of the Great Powers – none of these was anticipated by political leaders. Yet, when these events occurred, they confirmed the politicians' lack of adequate vision about the situation in the Balkans and the disastrous effect that the continuation of the war would have on the country. This was confirmed by the new peace treaties – in Bucharest on 28 July 1913 and in Constantinople on 16 September 1913.

### **Expectations after 1913**

One of the notable points in the negotiations and alliances carried out before the First Balkan War was that only at its end did Bulgarian society learn about the details of the agreements with Serbia and Greece, and particularly about the secret annex with Serbia on the division of Macedonia. From the perspective of the disappointment at the war's end, and in the face of the emerging Second Balkan War, the Bulgarian public was bitterly enraged by the mistakes that politicians had made when signing the agreements that established the Balkan League. The first and foremost mistake was the agreement to divide Macedonia – an act that contradicted previous Bulgarian policy and cast a shadow on the war as being aimed at conquering territories, rather than serving the purposes of national unification. Although the agreement for dividing Macedonia came after several years of negotiations with Serbia, was prompted by Russia as a factor to reach an agreement and was supported by the Bulgarian public in 1911 and 1912, from a retrospective viewpoint the anger against the politicians who had allowed such a policy was enormous. Together with other elements in the Bulgarian-Serbian agreement (such as the lack of specific parameters for Russia's role as an arbiter, or the Albanian national movement as a factor in the territorial distribution), other points that were severely criticized after the end of the First Balkan War concerned the agreement with Greece, where there was an absence of any arrangement for the distribution of territories in Macedonia. Although many of these oversights had their justification (in the last case, for example, the avoidance of a discussion on the fate of Thessaloniki), and although they were the result of a careful estimation of Bulgarian geopolitical strategy, it was a recurrent theme that the neighbours 'managed to cheat us'.

Particularly pointed were criticisms on the absence of a joint plan of military operations by the allies and the fact that the military actions were not in accordance with the political interests of Bulgaria. The country's participation in battles mainly in Thrace where the majority of Ottoman troops were concentrated did not help to sustain claims in Macedonia, where there was a relatively small Bulgarian presence. Thus, in retrospect, the exaltation with the military victories in Thrace foreshadowed the frustration with the lost hopes for Macedonia, the original focus of Bulgaria's national aims. In addition, instead of common agreement between the four states in the alliance, there were bilateral agreements between Bulgaria and the other Balkan states. As Serbia, Greece and Montenegro did not sign any additional agreements before the onset of

the First Balkan War, the new alliance that they formed against Bulgaria in 1913 largely came as a consequence of such preliminary oversights.

A major factor in the discrepancy between the expectations and the outcomes after the Balkan Wars lay in the secrecy of the arrangements between the allies. In Bulgaria, the only ones who were aware of the content of the agreements were the king, the Prime Minister and several members of the government, putting at risk the coordination of action between the different state institutions. In fact, the major precondition of the war was the proclamation of independence in 1908, which allowed Bulgaria to declare war against the Ottoman Empire and to sign agreements with other states, and secondly, the changes in 1911 of Article 17 of the Constitution, so that international agreements were to be signed by the government and approved by the king (not by the Parliament, as before). The latter meant that the National Assembly was informed about such negotiations and agreements only if considered necessary and it was prevented from participating in the most important decisions regarding the state's foreign policy. The decisions for starting the negotiations with Serbia and with Greece were taken without general discussion and were known to only a few people – not even to General Ivan Fichev, who was holding parallel negotiations with Serbian and Greek military officials. In addition, the Bulgarian diplomats abroad were practically kept in isolation about the direction of foreign policy.<sup>19</sup> Publicity was kept to a minimum and Bulgarian external policy became less manageable. As the Bulgarian historian Milen Semov points out: 'everything was held in complete secret. It was secret from the society and the people, who did not know that we would share Macedonia, but rather believed that we were doing everything for the liberation of Macedonia. It was held secret from our military commanders – the generals, who did not know the content of the agreements that were signed with Serbia and Greece for Macedonia . . . It was secret from the allies and from the Great Powers.'<sup>20</sup> This pattern of secrecy not only determined the level of unrealistic expectations and speculation about the war's outcome, but also prevented the coordination between different state institutions before and during the Balkan Wars. The harmful impact of this secrecy was felt once again in June 1913 when the decision for a war against the allies was taken by the circle around the monarch, without sufficient evaluation of the situation and without the diplomatic tact to help avoid the pending catastrophe.

Having started in parallel to the ongoing Second Balkan War, reflections on these mistakes revealed both the general lines of the ensuing

<sup>19</sup> Semov, *Obrecheni pobedi*, p. 23.      <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

historical interpretation of the Balkan Wars in Bulgaria and the symptomatic oversights and silences that were established and that remain a blank spot in Bulgarian historiography. First and foremost, these reflections demonstrated the insistence on the 'liberating character of the war' for lands with a prevailing Bulgarian population, diminishing thus the existing element of territorial accession and not taking into account the mixed character of the population in the occupied areas. The Bulgarian ethnic component was viewed as predominant, even exclusive, in all the territories that Bulgaria occupied and claimed for, thus disregarding the presence of other ethnic groups, such as Greeks, Serbs, Turks and Jews, who were rarely mentioned or presented in downgraded numbers, particularly in territories contested by neighbour states. Accusing diplomats vehemently for their failure to defend what the Bulgarian army had fought for at the front, the interpretations after the first Balkan War did not scrutinize the extremity of Bulgaria's claims, including Thessaloniki, Adrianople and the islands of Tassos and Samotraki. Furthermore, the emphasis on the Bulgarian victories during the war came to sidestep the military involvement and victories of the other Balkan armies, their participation in joint military actions (such as the Serbian participation in capturing Adrianople). In speeches, in public proclamations and in historical interpretations after the summer of 1913, this particular Bulgarian point of view, shaped as justified and uncompromising, was strictly followed. In the post-war years some critical remarks did appear on the ambition of entering Constantinople, or on Bulgaria's responsibility for starting the Second Balkan War. However, the primary accusations were against the neighbours as being solely culpable for Bulgaria's woes.

This negative image of neighbours and the idealization of the Bulgarian army marginalized important themes, such as the treatment of different ethnic groups and prisoners of war in areas occupied by Bulgaria. In a similar way, while the influx of refugees to Bulgarian territory after the Balkan Wars was presented as an argument for the legitimacy of Bulgaria's territorial pretensions, no attention was paid to the wave of refugees (mostly Muslims and Turks, but also other ethnic and religious groups) from territories occupied by or later integrated into Bulgaria. In accounts of the mistakes in the war, the major stress was on the diplomatic and military arrangements, forgetting the numerous cases of destruction and wasted human lives in the occupied areas, and among the state's own soldiers. While the international press reported on atrocities during the Balkan Wars, in Bulgaria atrocity evidence was mainly attributed to other Balkan armies and overshadowed by stories of the heroism of Bulgarian troops. The master narrative of the liberating purpose of Bulgaria's

involvement in the war and the supreme value of its achievement at all possible cost formed the narrative pattern, common to other countries of the region. Nonetheless, it reveals an important aspect of Bulgarian interpretations, and it was largely reproduced in historiographic texts, as well as in practice during the state's participation in the Great War – this narrative pattern is certainly worth remembering.

### **Expectations in the perspective of the post-war developments**

From the perspective of the failure of Bulgaria's expectations in the First Balkan War, the developments in the region in 1912–13 have a further dimension – one related to the impact that the failed expectations had on political decisions and social processes after 1913. The primary focus of attention was related to the issue of national unification, a key motive for the onset of war against the Ottomans. Despite the declared intentions and the substantial territorial rearrangements in the Balkans, the unification of national groups in their respective nation-states did not take place, leaving open territorial claims, political tension and conflict in the Peninsula. The relationship between putative national groups and territories easily translated claims of national unification into demands for land acquisition, territorial enlargement and irredentism. In arguments over the demographic and geographic principles, the latter seemed to prevail towards the end of the First Balkan War. In the arguments against the Ottoman Empire, demo-politics was a major and decisive card (with all its aspects of ethnic, religious and cultural affiliation of the population groups in Ottoman lands). However, by the end of the First Balkan War, geopolitics dominated the arguments, determining the framework for discussing territorial issues in the decades to come. Furthermore, the strategies of uniting ethnic and cultural groups within one nation-state were challenged by the lack of clear and consensual definitions about such groups in the ethnically, religiously and culturally mixed regions in this part of Europe. Although an expressive example in this respect was given by the Ottoman state (which after the Balkan Wars gradually turned to 'Islamic Ottomanism'), the end of the Second Balkan War also outlined the contours of ethnic and cultural nationalism, revealing similar policies for national and regional assimilation carried out by Serbia and Greece in Macedonia, by Bulgaria in the Rhodope Mountains and by Romania in Southern Dobroudja. The new state framework of ethnic and religious groups triggered migration from the occupied territories, particularly Muslims to the Ottoman Empire and Bulgarians to their nation-state.

For Bulgaria, perceiving itself as 'cheated' by its allies after the First Balkan War and as the loser of the Second Balkan War, the failure of national unification was a heavy blow. Facing a range of economic and social difficulties, the state appeared as a defeated country. While the 250,000 refugees that arrived in Bulgaria in 1913 encountered difficulties of accommodation and economic survival, the Bulgarian population in territories that were distributed among Bulgaria's neighbours underwent systematic policies of cultural assimilation and pressure to declare themselves Serbs, Greeks or Romanians. The destruction of existing Bulgarian institutions (schools, churches and monasteries) matched the expulsion or physical destruction of teachers and priests and their substitution by Serbian, Greek or Romanian officials. The repression, often resulting in persecutions and arrests, was met with resistance by the population through uprisings and riots, the largest ones being near Ohrid and Debar in September 1913. Heavily suppressed by local authorities, events like these had enormous resonance in Bulgarian society and nurtured the appeal of continuing the struggle. Although the expressions of support from Bulgaria to fellow nationals remaining outside the borders of the country continued, the end of the Balkan Wars added a new dimension to the country's claims on territories including Bulgarian population, namely the state's previous 'natural' right to protect the Bulgarians in Macedonia and Eastern Thrace. After the Balkan Wars, the situation excluded the possibility for such protection, except for a new military conflict, where Bulgaria would seek to get back what it perceived as having been unjustly taken.

One of the most serious consequences of the Balkan Wars for Bulgaria was that it ended up internationally isolated and surrounded by enemy states. While at the beginning of the military conflict the nation fervently promoted the idea of Balkan unity, and was the main initiator of the Balkan alliance, in 1913 the state was at war with all its neighbours and was entrenched in a mass psychosis against the 'allies-brigands'. The latter was particularly well outlined in public reaction to the signing of the peace treaties: 'The peace in Bucharest was established', declared one editorial, 'but peace will not be in the Balkans. There cannot be peace where there is violence. The peace that was signed in Bucharest is a sanctioning of the most monstrous violence. Bulgaria cannot accept this peace.'<sup>21</sup> Pressed to establish peace treaties with its neighbours, Bulgaria maintained that these 'would create eternal disturbances in the Balkans' and that 'only with abolishing the obvious injustices could peace be

<sup>21</sup> *Narodna Volya*, 58, 26 July 1913.

preserved'.<sup>22</sup> Despite such declarations, neither the neighbouring states nor Bulgaria itself were eager to enter into negotiations, and the relationships remained at a standstill until a new course of arrangements and coalitions was taken up in the following year.

No less serious was the breakdown in relations with the Great Powers, most of which reacted negatively to Bulgaria's territorial pretensions after the First Balkan War and kept a cold distance to the country's defeat during the Second. There remained only the limited protection of Austro-Hungary (the major Great Power loser of the wars), and this was partly beneficial, as it helped Bulgaria to achieve peace and preserve some of the contested territories. But this support also had a negative effect, as it left the country in the sphere of influence of the Triple Alliance only a year before the First World War – nor were German leaders keen on the Bulgarian dimension.<sup>23</sup> In fact, Bulgaria's political orientation to the Central Powers had already started during the first half of 1913. Given the conflicts with Greece, Serbia and Romania, and with the territorial claims for access to the Marmara Sea and unwillingness for concessions to its national ideal, Bulgaria diverged from the strategic interests of the Entente. Thus, despite attempts for Bulgarian involvement on the Entente side in the first phase of the Great War, moving towards Austria-Hungary in 1913 determined Bulgaria's path.

### **Conclusion: expectations in comparative perspective**

An analysis of the discrepancies between expectations and outcomes of Bulgaria's participation in the Balkan Wars would certainly be one-sided if not posed with the background of the overall situation of expectations and conjecture in the Balkans and Europe in general – few of those actually becoming reality in the end of 1913. Although at some points it was perceived as unavoidable, the war of the Balkan allies against their former master was in many respects unpredictable – both for the warring sides themselves, and for external observers. Neither the ultimate defeat of the Ottoman Empire, nor the rapid military outcomes, were forecast by the major European states. In many respects, the Balkan Wars demonstrated the perpetually unstable relationship between existing scenarios and ongoing developments. This explains the high number of 'surprises' that bombarded the European scene during the course of the war (from

<sup>22</sup> *Mir*, 3955, 29 July 1913.

<sup>23</sup> Semov, *Obrecheni pobedi*, p. 32; see Bormann's contribution to this volume ([Chapter 14](#), pp. 256–61).



the military battles, through the prospect of Bulgaria's capture of Istanbul, to protracted and ambiguous Russian arbitration). It also illustrates the various fears, such as racial conflict, that seeped into international relations at the time. The failure of most expectations was, however, a testimony both to the unpredictable nature of the emerging conflict and to the extent to which illusions and fears blurred the dangers that these regional struggles would lead to.

In view of general European planning and expectations of the Balkan Wars, Bulgaria and the other Balkan states appeared not only as major actors and nation-states that mobilized their military forces against a common enemy, but also as channels and targets of propaganda, emitted from diplomatic corps, foreign offices or royal circles. Parallel to that, however, these states were gradually gaining autonomy on their own and asserting their rights in making coalitions, holding military activities and pursuing territorial pretensions, key factors in reshaping the European state system. These nations were seeking to affirm their capacity to defend their claims and to achieve recognition through military might. In many respects, they demonstrated much more confidence in military capacity and patriotic enthusiasm than in long-term speculative predictions. This turned out to be an important disadvantage both for defeated Bulgaria and for its victorious neighbours. Throwing themselves into the war as whole nations marching forth for their national agendas, they all found themselves with substantial budget deficits. Their expectations for autonomous and independent decision-making were largely limited in the following years, as is shown through their alliances in the emerging world war.

An even stronger limitation was posed by their eagerness to preserve what was gained during the Balkan Wars or to gain revenge for the perceived injustice after their end. The latter determined the participation of Bulgaria in the Great War, where – yet again beyond all pre-1912 expectations – it appeared in a camp together with the Ottoman Empire, against its Balkan allies, and against the two states that had once fought in 1877–8 for its political liberation – Russia and Romania. Fewer than five years after the preparation for war in 1912, history took a very ironic turn. If during the Balkan Wars it was the Ottoman territories and the Ottoman legacy that were at stake, in the First World War it was already the legacy of the Balkan Wars that would determine the political visions and the military actions in this part of the European continent.



*Part II*

The European military between  
real and imagined wars



## 9 The Russian threat calculation, 1910–1914

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*Bruce W. Menning*

In 1906–10, Russian military planners were invariably pessimistic about their empire's chances for success in a possible European war. Far Eastern defeat and internal revolution had set them back on their heels, and nearly everywhere the numbers trended negative. Friends were few and potential enemies manifold. During the Bosnian annexation crisis of 1908–9, not even France supported Russia. Of necessity, the 1910-vintage Russian plan for war against the Triple Alliance, or Triplice, was defensive in nature. Amazingly, by early 1912 the military calculus had changed sufficiently that Russian General Staff officers might not only contemplate a measure of success in a future European war, but even engage in serious planning for offensive operations at the outset of hostilities. Although the desire for war remained muted in most quarters, pessimism gave way to guarded optimism, and the new mood persisted until the conclusion of initial operations in August–September 1914.

What underlay the sea-change in military thinking? For planners, the answer came from altered threat calculus. Between the summer of 1910 and the late winter of 1911–12, the European strategic landscape underwent transformation, and the nature of this transformation generated a new military outlook. With intelligence filling in vital detail, the European political and military terrain now appeared less foreboding. It offered options far more palatable than the 1910-plan that implicitly surrendered ten Polish provinces at the possible outset of general European war. Probably more than any other factor, including reform of the armed forces and revitalized alliance commitments, altered threat calculus lay at the foundations of Russian war planning on the eve of the Great War.

Several considerations justify a serious look at the threat-based origins of the immediate pre-1914 approach to planning. Firstly, there are fresh materials from the archives, and these materials, together with a mixture of newer and more traditional sources, provide greater insight into the vagaries of war planning. Secondly, evolving threat assessment, a function of the General Staff's 'all-seeing eye', held an important key to

understanding strategy development.<sup>1</sup> Thirdly, threat assessment underscored the importance of setting strategic priorities, an important planning function that recent historical treatments have blurred.<sup>2</sup> Finally, threat assessment constitutes an important prism through which to view other factors that figured in the origins and onset of the Great War.

The shock of Far Eastern defeat fuelled the initial impulse for a post-1905 reappraisal of Russia's strategic situation. The immediate post-war years comprised a period that Iu. N. Danilov, Quartermaster General, or chief of plans and operations (1909–14), would later label the time of Russia's 'complete military helplessness'.<sup>3</sup> Russia had emerged from the war against Japan with one ally, large debts, a navy shorn of three-battle-squadron equivalents, an army in disarray and the embers of domestic revolution still smouldering, especially in the countryside. While Russia underwent pacification and constitutional reformation, there was a pressing need to restore order and stability at home and abroad. As an antidote to Far Eastern adventurism, Foreign Minister A. P. Izvol'skii proclaimed a return to focus on Europe, with the ringing declaration in February 1907 that 'If we lose our Far Eastern maritime province, then Russia's status as a Great Power will not change, but if we do not participate in the resolution of events in the Balkans or in Austria, then we might be stricken from the ranks of the Great Powers.'<sup>4</sup> While playing for time over the next half-decade, Russia played its foreign policy cards from a position of weakness, with few military and naval trumps. Emphasis fell on seeking accommodation with Japan and Great Britain, on normalizing relations with Germany and Austria-Hungary, on balancing Great Britain against Germany on the continent and on adhering to the letter of the Franco-Russian Alliance. However, initial (and modest) successes soon led to overreach, and in 1908–9 Izvol'skii pressed too far for Austro-Hungarian cooperation in the quest for a more favourable naval regime at

<sup>1</sup> For purposes of this chapter, the ungainly title 'Main Directorate of the General Staff' (Russian acronym *GUGSh*) is rendered simply as 'General Staff'. Also, within the following text, 'N.S.' refers to New Style, or the Gregorian calendar generally in use in the West. Those dates without ascription are Old Style, in accordance with the Julian calendar, then in use in Imperial Russia. At the time, the Julian calendar lagged its Western counterpart by thirteen days. Dual citations refer to dates of international significance.

<sup>2</sup> Sean McMeekin, *The Russian Origins of the First World War* (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), pp. 25–40, ascribes over-arching significance to the Turkish Straits, while William C. Fuller, Jr, *Strategy and Power in Russia, 1600–1914* (New York: Free Press, 1992), pp. 423–33, emphasizes the significance of Far Eastern threats.

<sup>3</sup> Iu. N. Danilov, *Rossia v mirovoi voine 1914–1915 g.g.* (Berlin: Knigoizdatel'stvo 'Slovo', 1924), p. 32.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in [F. F. Palitsyn and M. V. Alekseev], *Doklad o meropriiatiakh po oborone Gosudarstva, podlezhashchikh osyshestvleniiu v blizhaishhee desiatiletie* [v. sekretno] (n. p.: n.d.), p. 10.

the Turkish Straits. During the ensuing Bosnian annexation crisis, Russia suffered a ‘diplomatic Tsushima’, as one parliamentary deputy put it. War Minister A. F. Rediger declared the army unfit for war, and Russian military weakness was laid bare for all to see.<sup>5</sup>

As these events swirled around them, officers of the General Staff attempted to make sense of the fundamental calculus for war planning. In accordance with tsarist directive, they returned to preparation for the worst-case scenario: a general European war in which ‘the Triple Alliance dispatched its primary forces against Russia’.<sup>6</sup> The emphasis on possible European war occupied the figurative high ground throughout the period before the Great War. Any other scenario was subsidiary. The strategic rationale behind the sense of priorities was clear: the combined German and Austro-Hungarian threat in the west was literally existential. No other potential theatre of war, including the Far East, Central Asia, the Trans-Caucasus and the Straits, held the kind of opposition that might bring the Russian Empire to its knees. As the Chief of the General Staff, F. F. Palitsyn, and his First Over-Quartermaster General, M. V. Alekseev, put it, ‘Germany and Austria-Hungary can shake the existence of our state at its very core’.<sup>7</sup> Or, as Quartermaster General Danilov remarked in early 1912, ‘the fate and future of Russia will be determined on the western frontier’.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, contingencies in non-European theatres remained distinctly secondary to feeding the great maw of a potential western theatre of war.<sup>9</sup>

Nonetheless, other theatres, especially those adjacent to Turkey or with assets dedicated partially to action at the Turkish Straits, might be linked directly or indirectly to the west. Although a Russian-controlled regime at the Straits was highly desirable for St Petersburg, various schemes for a *coup de main* at the Bosphorus invariably came to naught. Reliance on an expeditionary force stumbled on the three ‘U’s’ of planning: *Unpreparedness of forces*, *Unpredictability of outcomes* and *Unreliability of allies*. No one might foresee how the Great Powers would react, and after 1905 neither Bulgaria nor Romania might remain neutral. Worse, the Russians could not count either upon command of the Black Sea or

<sup>5</sup> Aleksandr Rediger, *Istoriia moei zhizni*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Kuchkovo Pole, 1999), vol. II, p. 277.

<sup>6</sup> This explicit priority permeated war planning at the centre throughout the pre-1914 period. See, especially, [Palitsyn and Alekseev], *Doklad*, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> Danilov, Report, 30 January 1912, Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Voenno-Istoricheskii Arkhiv (hereinafter RGVA), *fond* [collection] 2000 (Glavnoe Upravlenie General’nogo Shtaba), *opis’* [inventory] 1, *delo* [file] 1813, *list* [folio page] 6.

<sup>9</sup> RGVA, f. 400 (Glavnyi Shtab Voenного Ministerstva), op. 4, d. 433, l. 188 *obratnaia* [obverse side].

upon sufficient troop and transport assets to create a realistic lodgment on hostile shores. A forward-operating base (Burgas or Varna) was a *sine qua non*, but amidst other challenges and uncertainties no one appears to have accorded logistics any serious attention.<sup>10</sup> Still worse, once St Petersburg after 1910 began dismantling or decommissioning major fortresses within Russian Poland, Russia lacked strong static defences in the west to protect against lateral escalation should Germany and Austria-Hungary object to a Russian-dominated settlement at the Straits. Perhaps the military historian A. M. Zaionchkovskii best characterized the complex situation surrounding military resolution not only of access to the Straits, but also of the larger and related 'Eastern Question'. Writing in the 1920s, he cited a half-century's worth of recurring pre-1914 problems with external interference and unpredictable outcomes. He concluded that 'the struggle for Constantinople and the Straits, therefore, gradually shifted from the south to the west, where the outcome had to be decided on the fields of Galicia and on the banks of the Vistula'.<sup>11</sup>

Whatever strategic wisdom ordained, the Straits nonetheless sounded a siren-like call for those who failed to distinguish between Russia's vital interests and Russia's significant interests. Two fleeting (and false) windows of opportunity opened, one in late 1907 and the other in early 1914, during which inter-ministerial Special Conferences seriously considered planning for immediate amphibious expeditions against the Bosphorus. At the first, Prime Minister P. A. Stolypin objected to the undertaking, for which neither the army nor the navy was ready, on the grounds that the possibility of war would imperil the fragile post-1905 domestic peace.<sup>12</sup> Seven years later, both General Ia. G. Zhilinskii, Chief of the General Staff, and Quartermaster General Danilov objected on the grounds that all available troop assets were dedicated to deployments in the western theatre in the event of a possible European war.<sup>13</sup> Like Zaionchkovskii after him, Danilov believed that the route to the Straits lay not across the Black Sea, but overland through Berlin and Vienna. Although General

<sup>10</sup> D. Iu. Kozlov, *Narushenie morskikh kommunikatsii po opytu deistvii Rossiiskogo flota v Pervoi mirovoi voine (1914–1917): Monografiia* (Moscow: Russkii fond Sodeistviia Obrazovaniu i Nauke, 2012), pp. 88–96; M. A. Petrov, *Podgotovka Rossii k mirovoi voine na more* (Moscow-Leningrad: Gosvoenizdat, 1926), pp. 159–61.

<sup>11</sup> A. M. Zaionchkovskii, *Podgotovka Rossii k imperialisticheskoi voine* (Moscow: Gosvoenizdat, 1926), p. 64.

<sup>12</sup> Bruce W. Menning and John W. Steinberg, 'Lessons Lessened: The Near-Term Military Legacy of 1904–5 in Imperial Russia', in Steven Ericson and Allen Hockley (eds.), *The Treaty of Portsmouth and Its Legacies* (Hanover NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2008), pp. 95–7.

<sup>13</sup> Conference Proceedings, 8, 11 March 1914, Arkhiv Vneshnei Politiki Rossiiskoi Imperii (hereinafter AVPRI), f. 138 (Sekretnyi arkhiv ministra), op. 467, d. 462/481, l. 73.



Staff counsel failed to sway diehards, interest in the Bosphorus expedition gradually flagged for lack of preparedness and insufficient military and naval assets. Only during the course of the Great War did the possibility to fulfil Russia's 'historic mission' once again rise Lazarus-like from the dead, only to revert once again to the graveyard of ill-conceived plans.<sup>14</sup>

Interestingly, the Straits scarcely figured in pre-1914 comprehensive threat assessments. Of these the Russian General Staff produced only three. The first, compiled in mid-1908 under the auspices of General Staff Chief F. F. Palitsyn and his First Over-Quartermaster General M. V. Alekseev, was entitled (in English) *Report on Measures for the Defence of the State Appropriate for Realization in the Coming Decade*. The second two were formal Danilov-dominated intelligence estimates for 1910 and 1914. All three documents outlined the larger strategic situation, including threat assessment, and all three reflected important continuities. For example, they devoted primary attention to defence of the western frontier, and they were wedded to a Jomini-style analysis (e.g., accent on terrain, strategic objectives, avenues of approach and lines of communication) of that frontier. However, they were summaries, they did not say everything, and they were worst-case based.

Written in mid-1908 against the backdrop of the evolving Bosnian annexation crisis, the Palitsyn-Alekseev report was an exercise in military pessimism. Its two compilers surveyed Russia's strategic circumstances and conceded that 'Russia is incapable of conducting simultaneous successful wars in Europe and Asia'. For explanation they cited the near-term 'absence of naval defensive means and the inability to accomplish broad measures for strengthening our military situation'.<sup>15</sup> In the all-important potential western theatre of war, they enumerated a litany of potential enemies, especially in light of the seemingly shaky post-1905 French commitment to the Franco-Russian Alliance. Like many contemporaries, including especially Danilov, they were inclined, as A. A. Kersnovskii would later write, to see opposition everywhere, precluding only 'an invasion of Martians'.<sup>16</sup> Palitsyn and Alekseev identified the Triplice as the primary European foe, calling it 'the most significant factor in the international situation able to seriously affect the fate

<sup>14</sup> O. R. Airapetov, 'Na Vostochnom napravlenii. Sud'ba Bosforskoi ekspeditsii v pravlenie imperatora Nikolaia II', in O. R. Airapetov (ed.), *Posledniaia voina imperatorskoi Rossii. Sbornik statei* (Moscow: Tri Kvadrata, 2002), pp. 204–7, 210–12, 214–18, 232–5 and 241–9.

<sup>15</sup> [Palitsyn and Alekseev], *Doklad*, p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> A. A. Kersnovskii, *Istoriia russkoi armii*, 4 vols., reprint edn (Moscow: Golos, 1994), vol. III, p. 158.

of Russia'.<sup>17</sup> They then generously added Romania and Turkey to the list of potential enemies, while not denying possible opposition from Bulgaria and Sweden. Under an absolute worst-case scenario in which France did not participate in hostilities, these threats in the aggregate could field 2133.5 battalions against Russia's 1561.<sup>18</sup> Should France support Russia, the odds were only even. In view of these numbers and other uncertainties, the Palitsyn-Alekseev report advocated withdrawing forward Russian troop deployments for a European war farther into the interior, in the north to the middle Niemen and in the south to a position that covered approaches to Kiev between the Pripet Marshes and the Dniester. Thus, the Palitsyn-Alekseev report recommended removal of potential wartime strategic deployments from Russian Poland. Should even these altered deployments become untenable, the two officers envisioned withdrawal to a last-ditch defensive line along the Dnieper and Western Dvina.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, they also called for reconstruction of the system of frontier fortresses and the reorganization and rearmament of the army.

Without the same emphasis on reform and reconstruction, Danilov's first (July 1910) comprehensive intelligence estimate echoed much of the same sentiment. In surveying the European strategic landscape he concluded that its two major features were the contending alliances that pitted the Triplice against Russia and France. Although Italy was drifting away from its partners, the Triple Alliance remained robust at its core, as demonstrated by German and Austro-Hungarian cooperation and mutual support, especially during the (First) Moroccan and Bosnian crises. In the event of war, there was great likelihood that Romania and even a weakened Turkey might cast their lot with the Triplice, and at least some probability that Sweden would follow. Confronted with this imposing array, Danilov wondered whether the passage of time in France since 1870–1, together with a materialist-inspired anti-militarism among the upper classes, had eroded revanchist sentiment against Germany. France might elect to support Russia in any confrontation only 'if Germany directly threatened France with invasion' or if 'France's direct vital interests were affected'. Otherwise, as Danilov lamented, 'our own modest experience indicates that it is possible France will remain neutral'.<sup>20</sup> Although Serbia would likely seize the moment to attack Austria-Hungary, sentiment within other Balkan states – except

<sup>17</sup> [Palitsyn and Alekseev], *Doklad*, p. 7.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14. An infantry battalion numbered between 800 and 1,000 soldiers.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 48–50.

<sup>20</sup> Danilov, Note, 27 June 1910, RGVA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 172, l. 1ob.; general assessments are at ll. 1–3.

Romania – remained difficult to gauge in the wake of the Bosnian annexation crisis. England adhered to neither continental alliance, although the naval race with Germany inclined London to side with France and Russia. Should European war come, England would at the outset remain neutral while keeping a wary eye on Germany and awaiting the outcome of events.

Other uncertainties extended to the nature and scale of anticipated opposing forces, the size of which rendered French assistance a key variable. In the event that Germany elected (or was forced) to fight a two-front war from the outset, by 1910 the Russians had already concluded that Berlin must send the preponderance (*c.* nineteen corps) of its forces west, against France.<sup>21</sup> In this case, Russia might face the bulk of the Austro-Hungarian Army (thirteen corps) and only six German corps. An analysis of possible axes of hostile advance envisioned the two foes joining forces west of Brest-Kobrin and then developing primary operations along a corridor between the Baltic and the Pripet Marshes. The ultimate objectives were St Petersburg and Moscow, but Danilov's estimate also anticipated secondary operations south of the Pripet through the Dubno-Rovno-Proskurov complex and on to Kiev. The possibility for initial reverses alarmed Danilov far less than the rapidity of enemy advances which might catch the more slowly mobilizing tsarist forces in the midst of transit to concentration and strategic deployment.<sup>22</sup> However, there were at least three bright spots in the otherwise dark strategic picture: (1) the Pripet Marshes formed a natural barrier against incursion, canalizing enemy advances either north or south; (2) the Russian Empire's strategic depth precluded rapid decision, thus imposing the spectre of protracted conflict on potential invaders and (3) the German preoccupation with France precluded anything but token landing operations against the Baltic littoral and the vulnerable shores of the Finnish Gulf.<sup>23</sup>

More worrisome for Russian planners was the absolute worst case for possible European war, in which Russia might confront Germany and Austria-Hungary without French assistance. Danilov envisioned an evolving political situation 'in which either immediate French interests would remain untouched by a war between Russia and Austria-Hungary, or in which strategic considerations would cause Germany in the initial period of war to stand on the defensive against France while directing the preponderance of forces against us'.<sup>24</sup> In this instance, Sweden with its six

<sup>21</sup> A corps was a combined-arms formation, comprising two-three divisions, and numbering over 35,000 troops. Two or more corps usually comprised a field army.

<sup>22</sup> Danilov, Note, 27 June 1910, RGVA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 172, ll. 23, 24.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 56ob.–57. <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 34.

field divisions would likely enter the enemy fold, thereby reinforcing the eighteen corps Germany might now deploy in the east. On the sixteenth day of mobilization, if not earlier, the Russians might expect a German onslaught from the west with five field armies, augmented in the south by thirteen Austro-Hungarian and three Romanian corps.<sup>25</sup> With Swedish reinforcement in the north, the comparative wealth in enemy opposing forces opened the possibility for landing operations to threaten St Petersburg, while substantial enemy formations across the broad western front might simultaneously develop three or four axes for subsequent multiple thrusts into the Russian interior. However, important terrain features, especially the comparatively narrow corridor between the Baltic Sea and the northern shoulder of the Pripet, restricted freedom of manoeuvre and prevented the enemy from bringing overwhelming numbers to bear along this highly advantageous route into the Russian interior.<sup>26</sup> For Danilov, the clear planning implication was to derive advantage from depth and terrain to buy time and to secure mobilization and concentration against a plethora of opposing forces.

These considerations solidified the rationale behind Mobilization Schedule No. 18 (Altered) or, as it came to be known, Mobilization Schedule 1910.<sup>27</sup> With the exception of one corps, this scheme emptied the southern reaches of Russian Poland of major formations in order to mass four armies in two echelons on the northern shoulder of the Pripet Marshes and a single army with two ungainly operational groups on the southern shoulder. The overriding note was caution, since 'our likely enemies in the west . . . are superior to us in speed of mobilization and concentration', and thus 'they will probably begin hostilities with a rapid incursion into our homeland'. This prospect remained true even 'if Germany would divide its forces for a simultaneous war with our ally, France'.<sup>28</sup> It followed that the primary task for Russian planners was to concentrate defending armies in locales suitable to delay enemy forces south of the Pripet and 'to create north of the Pripet as much as possible a favourable situation for transition with combined forces to a general offensive on orders of the Supreme Commander'. Defensively oriented dispositions clearly reflected the pessimistic tenor of immediate post-1905 threat assessments.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 47ob. <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 35–35ob., and 48ob.

<sup>27</sup> Bruce W. Menning, 'War Planning and Initial Operations in the Russian Context', in Richard F. Hamilton and Holger H. Herwig (eds.), *War Planning 1914* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 109–26.

<sup>28</sup> Sukhomlinov to Nicholas II, Report, 23 June 1910, RGVA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 7140, I, 36.

These dispositions also reflected 1910-vintage financial realities and peacetime troop deployments. Additional allocations for defence after the Bosnian annexation crisis were insufficient for both army rearmament and the modernization of all fortresses in Russian Poland. Thus, selected forward fortresses (Żegrz, Ivangorod, Novogeorgievsk (spared in 1912) and Warsaw (except for the citadel)) underwent decommissioning and demolition. The result was loss of protected manoeuvre space west of Brest-Litovsk and less flexibility to contend with lateral escalation should the Straits or the Trans-Caucasus divert Russian forces from the western state frontier. Meanwhile, in mid-1910, a combination of factors, ranging from concerns for domestic economic development to the imperatives of military reform, dictated the re-deployment of ten infantry and two cavalry divisions from the Warsaw and Vilnius military districts deep into the Russian heartland.<sup>29</sup> Only thirty months later would the mobilization crisis of late 1912 reveal an unforeseen consequence: With two under-strength corps (XIV and XIX, with one division each) *in situ* during any possible run-up to war, these re-deployments left the south face of the Warsaw military district, i.e. Russian Poland, perilously vulnerable to pre-emptive enemy threats.

Opposite German East Prussia in the north, fewer fortresses and reductions in forward-deployed troops elicited concern, but so did the readiness of the Imperial Russian Navy. The army's right flank rested on the Baltic littoral, and both Finland and St Petersburg were vulnerable to attack from the sea. For the Naval General Staff, the ever-growing German navy posed the gravest threat, and there was little post-Tsushima confidence that the Baltic Fleet's motley assemblage of pre-dreadnoughts and assorted smaller vessels might contend successfully with modern German numbers.<sup>30</sup> Even if the French navy succeeded in diverting to the west one-half of Berlin's naval might, the Russians were still outnumbered and outgunned in the Baltic. In 1909, the Russians laid down four dreadnoughts, but construction would drag until late 1914. In September 1910, the naval General Staff began calculating that the British Royal Navy would reinforce the French diversion of German naval assets.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Sukhomlinov to Nicholas II, Report, 2 Jan. 1909, *ibid.*, ll. 1–2. Military districts were territorial entities, the functions of which included the recruitment, training, and deployment of troops. There were eight in European Russia, of which the four 'frontier' districts (Vilnius, Warsaw, Kiev and Odessa) retained important defensive missions.

<sup>30</sup> Evgenii F. Podsoblyayev, 'The Russian Naval General Staff and the Evolution of Naval Policy, 1905–1914', *Journal of Military History*, 66, 1 (2000), pp. 58–9.

<sup>31</sup> K. B. Nazarenko, *Morskoe ministerstvo Rossii. 1906–1914* (St Petersburg: Gangut, 2010), p. 182.

Still, planners worried in the event of 'worst case' that Berlin might exercise its command of the Baltic to land (possibly with Swedish cooperation) as many as ten infantry divisions on the Russian littoral to threaten either imperial St Petersburg or the Russian army's right. Until construction of four additional dreadnoughts (only by 1918) might tip Baltic correlations in Russia's favour, the navy's answer to the threat was primarily defensive. A combination of coastal artillery and mine barriers, covered by submarines and surface assets, would deny enemy entry into the Gulf of Finland. Should opportunities arise, occasional Russian naval sallies into the Baltic proper might disrupt enemy sea lines of communication and even take the fight to enemy shores.<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, the army's answer to the Baltic threat was to retain the equivalent of two reinforced corps (the Sixth Army) in the vicinity of St Petersburg until there was absolute certainty during the initial period of war that Germany had irrevocably deployed the bulk of its forces against France.

As the navy wrestled with Baltic dilemmas, the more evident consequences of 1910-vintage change for the army evoked consternation and criticism from St Petersburg to Paris and places in-between. The selective abandonment of fortresses, when coupled with troop re-deployments to the Russian interior, deeply troubled the French General Staff. Doubts arose over attendant constraints on the speed of Russian mobilization and the degree of St Petersburg's commitment to the Franco-Russian Alliance.<sup>33</sup> In the Russian capital, senior military officers and parliamentary deputies alike viewed the abandonment of the fortresses as a move tantamount to ceding Russian Poland to the enemy in the event of a European war. Within military district headquarters in both Kiev and Warsaw, dissatisfaction flowed less from structural and organizational issues than from the conceptual underpinnings for Mobilization Schedule 1910. It was too passive, and it too willingly surrendered the initiative. Also, in military-technical terms, its reliance on echeloned formations inhibited the attainment of mass along the critical northern axis, while the vast distance between deployments north and south precluded mutual support and cooperation. The quest was soon on for a more palatable alternative to Mobilization Schedule 1910, and Lieutenant General Alekseev, now chief of staff of the Kiev military district, would become the leading revisionist.

More than any other officer it was Alekseev who left his stamp on the subsequent abrupt reversal in Russian war planning. Thanks largely to his efforts, not two years would elapse before 1 May 1912, when Nicholas

<sup>32</sup> Kozlov, *Narushenie morskikh kommunikatsiia*, pp. 78–85.

<sup>33</sup> Nostits to Zhilinskii, 23 March 1911, RGVA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 1790, l. 204.

II approved a new version of the Russian mobilization schedule.<sup>34</sup> It later came to be known as No. 19, and it provided for two variants: 'A' for an offensive effort primarily against Austria-Hungary, and 'G' for a worst-case defensive effort against Germany. With alterations during 1913 and on the run in August (N.S.) 1914, Russian troop dispositions would enter the Great War on the basis of Mobilization Schedule No. 19A. In contrast with its predecessor, Schedule No. 19A and its related operational concept marked a significant departure in war-planning continuity. Planners removed the two second-echelon armies (the Fourth and Fifth) from the northern shoulder of the Pripet Marshes and pressed them deep into Russian Poland, where they would deploy opposite the central and western reaches of Austrian Galicia. In concert with the Third Army (with its two groups by 1914 constituting two separate armies, the Third and Eighth), guarding the southern shoulder of the Pripet Marshes, the operational concept was to roll over Austro-Hungarian forces in Galicia in a gigantic single or double envelopment, depending upon time, timing and circumstances. In the north, opposite the southern and eastern faces of East Prussia, Schedule 19A would press the First and Second Russian Armies respectively across the Niemen and Narew Rivers for concentric operations intended to produce a double envelopment of residual German forces east of the lower Vistula. On paper, at least, Schedule 19A would address both the requirements of the Franco-Russian Alliance and the vulnerabilities of the weaker partner in what would come to be known as the Central Powers.

At the same time, the new concept entertained a high degree of risk. One major risk might be mitigated: in the event that Germany dispatched the majority of its forces east, the 'G' variant would govern Russian dispositions according to an array that resembled deployments for Schedule 1910 (with altered dispositions for the constituent armies). However, the German and Austro-Hungarian advantage (respectively about ten and seven days over the Russians) in speed of troop mobilization and concentration was more difficult to palliate. With adequate warning and preparation, even minimal Austro-Hungarian forces in Galicia might pre-empt Russian strategic deployments according to the preferred 'A' variant. For this option to remain viable, the forward deployment line in the southern reaches of Russian Poland along the Kovel'-Chelm'-Liublin railroad corridor suddenly assumed the same significance as initial German deployments against Belgium according to the Schlieffen scheme.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> The operational concept is at Danilov, Report, 1 May 1912, *ibid.*, d. 1824, ll. 1–6ob.

<sup>35</sup> N. N. Golovin, *Iz istorii kampanii 1914 goda na russkom fronte: Galitsiiskaia bitva* (Paris: 'Rodnik', 1930), pp. 32–3.

However, Russian planners would come to this realization only during the course of the mobilization crisis of late 1912. In the interim, they might fret about incremental improvements in the speed of mobilization, while poring over intelligence materials on Austro-Hungarian preparations for war.

More intriguing than risk was the rationale behind the abrupt reversal in war planning that spawned Mobilization Schedule No. 19A. There was little change between July 1910 and March 1914 in Quartermaster General Danilov's formal threat estimate. The last version before the Great War repeated much of the 1910-estimate. The 1914-vintage document highlighted the continuing robustness of the Triplice, all the more threatening since late 1912, when Italy formally renewed membership. Danilov also held that Turkey remained a likely wartime adherent, especially in light of growing German influence at the Straits. In the event of hostilities, Turkey at the very least would pursue a policy of benevolent neutrality towards the Triple Alliance. Bulgaria, meanwhile, would likely attack Serbia, should that country cross swords with Austria-Hungary. On a more positive note, Romania after the Balkan Wars of 1912–13 had drifted away from the Triplice. Should war come, Romania would likely await outcomes before joining one or the other side. Sweden remained an unknown quantity: there was no alliance with Germany, but unfriendly relations between Stockholm and St Petersburg persisted, perhaps portending hostile Swedish intentions.

Among potential Russian allies, the picture was slightly more positive than in 1910. Relations with France, though vastly improved, still failed to match the ties that bound Austria-Hungary to Germany. Only if the French saw their interests threatened by a conflict between Russia and the Austro-German coalition would Paris join in the fray. There was some consolation in the fact that, even if France initially withheld support for Russia, the French army by its very existence constituted a major threat to Germany's western frontier. A larger measure of consolation derived from England's evolving posture. No alliance formally linked London with Paris and St Petersburg, but in practice England had recently – albeit not always wholeheartedly or with alacrity – sided with France and Russia in the resolution of important differences on the continent.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, the 1914-estimate concluded, 'in the event of European war, it is to be expected that England will assume a hostile posture toward Germany'.<sup>37</sup> Even more surely the Russians might count on Serbia,

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, the commentary in A. V. Ignat'ev, *Russko-angliiskie otnosheniia 1908–1914 gg.* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoi literatury, 1962), pp. 152–3.

<sup>37</sup> RGVA, f. 2003 (Shtab Verkhovnogo Glavnokomanduiushchego (Stavka)), op. 1, d. 1118, l. 107; on l. 115ob.



having emerged from the Balkan Wars chastened but stronger, ‘to draw on to itself some part of the armed forces of Austria-Hungary’. These positive comments notwithstanding, the Russian army confronted, just as in 1910, the prospect of simultaneous war along its western military frontier with Germany, Austria-Hungary, Romania and Sweden. Turkey occupied a separate status accorded to lesser foes located in possible subsidiary theatres of military operations.

The difficulty with various assertions and postulations in the 1914-estimate is that they do little to justify Schedule No. 19A. Their cautionary nature was more appropriate either to the earlier Mobilization Schedule 1910 or to Schedule No. 19G. The latter remained necessary because, just as in 1910, ‘there was no documentary data at our disposal about the deployment plan of the German armies’.<sup>38</sup> Whether Germany would turn west or east, ‘it is necessary to anticipate both cases, the more so since the marshalling of preponderant force by Germany on its eastern front would indisputably be for us the most difficult contingency’. Should absolute worst case govern, the estimate put the number of German corps against Russia at eighteen, the same as in 1910. Until the eighth day of mobilization (M+7 in the parlance of the time), the Russian troop mobilization regime retained sufficient flexibility to accommodate a transition from 19A to 19G.

Amidst worst case and other continuities, there were at least two important clues in the 1914-estimate that suggested grounds for option 19A in the event that Germany turned west. The first was the assertion that Austria-Hungary might deploy as many as six corps against Serbia, as ‘recent Balkan events have indicated’.<sup>39</sup> The second was the assertion that ‘even a simple threat to its left flank . . . could place the entire Austro-Hungarian army [in Galicia] in a rather critical situation, since its communications would be threatened and even severed along their most important line (Kraków-Vienna)’.<sup>40</sup> The latter conclusion came from strategic analysis; the former derived from military intelligence. Analysis uncovered an exploitable vulnerability, while intelligence indicated the likelihood of lower odds, perhaps nine Austro-Hungarian corps instead of thirteen, provided that Serbia entered a European war *à outrance*. Beyond these clues, the historian must look farther afield than Quartermaster General Danilov’s 1914-estimate for other justifications behind Mobilization Schedule 19A.

Some lay in plain sight, within the flow of events after mid-1910, while others existed only in the rarified atmosphere of military intelligence. Among the former were developments during 1911 and 1912 that appreciably altered the European strategic landscape. Few, if any, of these

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131ob.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 134n.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 139ob.

developments had domestic roots. The Russian economy was improving, but there was no new-found Russian military prowess. The army remained stuck in the throes of reorganization and re-deployment and only partially rearmed and re-equipped. The navy had only just begun construction of four dreadnoughts for the Baltic Fleet. Appropriations would follow at the end of 1912 for three dreadnoughts on the Black Sea, but they were not due for christening until 1915–16. Perhaps only in the intelligence realm were the Russians well armed to anticipate and monitor change, thanks to a revamped military intelligence establishment. However, even without intelligence-informed insight, acute observers perceived three circumstances that signalled significant change in the Russian threat calculus. They were the Second Moroccan Crisis, the Tripolitan War between Italy and Turkey, and the First Balkan War.

Of these, the implications of the first two registered almost immediately on the seismic detectors of the Russian General Staff. Because of the Russo-Japanese War, the Russians had sat out the First Moroccan Crisis in 1905–6. They also sat out the Second Crisis of 1911, partly in a fit of pique (a kind of quid-pro-quo for the lack of French assistance during the Bosnian annexation crisis) and partly because they had no dog in the fight over other Powers' colonial possessions in Africa.<sup>41</sup> Still, the Russians duly noted that England filled the void with important diplomatic support for France. In addition, and perhaps more important in military perspective, the Russians took notice of increased Anglo-French military and naval collaboration. The General Staffs in London and Paris had begun to discuss possible cooperation in the event of a European war, and the two capitals' navies were on the verge of a convention that would divide areas of responsibility should that war come.<sup>42</sup> With the British Grand Fleet concentrated in northern waters, German attention would be diverted from the Baltic, thus alleviating some Russian concern for littoral defence. More important, during Franco-Russian staff talks in August 1911, General Auguste Dubail asserted that in a war against Germany the French army would assume the offensive on the twelfth day of mobilization 'with assistance from the English army on its left flank'.<sup>43</sup> By

<sup>41</sup> Ignat'ev, *Russko-angliiskie otnosheniia*, p. 104.

<sup>42</sup> These conversations according to the Russians had begun early in 1911; see Izvol'skii to Sazonov (read by tsar), Letter, 3/16 February 1911, in *Materialy po istorii Franko-russkikh otnoshenii za 1910–1914 g.g. Sbornik sekretnykh diplomaticheskikh dokumentov byvshego Imperatorskogo Rossiiskogo Ministerstva Inostrannykh Del* (Moscow: Obraztsovaia tip. M. S. N. Kh, 1922), pp. 34–5.

<sup>43</sup> Cited in A. M. Zaionchkovskii, *Podgotovka k mirovoi voine v mezhdunarodnom otnoshenii* (Leningrad: Izdanie tipografii Upravleniia delami Narkom Voenmor i RVS SSSR, 1926), p. 235.

early 1912, the French maintained that England might send a 150,000-man expeditionary force to the continent in the event of a European war.<sup>44</sup> In July 1912, the Russians negotiated their own naval convention with France, complementing on a minor scale the long-standing military convention.<sup>45</sup>

Meanwhile, the outbreak of the Tripolitan War in September 1911 uncovered weaknesses and vulnerabilities among Russia's potential enemies. Deep-seated differences festered between Rome and Vienna, and Italian incursions into North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean – along with implications for the Balkans – prompted Vienna to re-deploy elements of its fleet in the Mediterranean. Paris lent implicit support to Rome, and improved relations between the two reduced the sense of mutual threat. Moreover, in French General Staff perspective, slowness of mobilization rendered the Italian army a '*quantité négligiable*'.<sup>46</sup> At the outset of a European war, the French might leave only a screen against the Italians, permitting (to Russian advantage) deployment of the preponderance of the French army against Germany. Although Quartermaster General Danilov underscored the continuing robustness of the Triple Alliance in his 1914-estimate – perhaps because of the unexpected renewal of the arrangement in December 1912, nearly two years in advance of its expiration – Russian intelligence officers understood that Austro-Hungarian *Fall 'T*, for a possible war against Italy, remained on the books. At the very least in the event of large-scale European hostilities, Vienna would leave one corps opposite the border with Italy.

Knowledge of '*T*' was indicative that the post-1905 reorganization of Russian military intelligence, along with an infusion of resources and personnel, had begun to pay impressive dividends. Both the Russian General Staff and the staffs of the Kiev and Warsaw military districts fashioned agent networks in Austria-Hungary. One agent in particular, code-named No. 25, began providing high-grade secret intelligence, beginning already in 1909, if not earlier.<sup>47</sup> By 1911–12, St Petersburg possessed Vienna's strategic deployment plans for war, not only against Russia, but also against Serbia-Montenegro and Italy.<sup>48</sup> These materials provided military-technical grist for the threat estimate mill. They also afforded planners the luxury of responding more surely to changes

<sup>44</sup> Sukhomlinov to Sazonov, 12 January 1912, RGVIA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 7255, ll. 13–14ob.

<sup>45</sup> Izvol'skii to Neratov, Letter, 5/18 July 1912, *Materialy*, pp. 231–2.

<sup>46</sup> Ignat'ev to Zhilinskii, 21 November 1912, RGVIA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 3406, l. 136.

<sup>47</sup> See, for example, *Kriegsfall R*, as described in Pototskii, Report, 1 November 1909, *ibid.*, d. 2826, ll. 108–13ob.

<sup>48</sup> See the commentary, Samoilov, Report, 3 June 1911, *ibid.*, d. 2826, ll. 94–6.

perceived both within the larger European security environment and the adversarial strategy development.

As various tectonic plates shifted – sometimes more, sometimes less – their realignment became an important part of the Russian calculus that called for a different war plan. As the strategist who bore primary responsibility for the operational concept behind Mobilization Schedule 19A, Lieutenant General Alekseev during the summer and autumn of 1911 intently studied the flow of events in Europe and the Mediterranean. In a memorandum from early 1912 he summarized a powerful rationale for altered Russian strategic deployments.<sup>49</sup> In his judgement Mobilization Schedule 1910 failed to bring effective force to bear against Austria-Hungary. But the argument went farther, because ‘it would seem that the contemporary political and military situation suggested the necessity for adoption of another basic idea for war’. Italy was diverted by a colonial war in Africa, in light of which ‘it was impossible to consider Italy either an active member of the Triple Alliance or a serious threat to France’. Meanwhile, relations between Austria-Hungary and Italy had decayed to the extent that ‘it was scarcely possible to admit that the Italians would denude their northeastern frontier to concentrate troops against France’. Likewise, the relationship between England and Germany was sufficiently strained ‘that Germany must consider the probability of England’s active entry into a [European] conflict’. For Alekseev, contention between the two was more than fleeting because it was ‘rooted in the struggle for maritime supremacy and commercial dominance’. Therefore, ‘in any complex political situation England will stand at the side of Germany’s enemies and in any case exert powerful pressure on Germany’s resolution of her strategic mission’. In Alekseev’s estimation it was clear for Russia that ‘under such conditions there was no basis to believe that in the initial period of war Germany would deploy its main forces against us while leaving only a screen on her western frontier against France and England’. Moreover, because decision against Russia could not be achieved by means of a single blow, ‘it would be dangerous and disadvantageous for Germany to be drawn into a protracted struggle on her eastern front’. At the same time, it would also be disadvantageous for Russia’s superior forces to be drawn into a protracted fight for East Prussia, which at best lay only on the flank of the primary operational line to Berlin. All these assertions indicated, according to Alekseev, ‘that it would be timely to subject to thorough review the general idea of war and to resolve it in the sense that Russia in the initial period of war

<sup>49</sup> The following commentary is drawn from, Alekseev, Note, 17 February 1912, *ibid.*, d. 2309, ll. 112–13.

direct the main blow at Austria-Hungary, assigning for the fulfillment of this mission as much force as possible'. Against Germany he would leave only six corps concentrated in the region of Grodno-Bialystok. 'All our remaining forces' should, in Alekseev's words, 'be directed against Austria for the attainment of solid success'. Here in its bare essence was the strategic rationale for Mobilization Schedule 19A.

Interestingly, Quartermaster General Danilov would proceed from nearly the same set of premises to arrive at a scheme directing the bulk of Russian forces against Germany. In a memorandum of 30 January 1912, he argued strongly for building on assumptions about Germany's westward turn to argue for an advance with three Russian armies into East Prussia. They would constitute a powerful vanguard for follow-on operations to press a general offensive into Germany proper. If Germany turned eastward, the same armies might form a powerful defensive shield.<sup>50</sup> Explicit and implicit in Danilov's concept was the understanding that it might figuratively kill three birds with one stone: firstly, it addressed alliance requirements for rapid Russian offensive operations to relieve pressure on the French; secondly, it provided additional insurance against the absolute worst-case possibility in which Germany might turn east with the bulk of its forces; and thirdly, it made defeat of Germany the first strategic priority. There was a prevailing fear within the Russian General Staff that, even if Germany first turned west, the French might hold out for less than two months, after which time the Russians alone would face the undivided fury of the German army, not to mention that of Austria-Hungary.<sup>51</sup> Against the latter, Danilov would allocate only troops from the Kiev military district, although he did not discount the possibility of creating a more substantial anti-Austrian variant of his concept. Nonetheless, it was clear that Danilov's intent was to pre-empt competition by standing Alekseev's proposal on its head. Above all, it was also clear – perhaps because of fear, but more surely because of alliance considerations – that Danilov wanted to retain a 'Germany-first' planning posture. In its bare essence, and shorn of its offensive component, his concept provided the strategic rationale for Mobilization Schedule 19G.

Danilov's argument also retained sufficient validity to provide grounds for a challenge to Alekseev's concept.<sup>52</sup> On 21 February 1912, when

<sup>50</sup> Danilov to Zhilinskii, Report, 30 January 1912, *ibid.*, d. 1813, ll. 3ob.–4ob, and 10ob.–11.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 9ob., 13ob.

<sup>52</sup> Bruce W. Menning, 'Pieces of the Puzzle: The Role of Iu. N. Danilov and M. V. Alekseev in Russian War Planning before 1914', *International History Review*, 25, 4 (2003), pp. 783–9 and 790–6.

War Minister V. A. Sukhomlinov met in Moscow with the commanders of the military districts, the assemblage endorsed Alekseev's concept, but left room for Danilov. Thus, Sukhomlinov reported to the tsar, 'the conference resolved to direct [our] main forces against Austria'. But, the war minister continued, the conference also resolved 'to leave against Germany a sufficient number of corps for an advance into East Prussia, thereby according our French ally direct assistance'.<sup>53</sup> It was therefore a diluted version of Alekseev's concept that Sukhomlinov forwarded to the tsar, along with the provision for a worst-case variant should Germany turn east. What became Mobilization Schedule 19A was the mixed-blood offspring of compromise, while 19G was the step-child of fear and tsarist worst-case mandate.

Compromise only exacerbated fundamental planning problems, and worse, uncovered vulnerabilities that would become all too apparent during the mobilization crisis of late 1912. Despite Russia's comparative wealth in organized military manpower, the early-1912 compromise precluded the attainment of decisive mass against either Austria-Hungary or Germany. Worse, there were no new strategic railroads either to speed the attainment of mass or to offset adversarial advantages in alacrity of troop mobilization and concentration. As antidote, Danilov's concept offered a most dangerous palliative: engagement in initial offensive operations before the completion of mobilization and concentration.<sup>54</sup> Thus, the ability to attain mass might suffer still greater erosion.

Closely related to the problem of mass was the absence of robust peacetime troop dispositions, especially in locales adjacent to Austrian Galicia. This wound was self-inflicted, the result of re-deployments during 1910 that witnessed the transfer of active army formations into the Russian interior. By mid-1912, the entire 300-kilometre expanse between Brest-Litovsk in the east and Częstochowa in the west was covered by three infantry divisions, one rifle brigade, two cavalry divisions and two reserve infantry divisions (at Brest-Litovsk), all at reduced strength.<sup>55</sup> Peacetime troop quarters were scattered, and widely dispersed small units were under-manned and ill-equipped to defend the Kovel'-Chelm-Liublin railroad corridor. Yet it was precisely along this railroad that Russian troops were to concentrate in accordance with Schedule 19A's anti-Austrian emphasis. Loss of this deployment line

<sup>53</sup> Sukhomlinov to Nicholas II, Report, 25 February 1912, RGVIA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 1811, ll. 3-3ob.

<sup>54</sup> Danilov to Zhilinskii, Report, 30 January 1912, ll. 9-9ob.

<sup>55</sup> See Conference Decision, 18 February 1912, RGVIA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 10351, l. 82.

would render Schedule 19A a dead letter, while threatening the rear of anti-German dispositions against East Prussia in accordance with either 19A or 19G. Unnoticed by historians, it was this threat that drove much of the Russian response to the mobilization crisis of late 1912.

This crisis was sparked in mid-October 1912 by the outbreak of the First Balkan War – after the Second Moroccan Crisis and the Tripolitan War, a third major influence on pre-Great War Russian threat assessment. As both Russia and Austria-Hungary signalled deterrence and resolve during the early stages of the conflict, they engaged in a series of military measures and counter-measures for which Russian troop mobilization procedures were singularly ill-conceived and ill-prepared. The best the Russians could do without either declaring mobilization or selectively calling up reservists was to retain on active duty some 350,000 senior-class reservists who were due for homeward rotation upon completion of their service terms.<sup>56</sup> Vienna, meanwhile, engaged in a hidden partial mobilization that elevated troop readiness levels opposite Serbia and in Galicia. To the dismay and consternation of the Warsaw and Kiev military district commanders, the three Austro-Hungarian corps (I, X and XI) in Galicia covertly attained near war-time strength, while a minor flood of small units from interior corps added roughly the equivalent of another two corps.<sup>57</sup> Meanwhile, senior-class reinforcements for Russian units were distributed throughout the European provinces of the empire, so incremental increases to troop units opposite Galicia failed appreciably to tip troop-readiness scales in Russia's favour. Before Nicholas II unilaterally defused the crisis on 11/24 December 1912 with a decision to temporize, War Minister Sukhomlinov had proposed limited additional troop re-deployments from the interior and reserve call-ups within the frontier military districts. In contrast, the commanders of the Warsaw and Kiev military districts had proposed the immediate mobilization of ten corps and the withdrawal of forward troop deployment lines farther into the Russian interior.<sup>58</sup> The latter would have triggered the requirement for a revision of Schedule 19A to something that resembled Mobilization Schedule 1910, thus forfeiting nearly a year's worth of planning.

<sup>56</sup> This is the figure cited in Rossiia, Sovet Ministrov, *Osobyie zhurnaly Soveta ministrov Rossiiskoi imperii, 1909–1917 gg.*, 9 vols. (Moscow: Rosspen, 2001–9), vol. IV (1912 god), p. 388n.

<sup>57</sup> Skalon, Ivanov, Alekseev, *et al.*, Report, 6 December 1912, RGVIA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 7140, ll. 50–50ob.

<sup>58</sup> The results of the conference with the tsar are at Zhilinskii, Report, 20 December 1912, *ibid.*, d. 7140, ll. 103–4; the proposal of the war minister and the commanders of the two military districts are at Sukhomlinov to Nicholas II, Report, 8 December 1912, *ibid.*, ll. 64–64ob.

The tsar rejected both proposals, and Russia drew back from the abyss. Nonetheless, proximity to the precipice afforded at least three important conclusions for threat assessment. The first involved the changing French attitude towards Russian engagement with the Balkans. Before the crisis, Premier Raymond Poincaré in August 1912 had clearly declared to Foreign Minister S. D. Sazonov that France would not permit itself to be drawn into a European war because of Russia's Balkan commitments.<sup>59</sup> Just as Morocco in 1911 had not been a Russian affair, Russia's mid-1912 interests in the Balkans were not a French affair. By early November 1912 (N.S.), Poincaré's attitude had changed appreciably. He now professed to understand that any substantial change in the Balkan balance equated with a change in the European balance.<sup>60</sup> By early December, the French were promising wholehearted support for Russia, even to the point of entry into armed conflict.<sup>61</sup> This commitment London would not match. Indeed, the French had grown sufficiently bellicose that the Parisian cabinet failed to understand why Russia was not taking stronger counter-measures against the covert Austro-Hungarian mobilization.<sup>62</sup> Doubts arose over the credibility of Russian military commitment to the Franco-Russian Alliance.

The second factor bearing on Russian threat assessment was the prominent place occupied by military intelligence. It was one thing to possess Austro-Hungarian plans for strategic deployments, especially against Russia (*Fall R*), but quite another to witness and record a mobilization in practice, even if partial. Thanks to perhaps two dozen agents and the observations of a tireless military attaché and of various consulates, the Special Office (for consolidated intelligence) of the Russian General Staff assembled more than seventy situation reports between late November 1912 and early March 1913.<sup>63</sup> Heretofore unknown to historians, Agent No. 25 reported four or five times at the height of the crisis. His timely communications confirmed the covert mobilization of the three Austro-Hungarian corps in Galicia and alluded to a German promise of six corps in the event of war.<sup>64</sup> Another agent, Čedomil Jandrić, a junior officer of the Austro-Hungarian General Staff, reported on the flow of piecemeal

<sup>59</sup> Sazonov to Nicholas II, Report, 10 August 1912, AVPRI, f. 133 (Kantseleriiia ministra), op. 470, d. 201, ll. 88–88ob.

<sup>60</sup> Izvol'skii to Sazonov, Letter (read by tsar), 25 October/7 November 1912, *Materialy*, pp. 295–7.

<sup>61</sup> Ignat'ev to Zhilinskii, Telegram, 7 November 1912, RGVA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 3406, ll. 103–104ob.

<sup>62</sup> Izvol'skii to Sazonov, Letter, 5/18 1912, *Materialy*, pp. 311–13.

<sup>63</sup> See, for example, Samoilov and Monkevits, Summary, 3 December 1912, RGVA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 2852, ll. 1–3.

<sup>64</sup> Transcribed Copy of Letter, Agent No. 25, 26 November 1912, *ibid.*, d. 2851, l. 20.



reinforcements into Galicia.<sup>65</sup> For these and other services Agent No. 25 would lose his life and Jandrić would be imprisoned, thus depriving the Russians of important intelligence sources a year and a half later, during the July crisis of 1914. Indeed, there was always the danger that success might breed over-reliance, and the military historian Kersnovskii would later hold that a preoccupation with intelligence, especially through espionage, had subverted the General Staff's operational work.<sup>66</sup>

From direct observation and the fruits of espionage, Russian military intelligence officers derived important insights into the functioning of the Austro-Hungarian troop mobilization regime. They understood that it was flexible and decentralized, according a high degree of latitude to local commanders for selectively elevating troop readiness levels. From what are now termed 'indicators and warnings' the Russians came to understand that the three Galician corps would undergo covert mobilization at the mere declaration of 'Alarm', the rough Austro-Hungarian equivalent to a pre-mobilization period.<sup>67</sup> From one of Agent No. 25's last communications in early 1913 came the assertion that war against Serbia and Montenegro would require at most seven Austro-Hungarian corps.<sup>68</sup> Meanwhile, the Russians also understood that, whatever mobilization regime Vienna pursued, there was the likelihood that additional units from the interior might be infiltrated into Galicia to reinforce that province's three mobilizing resident corps. Under these conditions alone there was little likelihood that any future Austro-Hungarian incursion into the Balkans would remain a localized phenomenon. No matter the intent or purpose, various Austro-Hungarian readiness measures in Galicia constituted a substantial threat to Russia.

The larger implications of a seemingly minor threat constituted a third important influence of the First Balkan War on Russian assessments. In November–December 1912, reinforced Austro-Hungarian dispositions in Galicia stoked dismay and even fear when the commanders of the Warsaw and Kiev military districts perceived that comparatively few but well-situated enemy troops might imperil the vulnerable

<sup>65</sup> A comprehensive compendium of the units introduced into Galicia is at Zhilinskii to Sazonov, Letter, 3 January 1913, *ibid.*, d. 2856, ll. 19–24ob., with maps on ll. 26 and 33.

<sup>66</sup> Kersnovskii, *Istoriia*, vol. III, p. 161.

<sup>67</sup> This perception appeared earlier; see, Samoilo to Monkevits, Report, 10 May 1912, RGVA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 2840, ll. 5–6. The perception is repeated in an undated report, probably by Samoilo, at *ibid.*, d. 2869, l. 156.

<sup>68</sup> Monkevits, Addendum to Report, 30 May 1913, *ibid.*, d. 2869, l. 287. As noted above, in Quartermaster General Danilov's 1914-estimate, the Russian General Staff eventually settled on four-six as the number of corps that Austria-Hungary would send against Serbia.

Kovel'-Chelm-Liublin railroad corridor.<sup>69</sup> In effect, Alekseev's concept – the more so as it was subsequently watered down in Schedule 19A – mortgaged the entire Russian war plan to possession of this key terrain. Without its retention as a line of departure for initial operations, Russian strategic dispositions against Austria-Hungary must of necessity be drawn back to a line extending from slightly west of the Brest-Litovsk fortress to the Western Bug. In the event of a European war, there would then be no immediate offensive against Austria-Hungary, nor would there be an offensive into East Prussia to support alliance requirements against the Germans. Bluntly put, once the Austro-Hungarians engaged in a covert mobilization in Galicia, they confronted the Russians with the stark prospect of pre-emption. Peacetime Russian forward deployments were too weak to prevent any substantial incursion, and reinforcements from the Fourth and Fifth Armies were too distant to be any immediate help. They would not arrive for another two to three weeks.

This realization, in turn, fed the Russians' worst military nightmare, a spectre that never found its way into formal threat estimates. At the beginning of November 1912 (N.S.), the Russians learned from sources in Vienna of a new variation on the Austro-Hungarian war plan. It called for a sledge-hammer blow against Serbia, even as the three Austro-Hungarian corps in Galicia underwent covert mobilization and reinforcement. Once initial success against Serbia was assured, three-four corps would be shifted from the south to Galicia to supplement the three reinforced Galician corps for a full-blown offensive against lightly held Russian dispositions in Volynia and Podolia. Because the slow-footed Russians could eventually field larger numbers, the Austro-Hungarian capacity to exploit initial success would ultimately depend on German assistance.<sup>70</sup> This assumption held true under various scenarios; therefore, conventional Russian threat assessments always emphasized Austro-German solidarity as the leading characteristic of the Triple Alliance, no matter what role the Italians might assume. And, from reliable intelligence sources, the Russians knew that the Germans had promised at least six full army corps, perhaps across Silesia. Thus, in a crisis situation that involved a possible Austro-Hungarian incursion into Serbia, the Russians risked pre-emption if they failed to adopt counter-measures should Vienna mobilize more than six corps to subdue Serbia.

Early-1913 legislation for the Period Preparatory to War was an important – but imperfect – Russian means for mitigating this risk. The new law was roughly equivalent to the German *Kriegsgefahrzustand*

<sup>69</sup> Danilov/Stogov to Doboshinskii, Memo, 15 December 1912, *ibid.*, d. 7148, ll. 110–11.

<sup>70</sup> Zankevich to Danilov, Telegram, 30 October 1912, *ibid.*, d. 2838, l. 25.

(Danger of Imminent War), and it provided for a series of measures short of either partial or general mobilization to enhance military readiness. These measures included (*inter alia*) the recall of officers from leave and troops from furlough, the selective imposition of martial law, the elevation of fortresses to wartime readiness and the return of troops from field-training encampments to their billets. Within current budgetary restraints, commanders of military districts opposite potential belligerents were authorized to summon reservists residing within their districts to temporary training camps. These commanders were also authorized to deploy troops forward under the guise of field exercises to act as covering forces for possible follow-on mobilization and concentration. In light of subsequent confusion among historians over what actually constituted Russian troop mobilization, it is important to note that the Period Preparatory to War did not equate with mobilization, since there was no mass call-up of reservists, no inter-district railroad transit of assembled units and no concentration of large formations along the state frontier.<sup>71</sup> The intent was to enhance readiness and perhaps to deter, while not impairing the coherence of complex railroad transit schedules in the event that true mobilization might follow, depending upon circumstances.

The foregoing comments have highlighted major features and consequences of Russian threat assessment, before and after 1910. Formal estimates and less formal commentary gravitated from extreme pessimism to something less than fulsome optimism about the degree of military threat that emanated from Russia's potential adversaries. In particular, developments in 1911–12 indicated fissures and vulnerabilities within the Triple Alliance that invited exploitation. At the same time, the growing strength of France and its increasing commitment to Russia provided surer grounds to assume that Germany might bring less than its full military weight to bear against Russia. Although London abjured formal participation in an alliance arrangement with France and Russia, a combination of self-interest and apprehension over German actions and motives increasingly drew England and its Royal Navy into the Franco-Russian sphere. Serbia after 1912–13, like France after 1910, might divert adversarial forces from deployments against Russia. These and related circumstances and assumptions provided ample justification in Russian war planning for a sharp turn away from the passivity and defensive orientation inherent in Mobilization Schedule 1910.

Its primary replacement, Mobilization Schedule 19A, benefited from the new threat calculus, but simultaneously created new problems. The

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Sean McMeekin, *July 1914: Countdown to War* (New York: Basic Books, 2013), pp. 192–4, 207–9 and 214–15.

mobilization crisis associated with the First Balkan War uncovered a key Russian vulnerability in both peacetime and potential wartime troop deployments opposite Galicia. With only a modest troop mobilization effort in Galicia, Austria-Hungary might either neutralize or pre-empt Russian forward dispositions, thus unravelling the entire Russian war plan. Because there was no post-1912–13 Russian retreat from Schedule 19A (although the less-developed Schedule 19G always waited in the wings), the future implications were three-fold: (1) intelligence-informed indicators and warnings for even a partial Austro-Hungarian mobilization would assume great significance in decision-making during any future ‘go-to-war’ scenario; (2) because of an inadequate strategic railroad network and the vulnerabilities inherent in forward peacetime troop dispositions, Russian mobilization would become a ‘hair trigger’ proposition; and (3) the necessity to offset the Austro-German advantage in speed of troop mobilization and concentration meant that the Russians would both enhance their own pre-mobilization measures and countenance a major violation of the military principle of mass to engage in initial offensive operations before completion of mobilization and concentration.

Nicholas II was more than conversant with these implications, with the possible exception of the drop-off in mass during initial operations. He was an avid – even obsessive – follower of intelligence dispatches, and during the July crisis of 1914 he received daily intelligence summaries from the General Staff via War Minister Sukhomlinov.<sup>72</sup> In the tsar’s capacity as final arbiter for all things military, he was also conversant with the war plan and its relationship to the mobilization schedule.<sup>73</sup> During the July crisis of 1914, it was probably the tsar himself who on 11/24 July ordered the General Staff prepare a partial mobilization regime (against Austria-Hungary only), even as the Council of Ministers was about to recommend invocation of the Period Preparatory to War.<sup>74</sup> Although a short-lived decree for partial mobilization ensued on 16/29 July, the

<sup>72</sup> On the tsar’s preoccupation with intelligence matters, see the commentary of a former chief of staff of the St Petersburg military district in Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsiia, f. 6249 (Fon Raukh, G. O.), op. 1, d. 1, ll. 64ob.–65ob.; for an example of the General Staff’s daily intelligence summaries during the July crisis, see RGVIA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 2871, ll. 45–45ob.

<sup>73</sup> For an example of the tsar’s personal endorsement of the war plan, see Sukhomlinov to Nicholas II, ‘Considerations’, RGVIA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 7140, ll. 120ob.–121ob.

<sup>74</sup> Unless transmitting a directive from the tsar, Foreign Minister Sazonov would have had no authority to order the Chief of the General Staff to arrange for placing the army on a wartime footing and for drawing up a partial mobilization plan, as asserted by McMeekin, *July 1914*, p. 178. It is more likely that the tsar personally issued these instructions by telephone. See, especially, S. K. Dobrorol’skii, *Mobilizatsiia russkoi armii v 1914 godu* (Moscow: Izdanie Upravleniia po voiskovoi mobilizatsii i ukomplektovaniu Glavnogo Upravleniia RKKa, 1929), p. 95.

intent was possibly less to deter or defend than to buy additional time for St Petersburg to determine the degree of Berlin's support for Vienna.

In the end evolving threat assessment rendered Russian entry into a European war more palatable, but also more perilous and perhaps even more probable. In the event the 'iron dice' rolled, Russia after 1912 seemingly stood a better chance of success than at any time since the Russo-Japanese War. But fortune would smile only under conditions dictated by a narrow range of options that imposed time constraints and reduced flexibility for decision-makers. Under these circumstances, the threat inherent in even a partial Austro-Hungarian mobilization would in Russian perspective make war probable – unless Germany intervened to dampen Vienna's resolve.

## 10 The French military mind and the wars before the war

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*Adrian Wettstein*

Rarely has an army existed in military history that has been so uniformly described as anachronistic and obsolete as the French army at the beginning of the First World War. The *poilu*, as the French infantrymen were called, went to war with red trousers. The pride of the French army was its dragoon regiments – heavy cavalry with shining golden cuirasses and wearing golden helmets with panache – which corresponded more to a romanticized version of Napoleonic warfare than to the age of industrial war.<sup>1</sup> A strong offensive bias dominated French doctrine, a proper *culte d'offensive* which called for aggressive attacks without regards for losses – suicidal in a time of barbed wire, trenches, machine-guns and quick-firing artillery. Such anachronisms have been understood in the historiography as symbols of an army unprepared for modern war, with serious consequences: from August to December 1914, the French army suffered almost one million casualties, followed by another 1.5 million in 1915 and an additional 1.5 million in 1916 and 1917 combined. In the last eleven months of the war, France again suffered nearly 1.1 million casualties. These numbers seem to support the idea of an officer corps blind to the new realities of war.<sup>2</sup>

The following chapter argues that the Balkan Wars had for three reasons only a minor influence on French military thinking and doctrine. Firstly, there was no time before the outbreak of the Great War to discuss the Balkan Wars in depth. This, secondly, meant that the French military apparatus had not enough time to make major changes in doctrine and materiel. Thirdly, even if they were given the time, in the French

<sup>1</sup> John Keegan, *The First World War* (London: Hutchinson, 1998), p. 85; Niall Ferguson, *Der falsche Krieg. Der Erste Weltkrieg und das 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Dt. Verl.-Anst., 1999), p. 133. For a more differentiated view, see Dieter Storz, *Kriegsbild und Rüstung vor 1914: Europäische Landstreitkräfte vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Herford: E. S. Mittler, 1992), pp. 207–31. Storz's comparisons between French and German forces place the performance of the former in a poor light. For a more favourable view, see Philippe Masson, *Histoire de l'armée française de 1914 à nos jours* (Paris: Perrin, 1999), pp. 7–22.

<sup>2</sup> Azar Gat, *A History of Military Thought: From the Enlightenment to the Cold War* (Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 382.

officer corps in 1912–14 orthodoxy prevailed over open discussion. By examining the development of the French army between the turn of the century and 1914, I shall embed the events of the Balkan Wars into the larger context of French military thinking before the Great War. It seems to me necessary to understand how the French officer corps perceived the Balkan Wars. In the final part of the chapter, I shall look at two of the most important French discussions following the events of the Balkan Wars – the question of infantry attack and the discussion on introducing mobile heavy artillery.

Contemporary military newspapers and journals were an important forum for professional discussions on military themes.<sup>3</sup> This was especially true for the French military for a variety of reasons. Many generals participated in these discussions, and there was no restraint on providing ideas from abroad which seriously questioned French doctrine. The instability of governments and their War Ministers also affected doctrine. The consequences were twofold. On the one side, military ideas could be more openly discussed to a receptive audience. On the other side, persons no longer in office could influence French doctrine and thereby provide some stability. Perhaps the best example of this is General Hippolyte Langlois. After retiring, he founded what became the leading French military journal, the *Revue Militaire Générale*. With this journal, he effectively promoted the idea of the ‘*liaisons des armes*’ (combined arms). It provided a strong bulwark against the buildup of mobile heavy artillery by promoting Langlois and his followers’ ideas on artillery tactics based on rapid-firing light field guns. In fact, after Langlois’ death there was a tendency to press this idea to its extreme by demanding a kind of light machine cannon of a calibre below 4 cm which could ‘sprinkle the terrain’.<sup>4</sup>

But it is the nature of this medium that discussions take time to develop. First, articles took some time, often more than a year, to be published.<sup>5</sup> There are several articles that were published three to four months after being written. But even if there was a more rapid publishing process, it took some time for answers. If one looks at the discussion on the Boer War or the Russo-Japanese War, the highpoint of discussion on the lessons of

<sup>3</sup> See for the following: Adrian Wettstein, ‘Die Grenzen militärische Prognostik: Die Diskussion um den Krieg der Zukunft in den französischen Militärzeitschriften’ (in press). See also Markus Pöhlmann’s chapter in this book ([Chapter 12](#), pp. 207–8).

<sup>4</sup> ‘Question d’artillerie: est-il possible de démolir une artillerie défilée aux vues?’, *Spectateur Militaire*, 1 June 1912, pp. 346–72.

<sup>5</sup> See for example Capitaine Servagnat, ‘À propos de tactique de cavalerie’, *Spectateur Militaire*, 1 July 1913. This article was written in February 1912. Colonel Klein, ‘L’influence de l’aviation sur la fortification’, *Revue Militaire Générale*, April 1914, pp. 485–511, was written in May 1913.

those wars was one to two years after the event, and it was short-lived. For example, discussion on the Russo-Japanese War went through 1908 and 1909 before petering out. The Balkan Wars would have followed the same pattern but were interrupted by the outbreak of the First World War.<sup>6</sup>

If there was no time for a learning process, there certainly was none to implement the lessons learned. Most French field manuals were introduced shortly before the Balkan Wars. The cavalry received new regulations in 1911 and 1912, the field artillery in 1910. Only the infantry received a new field manual after the Balkan Wars, but its introduction on 20 April 1914 came too late to influence training before the outbreak of the Great War.<sup>7</sup> The Balkan Wars had no particular influence on this field manual for reasons to be discussed below. The same was true for the acquisition of new materiel. As we shall see there were calls for new artillery equipment, but those could simply not be fulfilled before the war. The introduction of long-range cannons in September 1914 was only possible since the arms factory Schneider had developed such a gun in 1901.<sup>8</sup>

These two arguments on lessons not being learned from the Balkan Wars were the same for other European armies. But there was one other obstacle that was particular to the French military that hindered any learning from the Balkan Wars. From 1910, the officer corps tended to stagnate and became hostile to new ideas. Why was this the case?

In the 1890s, the French army had rapidly modernized and assumed the leading position in some fields among Europe's Great Powers. It introduced a new rifle with the first full metal jacket bullet, using smokeless powder. Following the change from muzzleloader to breechloader (*System De Bange*, 1877), the artillery was revolutionized in the mid-1890s by the 75 mm-M1897 gun, which combined several innovations, such as a hydro-pneumatic recoil mechanism, cased ammunition, a rapid-fire breech which could be opened single-handed, a new type of sight for indirect fire, a self-contained firing mechanism and a gun carriage with a trail spade.<sup>9</sup> This revolution in artillery was not only one of materiel, but also one in doctrine. Developed by the famous artillery colonel Hippolyte

<sup>6</sup> Wettstein, 'Grenzen'.

<sup>7</sup> On field manuals, see Storz, *Kriegsbild*, pp. 212, 229 and 279–81.

<sup>8</sup> Hans Linnenkohl, *Vom Einzelschuss zur Feuerwalze: Der Wettlauf zwischen Technik und Taktik im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Koblenz: Bernard & Graefe, 1990), p. 82.

<sup>9</sup> Laurent Giovachini, *L'armement française au XXe siècle* (Paris: Ellipses, 2000), pp. 15–16, and Georg Ortenburg, *Waffen der Millionenheere 1871–1914* (Bonn: Bernard & Graefe, 1992), p. 105.



Langlois (who became *Général de brigade* in 1894), French doctrine now called for its artillery to use covered positions, to utilize more flexible batteries of only four guns and to use centrally commanded fire.<sup>10</sup> It experimented with forward artillery observers and the use of the telephone as a means of communication. For some ten years, there was no artillery in the world that could compete with the French.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, the French army experimented with Hotchkiss and St Étienne light and heavy machine-guns.<sup>12</sup> In tactics as well as in strategy, the French army became more aggressive and offensive-minded. War plans between 1889 (War Plan 10) and 1909 (War Plan 16) followed a form of active defence, the French doctrine of *defensive-offensive*. This included an *armée de couverture* to cover its mobilization. After mobilization, four armies would form the front-line while a powerful mobile army would lay in a 'Napoleonic' order in depth, ready to counterattack in any direction on the command of the general-in-chief. On the tactical level, generals like Langlois and Henri Bonnaud opted for attack as the only way to achieve decisive results and stressed Napoleonic close-order formations, centralized command, storm tactics and cold steel. Already by 1884, infantry regulations stressed 'the principle of the decisive attack, head held high, with no attention to losses'. They were followed by men like Ferdinand Foch, Charles Lanrezac and Pierre Ruffey, all of whom became senior commanders in the Great War.<sup>13</sup> Cold steel was in vogue and cavalry officers discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the lance.<sup>14</sup> Even if there was a dominant mainstream, dissenting positions were discussed seriously.<sup>15</sup>

In the late 1890s, confusion arose. The Dreyfus affair led to real tensions between the military and civilian politicians, and the prestige of the army fell. At the same time, there was colonial friction with Great Britain, eclipsing tension with the traditional enemy, the German Empire. This meant that colonial warfare and questions concerning the navy became more important.

<sup>10</sup> Hippolyte Langlois, *L'artillerie de champagne en liaison avec les autres armes*, 2 vols. (Paris: Baudoin, 1892).

<sup>11</sup> Storz, *Kriegsbild*, pp. 36–8.

<sup>12</sup> Anon., 'Mitrailleuse automatique Hotchkiss', *Revue D'artillerie* (March 1897), pp. 535–47; Linnenkohl, *Vom Einzelschuss zur Feuerwalze*, pp. 25–30.

<sup>13</sup> Gat, *Military Thought*, pp. 125–32.

<sup>14</sup> 'La question des lanciers', *Revue du Cercle Militaire* (17 February 1889), pp. 137–42. This discussion was renewed in the years before the war (see for example: Un colonel de hussards, 'La lance à la cavalerie légère', *Revue de Cavalerie* (February 1913), pp. 129–34), but there is no connection to the Balkan Wars, since there was no comparable use of cavalry in those wars.

<sup>15</sup> Wettstein, 'Grenzen', pp. 43–71.

The Second Boer War (1899–1902) further deepened this confusion, since several renowned military writers such as Generals Charles Kessler and François-Oskar de Négrier saw the impossibility of attacking over open ground against defensive fire-power. They placed more weight on the fire fight and dispersed orders in tactics, challenging the partisans of Napoleonic tactics. Conversely – and this was the main argument of the partisans of the attack – the Boers lost by waging a purely defensive war, remaining relatively passive and never taking the initiative. This was connected – as was usual in this time – with moral inferiority. It must also be borne in mind that both sides argued that the Boer War was not comparable to a European war, especially one between France and Germany, because of differences in terrain, infrastructure and professionalism. Views of the more cautious officers gained the upper hand for a short time and the 1904 infantry regulation adopted a dispersed order and stressed the use of terrain for cover.<sup>16</sup>

The Russo-Japanese War led to similar results for attacking infantry, but this time, the partisans of the attack regained their ground. The Japanese ‘proved’ that the will to attack accompanied by moral superiority could break through enemy lines, even when the enemy was prepared and superior in numbers. French officers saw the causes of the Russian defeat in their passivity and defensive-minded strategy. Even if there were discussions about the terrible losses suffered by Japanese forces, these casualties were understood as proving the moral superiority of the attackers instead of challenging the wisdom of an aggressive, cold-steel oriented offensive doctrine.<sup>17</sup>

In between those two wars, the second edition of Ardant du Picq’s *Battle Studies* was published. Although du Picq by no means possessed an offensive bias, he did address problems of troop psychology on a very lethal battlefield and therefore stressed the importance of cohesion and morale.<sup>18</sup> Those ideas were very attractive for military writers who favoured the offensive on the basis of morale. Langlois and Bonnal extensively mined du Picq’s writings to support the idea that morale was paramount. This inspired a new generation of brilliant middle-rank

<sup>16</sup> See Kronenbitter’s contribution to this volume (Chapter 11, p. 192) for the Austria-Hungarian interpretation of the Boer War.

<sup>17</sup> Capitaine Liébaut, ‘La bataille: étude du colonel Maximilian Csicseric von Bacsany’, *Spectateur Militaire: Recueil de Science, D’art et D’histoire Militaires* (15 November 1908), pp. 318–19. Colonel Maximilian Csicseric von Bacsany was an Austrian observer on the Russian side. The article is generally a paraphrasing of his observations, but amended with French views on these observations. On the original article, see Kronenbitter’s contribution to this volume (Chapter 11, pp. 194–5).

<sup>18</sup> A good example of his long-living and deep influence is: Lieutenant de vaisseau Baudry, ‘La bataille navale’, *RMG* (January 1912), pp. 45–72.

officers who later became important members of the French General Staff such as Frédéric Culmann and Louis de Grandmaison.<sup>19</sup>

There was another reason for an offensive-minded doctrine. The French army was shaken by domestic events. Following the Dreyfus affair, a deep distrust of the army emerged in France. The Radicals tried to republicanize the army, which they saw as a refuge for conservative monarchism and Catholicism. They promoted officers who were politically desirable, on the basis of an extensive file, in which a Masonic Lodge provided evaluations of officers and their outlooks and values. When the public learned of this, it quickly became a scandal, the so-called *affaire de fiches*. This was the end for General André as War Minister, but his successor Bertheaux expanded the system of *fiches*. The morale of the officer corps suffered, and the French army had trouble recruiting new officers and keeping them under the flag. For example, every second artillery officer who graduated between 1905 and 1907 from the *École polytechnique* – the cream of the officer corps – resigned from the army in 1910.<sup>20</sup> The Two Years Law of 1905 was a further blow to the army, as the army believed that it undermined its professionalism and the possible use of conscripts in an offensive role. This marked the low-point of the army's internal coherence as well as its prestige in society.<sup>21</sup>

At almost the same time, European tensions rose with the First Moroccan Crisis and the Bosnian Crisis. As attention to foreign threats increased, patriotic feelings within France also surged. The nationalist revival began and its influence on military thinking and discussion should not be underestimated. The offensive spirit was an important point in rebuilding the army's morale after more than a decade of internal turmoil and humiliations.<sup>22</sup>

There was another development that had a massive influence on French military thinking: the ever-growing gap in numbers between the French and the German armies. France's population had more or less

<sup>19</sup> Azar Gat, *The Development of Military Thought: The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 140–1.

<sup>20</sup> Raoul Giradet, *La Société militaire dans la France contemporaine 1815–1939* (Paris: Plon, 1953), p. 274.

<sup>21</sup> Storz, *Kriegsbild*, p. 61; Douglas Porch, *The March to the Marne: The French Army, 1871–1914* (Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 92–104; David B. Ralston, *The Army of the Republic: The Place of the Military in the Political Evolution of France, 1871–1914* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1967), pp. 260–301; Serge Doessant, *Le général André: de l'affaire Dreyfus à l'affaire des fiches* (Paris: Glyphe, 2009); Lucien Sabah, 'Les fiches Bidegain: conséquences d'un secret', *Politica Hermetica*, 4 (1990), pp. 89–90.

<sup>22</sup> David E. Sumler, 'Domestic Influences on the Nationalist Revival in France, 1909–1914', *French Historical Studies* (Autumn 1970), pp. 517–37; Eugen Weber, *The Nationalist Revival in France, 1905–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959).

stagnated, growing from 36 million in 1870 to 40 million in 1914 whereas Germany's population grew from 41 million in 1871 to 60 million in 1905, topping out at 68 million in 1914. With Russia in disorder after the 1905 revolution, France could not stand alone against Germany's rising number of soldiers. Since France already recruited most of the available men in a year's class, there was no way of expanding its own army in numbers. But it was not only a matter of men; materiel deficiencies also proved problematic. Here too, France could not increase its already high military budget (4.8 per cent of the net national income in 1913), whereas Germany (3.9 per cent of its net national income in 1913) still possessed reserves. As a result, Germany in 1914 could field 5.76 guns per thousand soldiers against 4.8 in France – not including heavy artillery, an area in which the Germans completely outclassed their French counterparts.<sup>23</sup> This superiority also included ammunition – 2,000 rounds per German gun against 1,390 rounds per gun in France.<sup>24</sup> In terms of machine-guns, Germany was also superior. It could field 4,500 against 2,500 French weapons.<sup>25</sup>

French leaders realized that other forces must compensate for this gap in men and materiel. Adolphe Messimy expressed this view most prominently in 1908: 'We want an army which compensates numerical weakness with military quality.' As Minister of War in 1911 and again in 1914, he advanced his views in the army. In 1913, he wrote: 'Neither number nor miraculous machines will determine victory; this will go to soldiers with valor and "quality" – and by this I mean superior physical and moral endurance, offensive strength.'<sup>26</sup>

Because of these circumstances – a growing preference for the offensive, the recognition of the numerical inferiority in both men and materiel and the need to reestablish morale in the army – intellectual discussion in the French army atrophied. Beginning in 1907/08 and accelerating after the Second Moroccan Crisis and the start of the National Revival, French military thinking diverged from the European mainstream and became more and more aggressive, increasingly based on morale (*élan vital*)<sup>27</sup> and offensive-minded.

So, when the Balkan Wars began, the French officer corps was much more uniform in its thinking and there was less available intellectual

<sup>23</sup> Storz, *Kriegsbild*, p. 299. Including heavy field artillery, the numbers were 4.93 for France and 6.6 for the German Reich.

<sup>24</sup> Gat, *Development*, pp. 144–5. <sup>25</sup> Storz, *Kriegsbild*, p. 299.

<sup>26</sup> Porch, *March to the Marne*, p. 227.

<sup>27</sup> For the influence of Henri Bergson and his concept of *élan vital*, see Gat, *Military Thought*, pp. 162–4.

space for open observation or the introduction of new ideas than was possible during the Boer and the Russo-Japanese Wars. Instead of being a touchstone for French theories, the Balkan Wars tended to reinforce French orthodoxy concerning the offensive-à-outrance and *élan vital*. One must add that France – both in the public arena and in the army – maintained some disinterest for the Balkan question. Much of the publicity generated centred on the atrocities committed by the various Balkan armies. Professional articles were much rarer. For example, the *Revue Militaire des Armées Étrangères*,<sup>28</sup> founded in 1871 by the Second Bureau of the French General Staff – the military intelligence service – published just two articles on the Balkan Wars between 1912 and 1914. The first one in October 1912 was a short examination of the structures, organization and equipment of the Serbian, Greek, Montenegrin, Bulgarian and Ottoman armies.<sup>29</sup> The second one was published in five parts between February 1914 and August 1914 and numbered 220 pages.<sup>30</sup> It described the Serbian and Montenegrin operations against the Ottomans, and was intended to be the first of four parts. The second was to cover the Greek operations, the third one Bulgarian operations and the final instalment the Second Balkan War in its entirety.<sup>31</sup> It was not accidental that the first section examined Serbian operations, since there was a close connection between the Serbian and the French armies. Since 1906, numerous Serbian officers not only attended French military academies, but also served with French regiments to learn French military practices.<sup>32</sup> Despite providing a very detailed description of Serbian operations, the article made no mention of any new lessons for the French. The French view of war was confirmed by the article mentioning several times the moral superiority of Serbian soldiers over their Ottoman opponents, as well as claiming that their flexibility and initiative were important factors in the Serbian victory.<sup>33</sup> Coupled with this, the main obstacle for drawing lessons was the big gap in training. Describing

<sup>28</sup> On the *Militaire des Armées Étrangères*, see Allan Mitchell, *Victors and Vanquished: The German Influence on Army and Church in France after 1870* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

<sup>29</sup> Anonymous, 'Situation militaire actuelle des états balkaniques', *Revue Militaire des Armées Étrangères* (October 1912), pp. 256–67; Mitchell, *Victors and Vanquished*, pp. 23 and 88.

<sup>30</sup> 'Aperçus sur les guerres balkaniques 1912–1913', *Revue Militaire des Armées Étrangères* (February 1914), pp. 113–59; (March 1914), pp. 297–339; (April 1914), pp. 416–60; (May 1914), pp. 583–646; (June 1914), pp. 713–73.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* (February 1914), p. 113. <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>33</sup> See for example the conclusion on the battle of Kumanovo (23–4 October 1912), in *ibid.* (March 1914), pp. 338–9.

Serbian equipment as more or less modern with German Mauser rifles and French 75 mm Creusot rapid-fire artillery pieces, the writer added: 'But there must be good riflemen and artilleryists to serve those perfected weapons.'<sup>34</sup>

It is interesting that although this article came out later than similar articles on the Boer War and the Russo-Japanese War, the earlier articles included much more analysis.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, both wars were covered in the *Revue Militaire des Armées Étrangères* by several short writings on equipment, tactics and other themes already during the wars; this was not the case for the Balkan Wars. Other military journals followed the same pattern. Some tracked the wars with short news articles, but there was rarely any longer, more developed commentary.<sup>36</sup> However, comments from German articles were printed.<sup>37</sup> The rare longer articles often lacked analytical discussion – they described the deployment and the course of the operations, but there were almost no attempts to provide the French army with lessons from those wars.<sup>38</sup> On the contrary, there was a strong tendency to look at the Balkan Wars as very different from a war between European Great Powers – even different from the Boer War and the Russo-Japanese War, since those included armies that were European Great Powers (Great Britain, Russia) or were seen as closer to European Great Power militaries (Japan).

We shall now look in more detail at two discussions that were ignited during and after the Balkan Wars. In terms of infantry tactics and the near-endless discussion about attack and the influence of morale, the French merely confirmed the perceptions and conclusions they drew from the Russo-Japanese War.<sup>39</sup> A study by the Second Bureau cited the letter of a Serbian officer trained in France who wrote that the key to the Serbian victory lay 'in the heart' and in the patriotism of the Serbian

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* (February 1914), p. 119.

<sup>35</sup> The most influential work on the Boer War was Langlois, *Enseignements de deux guerres récentes: la guerre turco-russe et la guerre anglo-boer* (Paris: n. p., 1903).

<sup>36</sup> 'Chronique étrangère: la guerre Balkanique', *Journal des Sciences Militaires* (15 April 1913), pp. 451–63.

<sup>37</sup> 'Enseignements de la guerre des Balkans', *Revue d'Artillerie* (April 1914), pp. 92–5, paraphrases German articles from the *Militär-Wochenblatt* and the *Internationale Revue*. 'Enseignements tirés de la guerre des Balkans', *Revue du Génie* (September 1913), pp. 280–1 summarized an article from the *Deutsches Offiziersblatt*.

<sup>38</sup> Exceptions were Djemil Munir Bey, 'La guerre Turco-Bulgare', *Journal des Sciences Militaires* (15 August 1913), pp. 405–30 and Général Palat [Pierre Lehautcourt], 'Les préliminaires du désastre des Turcs', *Journal des Sciences Militaires* (1 May 1913), pp. 5–23, which both analyse the causes of the Turkish defeat.

<sup>39</sup> Storz, *Kriegsbild*, p. 253. The moral argument was offered as a cause for the Turkish defeat in both Munir Bey, 'La guerre Turco-Bulgare' and Général Palat [Pierre Lehautcourt], 'Les préliminaires du désastre des Turcs'.

troops. It further read: 'If one wants to win, he had always to attack, to attack always, even if one is inferior in numbers.' He then added that one of the secrets of the Serbian victory lay in the country's agrarian population, which not only defeated the Ottoman army, but the Turks as a race – it was the Serbian soldier who showed 'the value of his race'. This study as a whole reinforced the following four themes, which were fundamental to French doctrine: the infantry assault was possible; attack was stronger than defence because it was the morally superior form of fighting; morale is the key element to winning a battle and a war; and finally a Social Darwinist interpretation of war that held the strong would emerge triumphant. The study therefore tended to regard these themes as clear and given, and there were no dissenting counter-arguments. It read more like a catechism than an attempt to grapple with the complexities of modern war.

There were more open discussions, although they were infrequent. The most important of these concerned artillery.<sup>40</sup> This discussion went back as far as the 1880s. On the one side were the partisans of the single-gun army corps. This meant that the artillery in an army corps should have one single gun. With this, training and logistics would be much simpler. But those officers taking the position for a single-gun corps saw no advantage in having further types of guns. The other side argued that some types of fighting required specialized artillery pieces like howitzers for effective fire against field fortifications. This discussion included several sub-themes like the question of the need for steep-angle fire and mobile heavy artillery. While the German army took this route and developed specialized guns like the light field howitzer and mobile heavy field artillery around the turn of the century, the French introduced their revolutionary M1897, which seemed to end all debate. Instead discussion became more aggressive with partisans of the specialized artillery insulted as following blindly German ways of war. Artillery use in the Boer War did not provide useful lessons for the French and lessons drawn from Manchuria were contradictory at best, but most often generally dismissed, since – went the argument – there was no use of the latest artillery and therefore the war was simply not comparable. One part of the French officer corps became more and more entrenched in the defence of the single-gun corps and army that needed only light field cannons and heavy guns only for siege operations. The other section was more and more uncomfortable with the lack of fire-power and the impossibility of combating field fortifications. The debate gained new momentum in 1913.

<sup>40</sup> Wettstein, 'Grenzen'.



The trigger was the report by Général de brigade Frédéric Georges Herr, who visited the Balkan battle sites in November and December 1912.<sup>41</sup> Herr was an open-minded artillery general and graduate of the École polytechnique, who had served under General Joseph Gallieni in Madagascar from 1895 to 1902. Between 1911 and 1914, he commanded the artillery units of the elite French 6th Corps. In the Great War, he was promoted to Général de Division, leading the 12th French Infantry Division in the Battle of Éperges in 1915. Only nine months after the Great War had begun, Herr was named commander of a French army corps, and then in mid-1915 he became Commander of the Fortified Region Verdun – where he was to absorb the shock of the first German attack in February 1916.

What lessons did Herr draw from his observations in the Balkans at the end of 1912? In his opinion, the Bulgarians made bad use of their artillery by dispersing their fire instead of concentrating it. He further saw their lack of heavy artillery as an important reason for their failure to break through the Çatalca-Line, since their field artillery simply lacked the fire-power to destroy fortifications.<sup>42</sup> Herr was further convinced by his observations that the artillery needed to search, locate and then destroy the enemy artillery: 'La supériorité dans la lutte d'artillerie s'impose donc comme condition sine qua non du succès final de l'ensemble.'<sup>43</sup> He argued that a concentrated artillery duel and the destruction of the enemy's artillery was a prerequisite for an infantry attack that should be included in tactical manuals.<sup>44</sup> He also demanded further improvements: better equipment for artillery observation including aircraft,<sup>45</sup> and, more importantly, the introduction of mobile heavy artillery similar to that of the German army. His preferred gun was a cannon (not a howitzer like in Germany) with a range of 8–10 km and a calibre no larger than 10 cm, so the gun could be adequately mobile. These guns would cover the positioning of the light field artillery against heavy German artillery.<sup>46</sup> What became clear after the first battles in August 1914 was contradicted by the reports from the Second Balkan War.<sup>47</sup> The French artillery captain Bellenger wrote from Constantinople in Spring 1913, that artillery fire against covered batteries did not lead to any useful results. Under such

<sup>41</sup> Général [Frédéric Georges] Herr, 'Quelques enseignements de la Guerre des Balkans sur l'emploi tactique et technique de l'artillerie', *Revue d'Artillerie* (February 1913), pp. 305–40; Storz, *Kriegsbild*, pp. 260–5.

<sup>42</sup> Herr, 'Guerre des Balkans', pp. 317–20.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 318. 'Superiority in the artillery battle is necessary therefore as the condition *sine qua non* of the ultimate overall success.'

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 327–9. <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 325–7.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 320–4. <sup>47</sup> Storz, *Kriegsbild*, p. 261.



conditions it would be better to support the attacking infantry by ‘neutralizing’ the defending enemy infantry.<sup>48</sup> There was also opposition against the employment of heavy artillery – this time from Jean de Montdésir, a colonel of the engineers, who was in Belgrade during the Second Balkan War. He used the usual argument, that heavy artillery lacked mobility. Bellenger wrote in the same vein, stating that in an active and aggressively led campaign there would be no use for heavy field artillery. This type of artillery was only for cautious commanders. It is clear that Bellenger had in mind forward-oriented and aggressive French commanders and the clichéd cumbersome German commanders.<sup>49</sup> One should add that the Balkan states had few heavy guns and all of them were of older design. They simply were not comparable to German heavy guns and the guns under development in France like the Schneider 105 mm Canon Modèle 1913.

But the Balkan Wars had a paradoxical influence on French debates on heavy artillery. While General Herr’s report gave voice to a growing number of officers who saw the lack of heavy guns as a problem, the partisans of the field artillery gun saw only the victory of the French-equipped Bulgarian, Serbian and Greek armies against the German-equipped Ottomans. In an overly patriotic manner, some newspapers even claimed that French artillery defeated German artillery in the Balkans.<sup>50</sup> But there was a heated discussion in the newspapers between the end of the Balkan Wars and the beginning of the Great War, in which the arguments for and against heavy artillery were endlessly repeated. The discussion was extended to questions of steep-angle fire versus flat-trajectory fire (with most of the French writers supporting the latter) and a single-gun corps artillery versus a corps artillery with several specialized guns similar to that of the German army. Here most French officers opted for the one-gun corps, arguing that such an artillery unit would be easier to supply and to train. All of these questions, which were discussed for years,<sup>51</sup> remained unanswered by 1914, with the result that the French army went to war mainly equipped with their light field gun, whose lack of fire-power proved inadequate for the trench warfare that later characterized combat on the Western Front. At least Herr’s report opened the way for the purchase of some twelve Schneider 105 mm Canon Modèle 1913 cannons before the war, but there was not enough time to test them extensively

<sup>48</sup> G. Bellenger, ‘Notes sur l’emploi de l’artillerie dans la Campagne des Balkans’, *Revue d’Artillerie* (November 1913), pp. 85–100.

<sup>49</sup> Storz, *Kriegsbild*, p. 261.

<sup>50</sup> See also Pöhlmann’s contribution to this volume (Chapter 12, pp. 204–29).

<sup>51</sup> Wettstein, ‘Grenzen’.

before hostilities opened. The first three batteries initially entered the war in September 1914.<sup>52</sup>

This brings us back to beginning: the Balkan Wars as a learning ground for the French army simply came too late. Reports came fast from the battlefields, but only some of the 'lessons' found their way into military journals and newspapers. It would have taken even more time to adopt these lessons into new regulations. As we can see from the case of the 105-mm artillery pieces, it would take even more time to develop and test new weapons. One should not forget that the Schneider 105 mm Canon Modele in 1913 had been under development for ten years.

One may add at this point the question: what exactly could the French military have learned from the Balkan Wars? Most of the developments that would influence the First World War were already part of the Russo-Japanese War. In aviation and in the use of motor transport, the French armed forces had direct experience because of their wide use in manoeuvres in contrast to the small numbers of aircraft and motor vehicles used in the Balkans. Other weapons used were often very mixed, including many obsolete weapons. Whatever the influence of training and advisory missions of the Great Powers were, the Balkan armies were in no way comparable to Great Power armies.

In conclusion, the Balkan Wars occurred during a period when the French military mind was inwardly focused and generally ignored experiences that did not conform to their thinking. Following a chaotic phase, the French army was in search of stability. Realizing the growing inferiority in both men and materiel to the main enemy – the German Empire – the French army promoted an offensive doctrine based on moral superiority, as it saw this as the only way to compensate for its inferior numbers. Therefore, 'lessons' drawn from the Balkan Wars were used to reinforce the prevailing view. Most French military writers, however, were sceptical about learning from the Balkan conflicts, since they saw what they believed were differences that far outweighed any similarities between the wars in the Balkans and a possible war between the European Great Powers. In the few areas where open discussion did exist, both sides could rely on on-site observers, leading to opposing interpretations that had hampered the French army from learning important lessons from the Boer War and the Russo-Japanese War. In the Balkan Wars, however, these observers increasingly tended to

<sup>52</sup> They were part of a fierce discussion especially in the military newspaper *La France militaire*. See for example [Anon.], 'Le canon à grande portée et l'observation du tir', *La France militaire* (4 April 1914) and [Anon.], 'Le canon long de campagne à grande portée', *La France militaire* (8 April 1914). Both articles advocated the introduction of modern long-barrelled 105-mm cannons.

support the prevailing orthodoxy, as seen in the discussion on artillery. Furthermore, because of the short span of time between the Balkan Wars and the First World War, even if new ideas had been developed, there was simply not enough time to put them into practice.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>53</sup> This was also true for the German (see [Chapter 12](#), p. 229) and the Austro-Hungarian side (see [Chapter 11](#), p. 196).

## 11 The perception of the ‘wars before the war’ in Austria-Hungary

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*Günther Kronenbitter*

In the long process of adapting to modern warfare, Austria-Hungary's military leaders had to face a basic problem they shared with their colleagues in other Great Power armies: a lack of experience. After four decades of peace – or at least, the absence of major Great Power wars in Europe – military experts and leaders had a hard time figuring out what a major continental war might look like in the future. But whereas Great Britain, France, Italy, Russia and to a certain degree even Germany had wars to fight in far-flung places, the Habsburg Monarchy stayed out of the imperial game. In the wake of Sadowa (Königgrätz), Austria-Hungary enjoyed a ‘long peace’, punctuated only briefly by minor counter-insurgency operations in 1869, 1878 and 1881–2 in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the adjacent crown-land of Dalmatia.<sup>1</sup> Without overseas territories to be subdued and with even the south-eastern parts of the Habsburg Monarchy quite firmly under control for most of the time, the armed forces of Austria-Hungary had little opportunity to get first-hand knowledge of battle. The odd naval and military involvement in peacekeeping or peace-enforcing missions did not offer a substitute for the experience of actual war. Therefore, by summer 1914 only some older officers, veterans of 1879 and 1882, had seen fighting from close-up.

One of these was Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf, who in 1906 had been appointed Chief of the General Staff of the Habsburg ground forces.<sup>2</sup> By 1906 the Imperial and Royal (*k. u. k.*) Army was suffering from stagnant budgets and a cap on the number of recruits called up for active duty for almost two decades. Even the somewhat enhanced strike capabilities of

<sup>1</sup> M. Christian Ortner, ‘Erfahrungen einer westeuropäischen Armee auf dem Balkan: Die militärische Durchsetzung österreichisch-ungarischer Interessen während der Interventionen von 1869, 1878 und 1881/82’, in Bernhard Chiari and Gerhard P. Groß (eds.), *Am Rande Europas? Der Balkan – Raum und Bevölkerung als Wirkungsfelder militärischer Gewalt* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2009), pp. 67–87.

<sup>2</sup> [Franz] Conrad [von Hötzendorf], *Mein Anfang: Kriegserinnerungen aus der Jugendzeit, 1878–1882* (Berlin: Verlag für Kulturpolitik, 1925).

the much smaller defence forces of Austria (*k.k. Landwehr*) and Hungary (*k.u. Honvéd*), which formed an integral part of the Habsburg Monarchy's field army, did not have much of an overall impact. Because of constant quarrelling between Magyar leaders in Budapest and the Crown about Hungary's proper place in the Habsburg military, it took another six years before a modest rise in the number of recruits could be agreed upon in 1912. Initially backed by the heir-apparent Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his military chancellery at the Belvedere in Vienna, Conrad nevertheless tried to reinvigorate the army. While calling for an expansion of troop numbers and for better equipment, the Chief of the General Staff was particularly committed to providing the army and its officer corps with a clear-cut mission as an instrument of modern warfare.<sup>3</sup> In a bid to transform the understaffed and underpaid officer corps of the Habsburg Monarchy into a capable military leadership, Conrad reformed the war academy (*Kriegsschule*) where future General Staff officers were groomed. He also did his best to make sure that war preparations were to gain centre stage in everything from education to promotions, from the use of admittedly rather limited resources and to intra-military discourse. Therefore, the kind of war the army should be prepared to fight became an ever-more pressing issue.

Generals prepare their armies to win past wars, according to the old adage. To a certain degree, this saying holds true for Europe's military leaders on the eve of the Great War. The battles and campaigns of Frederick the Great or Napoleon were considered treasure troves of unsurpassed military genius, and future General Staff officers had to know them inside out. For a more recent point of reference, officers and experts turned to Moltke the Elder and Prussia's performance in 1866 and 1870. Moltke had put railroads and breech-loading rifles to impressive use, but since the days of Sadowa and Sedan weapons technology and mass conscription had transformed the framework of warfare for good. General Staffs in all major European armies were well aware of these massive changes. Quite often, it was up to them to ask for modern arms and ammunitions, for new strategic railroads and for state-of-the-art fortifications. In the last years of peace in Europe, new weapons and other relevant technology like the telephone, the internal-combustion engine and the aeroplane could not be ignored, but their impact on warfare was less clear. The wars in South Africa (1899–1902) and Manchuria (1904–5) offered at least a glimpse of what a future Great Power war in

<sup>3</sup> Günther Kronenbitter, *'Krieg im Frieden': Die Führung der k. u. k. Armee und die Großmachtpolitik Österreich-Ungarns 1906–1914* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2003), pp. 145–78.

Europe might look like. With covered defensive positions, and making the most of their major assets – superior knowledge of the terrain and an exceptional level of marksmanship – the Boers proved hard to overrun by direct attack. For war preparations, this turned out to be more than just a minor tactical issue. From the study of past wars, experts had come away with a resounding belief in the superiority of the offensive, both at the tactical and operational level of warfare. To overcome defensive positions quickly would be essential in order to gain and keep the initiative on the battlefield and beyond. Just like anyone else in the elite circle of Great Power armies, the Habsburg military had its own observers on the ground in South Africa and the General Staff studied the war carefully. In the ensuing debate about the consequences of these observations, all over Europe experts on tactics were pondering how to adapt to the changing circumstances. The foremost authority on tactical matters was no less a figure than Conrad. Like most of his colleagues in Europe, he took the South African experience quite seriously and spelled out the changes in battlefield tactics deemed necessary. Infantry should make better use of cover and marksmanship while taking the offensive. Frontal attacks were to be avoided, while the enemy's should be pounced on.<sup>4</sup>

With hindsight, these lessons might seem overly cautious and missing the point of devastating modern fire-power, but they still had serious implications. Less compact 'formations', seeking cover and firing as accurately as possible between 'leaps' forward would rely on junior officers or NCOs for coordination and leadership. Even the individual soldier would have to make vital independent decisions, e.g. choosing appropriate cover and suitable targets. Traditional forms of discipline would be less important than a sense of personal responsibility and initiative among the troops. When field regulations (*Exerzierreglement*) were to be updated in 1911, Conrad tried to implement as much as possible of his central theme that education mattered more than formal discipline. He met with opposition from Franz Ferdinand who already held a key position in the military even before he was appointed General Inspector of the Armed Forces by his uncle, Emperor Franz Joseph, in 1913. For all his initial sympathy with Conrad's policy of rejuvenating the higher echelons of the officer corps, the Archduke's conservatism made it hard for him to embrace a devaluation of formal discipline as proposed by Conrad. Franz Ferdinand was also convinced that it would be

<sup>4</sup> Erwin A. Schmidl, 'From Paardeberg to Przemyśl: Austria-Hungary and the Lessons of the Anglo-Boer War, 1899–1902', in Erwin A. Schmidl and Jay Stone (eds.), *The Boer War and Military Reforms* (Lanham NY: University Press of America, 1988), pp. 163–321; Erwin A. Schmidl, 'Österreicher im Burenkrieg, 1899–1902', unpublished PhD thesis (University of Vienna, 1980), pp. 316–64.

tantamount to inviting chaos on the battlefield if troop formations were more or less dissolved for the action. The heir-apparent had served as a cavalry officer and among his protégés were generals from this branch of the army, which had the most difficulty in adapting to modern warfare. Traditionalist tendencies certainly go a long way towards explaining the Archduke's stance. But it would be a little unfair to cast the debate as a confrontation between a hopelessly outdated aristocrat and an open-minded modernizing professional officer – although that was exactly the way Conrad perceived his quarrels with Franz Ferdinand.<sup>5</sup>

The differences between the Chief of the General Staff and the Belvedere were not confined to the drill ground. Conrad was proud of introducing a system of field manoeuvres without breaks at night and without demarcations. The 'free' manoeuvres were meant to simulate the reality of warfare. As critics noted, commanders adjusted to the new system by relying excessively on fast movement of troops. Thereby the manoeuvres fostered expectations of rapid deployment and regrouping that were unfeasible under the conditions of a shooting war. At the time, Conrad and his staff were rather proud of their new system. The Germans, usually an object of envy, were trailing behind in this aspect of war preparations. All the same, Franz Ferdinand was not impressed. On one occasion, the great field manoeuvres of 1913, he singlehandedly decided to switch to a more scripted version of exercises on the last day. As former General Staff officers suggested after the war, this was not completely pointless in military terms but did not tackle the main problem of Austro-Hungarian war preparations. Just as the new field regulations dealt with the effects of modern firearms only in passing, the 'free' manoeuvres encouraged operational and tactical wizardry at the expense of proper training in using combined arms and in logistics. By 1912–13, this was no negligible flaw because by then the lessons of the South African War had been reinforced and augmented by the first war between two modern Great Power armies since the 1870s.<sup>6</sup>

In several ways, Manchuria was slightly closer to Vienna than South Africa. The Russian and Japanese armies could be compared to other modern forces, in terms of military organization, weaponry and drill. They both fielded hundreds of thousands of soldiers, modern artillery and thousands of machine-guns. Quick-firing guns dramatically changed the pace and impact of artillery fire, but by the same token they also used up shells at an alarming speed. Logistics, traditionally for the most part busy with feeding men and horses, had to focus on ammunition as well. Not only were artillery pieces in need of a steady supply of ammunition,

<sup>5</sup> Kronenbitter, *Krieg im Frieden*, pp. 94–6.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 88–94.

but the infantry fired more rounds than in past wars as well. For the first time in military history, the machine-gun which had been around for about half a century became of crucial importance to battlefield tactics in a fight between two modern armies. The battle of Mukden epitomized the revolutionary aspect of land warfare in Manchuria. It was stretched out in terms of time and space, improvised field fortifications with barbed wire playing an important role and the devastating effects of modern fire-power led to not only high casualties but also to 'the emptiness of the battlefield' that struck eye witnesses of the epic fight.

Among those who watched the struggle unfold were observers from all over the world. War correspondents and war attachés embedded on either side watched and described the unfolding campaign for the benefit of readers back home. General Staffs would use both the newspapers and their attachés' reports to get a comprehensive view of what was going on in Manchuria. The Habsburg army had its set of experts on the scene just like the other Great Powers.<sup>7</sup> They took their mission seriously and produced not only a set of reports while the war was still being waged but also more analytical pieces afterwards.<sup>8</sup> The new, brutally effective use of fire-power caught the eyes of war attachés in Manchuria. It was not forgotten by those who had taken part in the fighting either. An Austro-Hungarian officer recalled a conversation with a Japanese officer who had come to visit k. u. k. army installations. Asked why the Japanese commands had relied so heavily on fresh recruits for attacks on a hill that had been defended by the Russians with particular tenacity, the officer replied: 'Because old folks, who have already attacked while under machine-gun fire before, will not do it for a second time.'<sup>9</sup>

Maximilian von Csicseries scrutinized the form of modern battle he had been able to witness in his reports. He also gave talks on the topic and published a series of articles in Austria-Hungary's leading military journal. Titled 'The Battle', the articles came out as a book just a little later.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Peter Broucek, 'Taktische Erkenntnisse aus dem russisch-japanischen Krieg und deren Beachtung in Österreich-Ungarn', *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs*, 30 (1977), pp. 191–220. For a post-1918 recollection see Theodor von Lerch, 'Erinnerungen eines österreichisch-ungarischen Generals. Japan, Korea und die Mandschurei', unpublished manuscript, [written after 1921], Austrian State Archive, Vienna (ÖStA), War Archive (KA), B/33:2.

<sup>8</sup> Hans Meisl, 'Der Russisch-japanischen Krieg 1904/05 und die Balkankriege in den Berichten der österreichisch-ungarischen Kriegs-, Militär- und Marineattachés', unpublished PhD thesis (University of Innsbruck, 1964), pp. 5–20, 48–190; a review of publications on the Russo-Japanese War for the General Staff from December 1909 in ÖStA, KA, Gstb OpB, box 799.

<sup>9</sup> Wilhelm Buschek, quoted in Broucek, 'Taktische Erkenntnisse', p. 213.

<sup>10</sup> Maximilian Csicseries von Bacsány, *Die Schlacht: Studie auf Grund des Krieges in Ostasien 1904/05* (Vienna: L. W. Seidel & Sohn, 1908).



As Csicserics summed up the lessons of Manchuria, he offered a clear account of the new features of warfare and tried to persuade the army leadership to reform its war preparations accordingly. He was not ignored, but neither would his advice be heeded as he had hoped.<sup>11</sup> The new field regulations were not much affected by the lessons of 1904–5. In the opening campaigns of the Great War, it turned out that the much more disastrous repercussion of war preparations was the unmitigated belief in the superiority of the offensive. Ignoring the evidence to the contrary, the Austro-Hungarian General Staff focused on the use of machine-guns and quick-firing artillery as ways to enhance the options for tactical offensives. Since Conrad's operational and even strategic plans were heavily dependent on fighting offensive battles to gain and keep the initiative, he learned what he wanted to learn. Like his opposite numbers and their staffs, Conrad did not let the experience of the Russo-Japanese War unhinge his adherence to the 'cult of the offensive'.<sup>12</sup>

The Austro-Hungarian military needed an explanatory tool in order to keep its preference for the offensive while taking into account the experience of the Manchurian War. In line with the *Zeitgeist* of the early twentieth century, the General Staff focused on the importance of zeal and courage on modern battlefields. Had not the Japanese troops carried the day by absorbing heavy losses and by an unrelenting will to succeed? In Western eyes, Japanese soldiers were still unspoiled by modernity and its culture of individualism and nervousness. Such a 'primitive' source of mental strength was unavailable for Western armies, but 'education' of soldiers, realistic field exercises and a highly motivated and self-confident officer corps would make up for this impediment. The concept of modern fighting as a battle of wills would give traditional martial virtues renewed relevance. It also offered a reassuring lesson for the officers' indispensable role in warfare. This pattern of learning from recent wars that had evolved since the turn of the century did not loosen its grip on the imagination of war planners during the last years of peace.<sup>13</sup>

Neither the Italian campaign in Libya nor the Balkan Wars caused major debates about the future of battle. The consequences of modern fire-power had been scrutinized, discussed and finally digested in a

<sup>11</sup> Maximilian Csicserics von Bacsány, 'Die Verwertung meiner Erfahrungen aus dem russisch-japanischen Kriege 1904/1905', in the appendix to Hans Eder, 'Der General der k.u.k. Armee und Geheime Rat Maximilian Csicserics von Bacsány', unpublished PhD thesis (University of Vienna, 2010), pp. 305–24.

<sup>12</sup> Stephen Van Evera, 'The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War', *International Security*, 9 (1984), pp. 58–107.

<sup>13</sup> Dieter Storz, *Kriegsbild und Rüstung vor 1914: Europäische Landstreitkräfte vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Herford, Berlin, Bonn: Verlag E. S. Mittler & Sohn, 1992), pp. 79–96, 136–66, 243–7.

seemingly suitable way for more than a decade. The time-span between the last of the 'wars before the war' and the July crisis was not long enough to debate and implement lessons from the theatres of operations.<sup>14</sup> In addition, Italy's Libyan campaign did not qualify as an example since it was colonial, asymmetric warfare and certainly not the kind of fighting that would take place in a European Great Power war. That Italy deployed aeroplanes in innovative ways did not have much of an impact on Austro-Hungarian perceptions of the North African struggle. More attention was paid to the obvious weaknesses of the Italian forces. Conrad pleaded for killing the untrustworthy ally off on this occasion and was forced to bow out of office after this particularly stark overstepping of his bounds. He learned from this setback. When he was brought back during the Winter Crisis of 1912–13, Conrad was even willing to engage in agreements on military cooperation with his Italian and German colleagues in the event of a Triple Alliance war for reasons of foreign policy.

The Balkan Wars had a catastrophic effect on Austria-Hungary's international position. The formation of the Balkan League in 1912 came as a surprise, just as no one had expected the armies of the Balkan states to rout the Ottoman forces so resoundingly in such a short period. Nevertheless, the usual machinery of war reporting got into gear. Journalists and military attachés tried to get to the theatres of war in 1912 and in the following conflict in 1913. The Balkan states were suspicious of the Habsburg Monarchy and tried to curtail access of Austro-Hungarian General Staff officers to the battlefields. But still, the campaigns were painstakingly followed by Conrad and his men. Crucial sources of information were the military attachés in Constantinople, Sofia, Athens, Bucharest, Belgrade and Cetinje, the capital of Montenegro.<sup>15</sup> Unlike his colleagues, the military attaché to Montenegro Gustav von Hubka was able to travel extensively and to give first-hand accounts of the Scutari Crisis in 1912–13.<sup>16</sup> Military intelligence, reports of consuls in the area and journals helped to keep the military leadership in Vienna quite well informed. Thus, they learned about the Bulgarian-Turkish fight along the Çatalca line and realized that siege warfare might become an important element of warfare in Europe

<sup>14</sup> For the perceptions of and lessons from the wars of 1904–5 and 1911–13 in Germany and France, see Adrian E. Wettstein's and Markus Pöhlmann's chapters in this book (Chapters 10 and 12, pp. 176–89 and 204–29).

<sup>15</sup> Meisl, 'Russisch-japanischer Krieg', pp. 299–423.

<sup>16</sup> Gustav von Hubka, 'Kritische Tage in Montenegro: Erinnerungen', *Berliner Monatshefte*, 9 (1931), pp. 27–45; Josef Steiner, 'Gustav Hubka (1873–1962): Sein Wirken als k. u. k. Militärattaché und Schriftsteller', unpublished PhD thesis (University of Vienna, 1975), pp. 37–129.

again. Without enough time left before the Great War would break out, the initiative to study siege warfare more closely went nowhere.<sup>17</sup>

Visions of modern warfare did not really change that much in 1912–14 in the Habsburg army. The only high-ranking Austro-Hungarian officer who took part in the campaigns of the First Balkan War was Prince Ludwig Windisch-Graetz. A well-connected member of the aristocracy and an artillery officer by profession, he had managed to serve as a war attaché embedded with the Russian cavalry that was captured by the Japanese at the battle of Mukden. In 1912 Windisch-Graetz got the Emperor's approval to join the Bulgarian army and was attached to the Bulgarian cavalry brigade under the command of Colonel Alexander Tanef. Windisch-Graetz witnessed the successful charge of Tanef's brigade against entrenched Turkish positions close to Edirne, and helped – according to his own account – to capture a Turkish army corps in November 1912. The following month, he joined the Macedonian irregulars.<sup>18</sup> In his final report, Windisch-Graetz gave a summary of his experience. One of the characteristics of the Balkan Wars in the eyes of foreign observers was the large massacres of unarmed civilians committed by both sides. Windisch-Graetz was rather pro-Bulgarian and so Turkish atrocities against civilians were vividly described, but Bulgarian ones only mentioned in passing. His evaluation of the Bulgarian troops was very positive, as Windisch-Graetz stressed their discipline, bravery and patriotism.<sup>19</sup> In his view, machine-guns and Shrapnel-fire turned out to have a rather limited impact.<sup>20</sup> Much more important was morale – the key to victory: 'Once again, the undisputable proof has been furnished, that success in war is above all to be found in the word "Forward!", in an uncompromising striving to achieve this forward that has become second nature to every Bulgarian leader.'<sup>21</sup> This verdict fitted in with the General Staff's received wisdom about the nature of war.

The Balkan Wars did not challenge the general concept of war preparations. But what the military leadership had to grapple with was a much more uncomfortable lesson: the military prowess of the Serbian army in both Balkan Wars. The Serbs defeated Turks and Bulgarians in turn and had every reason to be self-confident. Austria-Hungary's military attaché in Belgrade, Otto Gellinek, gave a comprehensive assessment of the

<sup>17</sup> Storz, *Kriegsbild*, pp. 250–68.

<sup>18</sup> Ludwig Windisch-Graetz, *Helden und Halunken: Selbsterlebte Weltgeschichte, 1899–1964* (Vienna: Wilhelm Frick Verlag, 1967), pp. 20–30, 58–63.

<sup>19</sup> [Prince Ludwig Windisch-Graetz], 'Im ersten Balkankriege: Die Aufzeichnungen eines Augenzeugen', *Reformatus Egyház Zsinati Levéltára, Budapest* (Archive of the Synod of the Reformed Church), *Tisza iratok* (Tisza Papers), B 12 10 a, no. 23, pp. 55–6, 66.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 62, 64. <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 66.

Serbian army in the wake of the Second Balkan War. He pointed out that Serbia's wartime enemies had suffered from major flaws – bad morale being particularly noteworthy among them – and therefore the significance of Serbian victories should not be exaggerated. This being said, Gellinek warned against Austro-Hungarian complacency. To his mind, Serbian troops in the regular field army were as much of a military force as Habsburg ones. For war planning, this meant that at least the same number of troops had to be deployed as the enemy was able to field. To rely on superior quality in order to make up for insufficient quantity was no longer feasible.<sup>22</sup> Other sources painted a similar picture of Serbia's military. An officer, reconnoitring Albania in 1912–13, compared the rank and file of Serbian troops to Greek forces in the area. He saw the Serbs, unlike the Greeks, as rather impressive soldiers and officers, with high morale and discipline.<sup>23</sup> From then on, the traditional condescending view of Serbia's military, as an army of regicides – officers had led the bloody coup in 1903 – and mediocre troops, prone to committing atrocities and with a penchant for irregular warfare, had to be reconsidered. Although this mental image still lingered on in the minds of Habsburg officers<sup>24</sup> and would play a role in the brutal campaigns of 1914,<sup>25</sup> the General Staff was forced to take the Serbian army seriously, as a modern, well-equipped and battle-hardened force to be reckoned with in regular warfare.

And indeed, the Habsburg war planners actually did take Serbia seriously and calculated accordingly. From 1906, plans for wars against Italy, Serbia and Russia were adjusted to new conditions and in 1913 and 1914 were supplemented with schemes for wars against Montenegro and Romania. Paying tribute to the strategic environment, plans for wars on several fronts had to be laid out as well. To make matters even more complicated for the Viennese General Staff, belated interventions of, say, Russia in an armed conflict with Italy or Serbia had to be taken into account. By splitting the field army into three main components,

<sup>22</sup> Otto Gellinek, 'Resumé über die serbische Armee nach ihrem Feldzug gegen Bulgarien im Sommer 1913', ÖStA KA GStb 1913 25–18/9. For a critique of Gellinek's reporting during the Balkan Wars, see Fedor Dragojlov, 'Eine verfehlte Balkanpolitik und deren Rückwirkungen auf den Donauraum: Eine Studie über verfllossene Dinge und aktuelle Probleme', unpublished manuscript [1947], ÖStA KA B/950:2, folio 32.

<sup>23</sup> Karl Adrario, 'Bericht über meine Reise durch Süd-Albanien', unpublished manuscript, ÖStA KA, MKSM 1913 18–1/7–5, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> For a striking example of this mentality, see Michael von Appel to Alexander Brosch von Aarenau, 25 July 1914, ÖStA KA, B/232:11, folio 79.

<sup>25</sup> Jonathan A. Gumz, *The Resurrection and Collapse of Empire in Habsburg Serbia, 1914–1918* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 44–59; Martin Schmitz, "Als ob die Welt aus den Fugen ginge": Kriegserfahrungen österreichisch-ungarischer Offiziere im Ersten Weltkrieg', unpublished PhD thesis (University of Augsburg, 2012), pp. 304–27.

Conrad and his team tried to keep some flexibility in the rather likely case of an unclear strategic situation at the onset of war, even if this slowed down the deployment of a substantial part of Austro-Hungarian forces. Facing a whole host of war scenarios, Conrad did not have much of a choice.<sup>26</sup> The Balkan Wars made things worse in several ways and not just with regard to Serbia's new military clout or the increased likelihood of Montenegrin-Serbian cooperation.

Much more detrimental to the Habsburg Monarchy's stance as a Great Power was the fact that the Balkan Wars 'revealed how isolated Vienna was and how little understanding there was at the foreign chancelleries for its view of Balkan events'.<sup>27</sup> Efforts to solve the impending security crisis by a revived Concert of Europe led to the creation of an independent Albanian state by Great Power *fiat*, but even international support could not stabilize the newly established principality. As Albania descended into chaos, neighbours tried behind the scenes and sometimes even out in the open to snatch parts of it. Italy, Austria-Hungary's ally and rival in the Adriatic, and the Habsburg Monarchy had pressed for Albanian independence, but as soon as this was achieved at the London Conference they began to compete for influence in the principality. When Germany worked hard to plaster over the widening split between her allies and pushed for naval and military agreements in 1912–13, Austria-Hungary had little choice but to play along. It made no sense to alienate the Habsburg Monarchy's most important ally and there was little to lose by engaging in Triple Alliance military diplomacy. Nevertheless, Italy could not be counted on in case of a third Balkan war or an ensuing European conflagration.<sup>28</sup> The same, Austria-Hungary had to realize in 1913, had to be said about Romania. Bucharest had been attached to the Triple Alliance for decades by a secret treaty and in recent years Romania had become a relevant strategic asset in case of a war against Russia. After the First Balkan War, the Habsburg Monarchy came to consider Bulgaria as a counterweight against Serbia, but much to Austria-Hungary's chagrin Bucharest fought and won against its southern neighbour in 1913. Closer Romanian-Russian relations and trouble caused by the plight of Romanians in Transylvania aggravated the situation. That Bucharest might switch sides and join the camp of the Habsburg Monarchy's adversaries

<sup>26</sup> Günther Kronenbitter, 'Austria-Hungary', in Richard F. Hamilton and Holger H. Herwig (eds.), *War Planning 1914* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 24–47.

<sup>27</sup> Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (London, New York and Toronto: Penguin Books, 2012), p. 288.

<sup>28</sup> Horst Brettner-Messler, 'Die militärischen Absprachen zwischen den Generalstäben Österreich-Ungarns und Italiens vom Dezember 1912 bis Juni 1914', *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs*, 23 (1970), pp. 225–49.

seemed a realistic scenario. Conrad and the General Staff were involved in efforts to thwart this shift, just as they kept in touch with their Italian and German counterparts.<sup>29</sup> From the General Staff in Berlin, they also learned first-hand of Germany's reluctance to support Austria-Hungary in the Winter Crisis of 1912–13.<sup>30</sup> Neither the Concert of Europe nor the Triple Alliance would alleviate the Habsburg Monarchy's security dilemma.

The strategic situation was shifting and planning for major war became ever more difficult. Whether Italy or Romania would stay neutral in a war with Serbia and Russia or rather join Austria-Hungary's enemies could alter the balance of military power decisively. Albeit involved in diplomacy, the military would have to rely on the Minister of Foreign Affairs to avert a multi-front war situation. The generously offered but unsolicited advice of Conrad was to wage a series of one-front wars to prevent a strategic predicament that would leave the Habsburg Monarchy only with the option to abdicate as a Great Power or to fight a multi-front war against all odds. Blasius Schemua, his successor as Chief of the General Staff in 1911–12, was less outspoken but shared Conrad's basic assumption that only an assertive and if necessary belligerent policy would save Austria-Hungary from ruin. During the First Balkan War, Schemua tried to stiffen the back of Foreign Minister Leopold Count Berchtold and suggested that in case of a war between the Habsburg Monarchy and Russia, the Austro-Hungarian forces might have a fair chance to succeed, even if the Germans were not fighting alongside them. Faster deployment and superior leadership would make up for fewer troops.<sup>31</sup> The Russians for their part were not as sure to win against the Habsburg army as one might expect. As Austria-Hungary increased troop numbers in Galicia in reaction to a low-gear build-up of forces across the Russian border that was meant to deter the Habsburg Monarchy from an intervention in the First Balkan War, Russia's leadership feared for existing deployment plans and decided to up the ante.<sup>32</sup> Thus began the Winter Crisis of 1912–13 that brought Europe close to the brink.

Facing Russian resolve to frustrate Austro-Hungarian plans to compel Serbia into submission either by waging war or by a credible threat to do so, the idea of going it alone against Russia was dropped quickly. As soon as the Serbs had beaten most of the Turkish troops on their theatre

<sup>29</sup> Kronenbitter, *Krieg im Frieden*, pp. 399–401, 436–44.

<sup>30</sup> [Franz] Conrad [von Hötzendorf], *Aus meiner Dienstzeit*, vol. III (Vienna, Leipzig, Munich: Rikola Verlag, 1922), pp. 144–53.

<sup>31</sup> Blasius Schemua, 'Allgemeiner Zustand der russischen Armee im Vergleich mit unserer Wehrmacht, 13 October 1912', ÖStA KA, Gstb OpB box 710.

<sup>32</sup> See Bruce Menning's chapter in this book ([Chapter 9](#), pp. 169–72).

of war, a campaign against Serbia would become much more risky and time-consuming. While this strategic window of opportunity was closing, the political backing for a forceful international policy was on the wane. As long as there had been reason to hope that Germany would back a belligerent posture, not only Berchtold but also the Emperor and the heir-apparent were supportive. As soon as it became clear that Germany was not willing to deter Russia from a military confrontation by taking the risk of a major war, the determination to launch an assertive policy evaporated. Therefore, de-escalation became a priority, but it took months to defuse the dangerous situation. In the end, it was Austria-Hungary that blinked and so the stand-off had to be considered a serious setback for the Habsburg Monarchy. Without any achievements to show for it, the temporary build-up of forces had depleted Austria-Hungary's coffers, strained troop morale and chipped away at the self-esteem of officers. The military elite, just like the political leaders, also had to realize how wavering German support for Austria-Hungary's Balkan policy actually was. Neither Schemua nor Conrad received a reliable commitment from their opposite number Helmuth von Moltke the Younger.<sup>33</sup> And finally, in the light of his experience in late 1912, Franz Ferdinand reasserted his aversion against anything that smacked of a possible military confrontation with Russia.<sup>34</sup>

Little wonder that it was up to the Archduke to argue against war in the two crises that evolved in 1913. In May and October, Austria-Hungary came close to a war against Montenegro and Serbia respectively. The build-up of forces in the south-east that had begun in Autumn 1912 gave the Habsburg Monarchy some leverage as long as Russia and her allies did not weigh in. In the disputes about Scutari with Cetinje and about Serbian-occupied areas in Albania with Belgrade, Austria-Hungary basically enforced the decisions of the London Conference through ultimatums backed by war threats. Instead of acknowledging the role of Great Power cooperation in isolating Montenegro and Serbia, Berchtold saw the caving in of both Balkan states as a result of Austria-Hungary's new assertiveness. The problem with this militant diplomacy was that the increase in troop numbers was extremely costly, just as was the build-up in Galicia, and the rewards were rather limited and did not compensate for the strategic setback caused by the Second Balkan War.<sup>35</sup> The military elite ruled out any further attempt at militant diplomacy as

<sup>33</sup> Kronenbitter, *Krieg im Frieden*, pp. 392–8, 401–13.

<sup>34</sup> See Alma Hannig's chapter in this book (Chapter 13, pp. 235–7).

<sup>35</sup> On militant diplomacy in the context of Austro-Hungarian policy, see Samuel R. Williamson, Jr, *Austria-Hungary and the Origins of World War I* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991).



ruinous, because it would mean that reserves would not accept extended peacetime deployment, officers would lose faith in the military and political leadership, and the military budget would be squeezed. Conrad also blocked requests to use even very small numbers of men and officers for peace-enforcing missions. With dramatically inadequate military resources at hand, he was unable to part with any of them. Only the decision to wage a real war would justify preparatory measures like troop deployments.<sup>36</sup>

For Austria-Hungary's military forces, the 'wars before the war' ended with the withdrawal of Serbia's troops from Northern Albania. While demobilized soldiers left the garrisons in Bosnia-Herzegovina and went back to their civilian life, the Habsburg military elite looked back at strenuous, nerve-rattling and frustrating months. The lessons they had learned were rather disheartening: short of war, the army could not be used as an instrument of diplomacy. Without a war sooner rather than later, it would lose any chance to fulfil its purpose to protect Austria-Hungary's status as a Great Power. Without trustworthy allies, the strategic situation could not allow for winning a multi-front war. Unfortunately, those allies were in short supply and this might rather get worse pretty soon. A localized war, insulated by the use of Germany's potential as a deterrent, might improve the situation. With all this in mind, the Chief of the General Staff focused ever more on the sorry state of the Habsburg Monarchy's political and strategic situation. Tactics and operational doctrines seemed to offer some consolation: wars could be won by offensive battles and campaigns, even if modern fire-power would make fighting more demanding on soldiers and officers. To discard these assumptions in the light of recent experiences was neither necessary nor conceivable. It would have ruled out brinkmanship or war as political tools and called the Great Power status of the Habsburg Monarchy into question. A military leadership unable to prepare for war looked like a contradiction in terms. Since all the other military elites in Europe shared the conviction that wars were still winnable at acceptable costs, there was no need to question the core of the army's mission. And even if the next war would trigger a longer period of fighting, one could find consolation in the rejuvenating effects of violent struggle.<sup>37</sup> Morale was expected to be decisive

<sup>36</sup> 'Unterredung Exc. Conrad mit Gf. Berchtold, Exc. Haus u. Szapary', ÖStA KA, GStb OpB box 738, folio 612–4. See also Conrad, *Aus meiner Dienstzeit*, vol. III, pp. 266–8.

<sup>37</sup> Gabriel Tánzos to Conrad, 3 July 1914, quoted in Günther Kronenbitter, "Nur los lassen": Österreich-Ungarn und der Wille zum Krieg', in Johannes Burkhardt, Josef Becker, Stig Förster and Günther Kronenbitter, *Lange und kurze Wege in den Ersten Weltkrieg: Vier Augsburger Beiträge zur Kriegsursachenforschung* (Munich: Verlag Ernst Vögel, 1996), pp. 187–8.



on the battlefields of wars. Victory in war would in turn boost morale not just among soldiers and officers, but also among the people. Italian imperialism had aimed for this effect and the Balkan states seemed to have succeeded in stimulating nationalism by waging wars. Why should the Habsburg military deny Austria-Hungary an opportunity to get a new lease of life?

## 12 Between Manchuria and the Marne: the German army and its perception of the military conflicts of 1911–1914

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*Markus Pöhlmann*

The policy of the German Empire on the Balkans has been repeatedly reduced to Otto von Bismarck's adage of 1876, according to which the region was 'not worth the healthy bones of a single Pomeranian musketeer'.<sup>1</sup> There is no documentary proof of whether the German chancellor made a similar comment with regard to Tripolitania and the Cyrenaica. But it probably would not have read much differently. This position of alleged indifference, however, nowhere near reflects Germany's position in the last years of peace after 1911. For the system of power coordinates in Europe had in the meantime changed fundamentally, and alliance obligations opened up a host of spheres of interest for the German Empire and the other major European powers. The objective of this chapter is to examine how the second-largest armed force in the world at that time, the Prussian-German army and the Imperial navy, observed the military developments in the indirect spheres of interest of North Africa and the Balkans and what conclusions they reached.

Examining the Italo-Turkish War and the two Balkan Wars is first problematic because they have little in common – from a military perspective – although both conflicts began as wars of conquest against the Ottoman Empire. The second problem is the fact that more specific military history literature on the conflicts is limited. There are only contemporary publications on the war in North Africa.<sup>2</sup> The Balkan Wars are better researched, although this conflict zone has also been studied with a view to the Third Balkan War of 1914–18.<sup>3</sup> Then account needs to be taken

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Gregor Schöllgen, *Imperialismus und Gleichgewicht: Deutschland, England und die orientalische Frage 1871–1914* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2000), p. 16. Bismarck repeated the quote in an 1892 interview, replacing 'musketeer' with 'grenadier'.

<sup>2</sup> George von Graevenitz, *Geschichte des italienisch-türkischen Krieges*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Eisenhardt, 1912/13); Hermann von dem Borne, *Der italienisch-türkische Krieg*, 2 vols. (Oldenburg: G. Stalling, 1913).

<sup>3</sup> Großer Generalstab (ed.), *Der Balkankrieg 1912/13: Erstes Heft: Die Ereignisse auf dem thrakischen Kriegsschauplatz bis zum Waffenstillstand* (Berlin: E. S. Mittler & Sohn, 1914); [Friedrich] Immanuel, *Der Balkankrieg 1912*, 5 vols. (Berlin: E. S. Mittler & Sohn,

of the fact that the military point of view was just one of several perspectives. The intelligence picture and intelligence reports of those wars were fed from many sources, mostly civilian, and they, of course, were subject to diverging interests. It is beyond the focus of this chapter to determine the actual influence of military reports on the military and civilian decision-makers.<sup>4</sup>

With Bismarck's adage in mind, it is first necessary to determine the relevance of the two conflicts for the German military. The hypothesis can be made that the war in North Africa had little relevance. The situation was different in the case of the Balkans. Firstly, there was the geographical proximity of this war to Germany – compared with South Africa or Manchuria. Then there was the fact that the conflict there also had significant alliance implications. It took place practically on the doorstep of the closest ally – Austria-Hungary. Finally, the German Empire was indirectly involved in the war through the military mission in the Ottoman Empire. German officers actually took part in the fighting.

The issue of the military lessons Germany learned from the wars of 1911 to 1913 will now be examined from three angles. An introduction will first be given to how military institutions like the Prussian-German army learn at all. Then the question of the military-political environment in which the wars in North Africa and on the Balkans were observed will be posed. And finally, an analysis of the various tactical and operational conditions and a look at the individual branches will clarify what lessons the German military actually learned from these conflicts.

### The German system of military intelligence

Regarding the observation and evaluation of military and military-political developments abroad, the army and navy in the German Empire

1913/14); Richard C. Hall, *The Balkan Wars 1912–1913: Prelude to the First World War* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000); also Edward J. Erickson, *Defeat in Detail: The Ottoman Army in the Balkans, 1912–1913* (Westport CT: Praeger, 2003). Finally Jürgen Angelow in collaboration with Gundula Gahlen and Oliver Stein (eds.), *Der Erste Weltkrieg auf dem Balkan: Perspektiven der Forschung* (Berlin: be.bra, 2011); Bernhard Chiari and Gerhard P. Groß (eds.), *Am Rande Europas? Der Balkan – Raum und Bevölkerung als Wirkungsfelder militärischer Gewalt* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Katrin Boeckh, for instance, comes to the erroneous conclusion that war correspondents were 'the only source informing the European public about the goings-on of the wars'. Katrin Boeckh, *Von den Balkankriegen zum Ersten Weltkrieg: Kleinstaatenpolitik und ethnische Selbstbestimmung auf dem Balkan* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1996), p. 367. For further sources and contemporary media, see Mechthild Golczewski, *Der Balkan in deutschen und österreichischen Reise- und Erlebnisberichten 1912–1918* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1981); Florian Keisinger, *Unzivilisierte Kriege im zivilisierten Europa? Die Balkankriege und die öffentliche Meinung in Deutschland, England und Irland 1876–1913* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2008).

had developed a relatively coherent system of military learning since the 1890s. This was a continuous and institution-based process which can largely be accounted for by the pressure of the long period of peace. With the exception of the operations in the colonies, the German armed forces had not waged a major war since 1871 – some forty years earlier.<sup>5</sup> Taking a look at the bigger picture offset this deficiency to a certain degree.

The system of military learning was based on several pillars. The first pillar was the work of the military attachés. In the Eastern Mediterranean region and in the Balkans, the embassies in Bucharest, Constantinople, Rome and Vienna had military or naval attachés. In view of Russia's role as a sympathetic power in the region, the military attaché in St Petersburg was important for the assessment of the situation in the Balkans.<sup>6</sup> Providing reports about Bulgaria and Serbia was the responsibility of the attaché in Romania. If there were no attachés, as in Athens, special envoys took on the task of providing military reports. The officers monitored developments in foreign armed forces and visited manoeuvres; sometimes they acted as points of contact for civilian specialists in a country and for agents. One of their most important tasks was to contrive arms export deals. In Greece, such deals primarily included the delivery of torpedo boats, a ship of the line and ammunition, or in Italy artillery guns. In Serbia, the contract for the delivery of German mountain artillery guns caused a government crisis in 1911/12 which brought down the Serbian War Minister.<sup>7</sup>

The second pillar of military learning was the continuous monitoring of international military publications by the General Staff and the Admiral Staff. As a matter of principle, these institutions had divisions that did this monitoring on the basis of countries or regions. In the General Staff, the 1st and 9th divisions handled the war events in North Africa, while the 10th division was responsible for the Balkans. Their work focused on the evaluation of the national and international daily press. In addition,

<sup>5</sup> The same was true for the army and navy of Germany's ally Austria-Hungary, where the last major operations dated back to 1882. See the chapter by Günther Kronenbitter in this book (Chapter 11, pp. 190–2).

<sup>6</sup> Heinrich Otto Meisner, *Militärattachés und Militärbevollmächtigte in Preußen und Deutschen Reich: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Militärdiplomatie* (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1957), pp. 19–21, 36.

<sup>7</sup> See the reports of the embassies in the Political Archive of the Federal Foreign Office (Berlin; hereafter PA AA). The importance of armament deals is revealed by the 1911–14 reports from Athens (PA AA, R 7.461), Rome (PA AA, R 7.809) and Belgrade (PA AA, R 11.516). A fundamental historiographic problem is posed by the fact that the bulk of the attaché reports must be presumed lost because of their physical destruction in 1945. The cover letters, individual preserved parts and the military reports of the special envoys that have survived in the holdings of the Political Archive of the Federal Foreign Office, however, provide a good insight into how the attachés worked.

specialised military publications provided valuable material. It was, of course, only possible to evaluate the latter group of sources if there were any established periodical military publications about the armed forces, and this was not the case with the Balkans.<sup>8</sup> The official histories of the contemporary wars in South Africa and Manchuria were an important source. The problem here, however, was that some of these serial works did not get published until long after the events reported had taken place and that the authors kept their cards close to their chests. Translations of the Russian General Staff work on the war of 1877/78 were not published until 1902.<sup>9</sup> The official publications about the Russo-Japanese War were not published until after 1910; the Japanese presentation, in particular – which additionally posed the issue of translation – offered little insight into the tactical and technical problems.<sup>10</sup> Individual reports by officers from the warring states or by German observers were another source. The most famous was undoubtedly Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz, who, as a member of the German military mission, had provided regular reports from the Ottoman Empire since the late 1890s.<sup>11</sup>

Military press activities were not limited to the mere evaluation of foreign publications. Rather, the military leadership was certainly interested in seeing a debate evolve at home about wartime events abroad. It bears repeating that an academic military discourse had developed in Germany since the 1890s, becoming more and more scholarly and controversial and thus fulfilling a crucial function for the development of the armed forces. It should not be assumed, of course, that this discourse was free by today's standards. Politics, in the sense of party politics, continued to be an anathema, even though many authors conveyed personal sympathies for one party or another. The War Ministry and the General Staff got continuous reports into the semi-official military weekly *Militär-Wochenblatt*, where individual authors contributed one page each. With regard to the war in North Africa, Captain (ret.) George von Graevenitz reported about the Italians, while Major General

<sup>8</sup> A pioneering project was the Turkish military journal *Die Nationalverteidigung: Wissenschaftliche und technische Osmanische Militär-Zeitschrift*, which was launched as a three-language edition (Ottoman, French and German) in 1911.

<sup>9</sup> Anon., 'Der Russisch-Türkische Krieg 1877/78 auf der Balkanhalbinsel [...]', *Militär-Literatur-Zeitung*, 82 (1902), pp. 431–4.

<sup>10</sup> Anon., 'Das Werk des Russischen Generalstabes über den Krieg in der Mandschurei. 1. Teil', *Militär-Wochenblatt* [henceforth referred to as *MWB*], 129 (15 October 1910), pp. 2986–92; Anon., 'Das japanische Generalstabswerk über den Krieg 1904/05', *MWB*, 141 (2 November 1912), pp. 3227–32.

<sup>11</sup> Colmar Frhr. v. der Goltz, *Der Thessalische Krieg und die türkische Armee: Eine kriegsgeschichtliche Studie* (Berlin: E. S. Mittler & Sohn, 1898). Carl Alexander Kretschlow, *Generalfeldmarschall Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz Pascha: Eine Biographie* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2012), pp. 356–77.

(ret.) Karl Imhoff wrote about the Turks.<sup>12</sup> Imhoff continued working as an observer of the Turks almost without a break when the Balkan War began, while Seidel, an active-duty captain, took over the Balkan states.<sup>13</sup> From 1897, the military weekly *Militär-Wochenblatt* included a section entitled 'Von den Kriegsschauplätzen' ('From the theatres of war'), which consisted of reports from exotic trouble spots like Eritrea, Madagascar, South Africa or Thessaly.<sup>14</sup> These reports often sparked off debates about specific tactical and technical issues.<sup>15</sup>

The last pillar of military learning was the secret military intelligence service, which was still in its early stages because of the federal structures in the Prussian-German state and military system. The army intelligence service, Section IIIb of the General Staff, was founded in 1889. Until 1914, it had a very small staff and its monitoring activities were focused on the two main opponents, France and Russia.<sup>16</sup> It probably got much of its information from the Balkans through consultations with fellow intelligence people from the Triple Alliance partner Austria-Hungary. The quality of this reporting channel should not, however, be overestimated. There is no doubt that the Viennese military intelligence directorate had greater competence and better contacts as regards that region. However, the formation of the Balkan League and the attack on the Ottoman Empire in October 1912 shows that the intelligence service of the Dual Monarchy had only been able to gather scraps of information on the military conditions in this specific situation.<sup>17</sup>

The result was that most of what the German armed forces heard about the wars in North Africa and on the Balkans came from open sources. It was a characteristic of the belligerents in both wars that – with the exception of Italy – they did not have relevant military publications and that they even went to extremes to seal off the theatre of operations during

<sup>12</sup> Regular reports started to come in from Hauptmann a. D. Dr. v. Graevenitz, 'Der Italienisch-Türkische Krieg. 1. Teil', *MWB*, 127 (12 October 1911), pp. 2927–31, and Generalmajor Imhoff, 'Der Italienisch-Türkische Krieg', *MWB*, 137 (2 November 1911), pp. 3154–8.

<sup>13</sup> Generalmajor Imhoff, 'Vom Balkankriege', *MWB*, 140 (31 October 1912), pp. 3208–13.

<sup>14</sup> Anon., 'Von den Kriegsschauplätzen', *MWB*, 40 (5 May 1897).

<sup>15</sup> For military periodicals in Imperial Germany, see Markus Pöhlmann, 'Das unentdeckte Land: Kriegsbild und Zukunftskrieg in deutschen Militärzeitschriften', in Stig Förster (ed.), *Der große Krieg: Europäische Militärzeitschriften und die Debatte über den Krieg der Zukunft, 1880–1914* (in press).

<sup>16</sup> Jürgen W. Schmidt, *Gegen Frankreich und Russland: Der deutsche militärische Geheimdienst 1890–1914* (Ludwigsfelde: Ludwigsfelder Verlagshaus, 2005).

<sup>17</sup> Albert Pethö, *Agenten für den Doppeladler: Österreich-Ungarns Geheimer Dienst im Weltkrieg* (Graz and Stuttgart: Leopold Stocker, 1998), pp. 25–40; Günther Kronenbitter, 'Krieg im Frieden': *Die Führung der k. u. k. Armee und die Großmachtpolitik Österreich-Ungarns 1906–1914* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2003), pp. 233–76.

the war. The information gained by the German General Staff from the international daily press was usually very biased and appropriately unreliable. The conditions for Germany's monitoring activities were therefore quite poor to begin with, and during the war Germany was forced to rely on indirect information channels.

### The strategic framework of 1911–13

Military learning never takes place in an abstract environment, but is influenced by specific political, military and social conditions. This raises the question of how German soldiers perceived these conditions in 1911–14. To this day, researchers studying the literature on the First World War come across the thesis that the armies of the European powers – above all of the German Empire – did not learn anything from the wars in South Africa, Manchuria and the Balkans, a neglect which had dire consequences in 1914. This argument is astonishingly weak actually, but persistent.<sup>18</sup> Such theses often fail to take into account that military lessons can also confirm existing views or that knowledge gained from other countries' conflicts can simply be irrelevant for one's own country's needs. To cut a long story short: the fact that it is not possible to identify a military change at a first glance does not mean that no lessons were learned. Such arguments underestimate the specific conditions in the theatre of war. Do representatives of foreign countries, be they diplomats, journalists or military observers, have access to the theatre of war at all? What are the practical possibilities for reporting if they do have access? Finally – and this is an argument that could have particular weight with regard to 1911–13 – such arguments fail to recognise that military learning is like any type of institutional learning in that it takes a certain amount of time. Reports must be written. The South African War of 1899–1902 had resulted in a hasty reformation of Germany's infantry tactics, which was followed by a doctrinal rollback in which some of the earlier lessons were rejected again. Since then, the South African War has been regarded as a conflict from which lessons had been drawn too quickly. The assumed lessons must pass the test of discussion within the military as well as the field trial. Only then is there the possibility of lessons learned from war being implemented in doctrine.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> For a critical assessment of this school of thought, see Pöhlmann, 'Das unentdeckte Land'.

<sup>19</sup> Hans Rohde, *Unsere Gefechtsvorschriften und der Balkankrieg* (Berlin: R. Eisenschmidt, 1915), pp. 1–2; and Immanuel, *Balkankrieg*. vol. IV, p. 74.

The military situation of the German Empire during the phase in question was eminently characterised by diplomatic crises and armament for land warfare.<sup>20</sup> The focus was on German-French antagonism. As a result of the alliance situation, military interest focused on a continental two-front war with France and Russia in Western and Central Europe. This in turn meant that all the other theatres of war and forms of conflict could only be of secondary relevance. Any intelligence service requires an intensive use of resources, and before 1914 even the heavily armed forces did not have unlimited access to personnel and material resources. If one accepts this, one also has to accept that this institutional focus on the conventional two-front war was not a sign of ignorance. Rather, it was an expedient concentration of the armed forces' intellectual and institutional forces.<sup>21</sup>

The conditions for observation and reporting were remarkably poor both in North Africa and on the Balkans. Civilian and military observers were not welcome with any of the parties at war. Whenever they did get the opportunity to observe the activities of headquarters or even troops in combat, their freedom of movement was restricted and they were subject to strict censorship. It must be understood that this also applied to observers from allied or friendly states.

Italy's attack on the Turkish provinces of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica on 3 October 1911 came as such a surprise to the German authorities that it was necessary to improvise observation locally. Furthermore, the Italians – in the opinion of the Germans – practised a highly effective 'obfuscation of information' from the very beginning.<sup>22</sup> It was only because of pressure exerted by the European powers that the Italians permitted military representatives at all, but even then just one per state at the most. Their freedom of movement was severely restricted. At times they were put on a ship, and the German military attaché in Rome, Major Leopold von Kleist, had to give his word of honour 'not to let information about anything he saw or heard make its way home either through reports or private letters until the end of the expedition'.<sup>23</sup> The Chief of the General Staff had objected to Kleist travelling to Tripoli before he

<sup>20</sup> See Hew Strachan, *The First World War*, vol. I: *To Arms* (Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 1–64.

<sup>21</sup> Holger H. Herwig, 'Imperial Germany', in Ernest R. May (ed.), *Knowing One's Enemy: Intelligence Assessment Before the Two World Wars* (Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 62–97.

<sup>22</sup> Hauptmann a. D. Dr. v. Graevenitz, 'Der Italienisch-Türkische Krieg. 1. Teil', *MWB*, 127 (12 October 1911), pp. 2927–31.

<sup>23</sup> PA AA, R 14214: Prussian Minister of War to AA Nr. 8856, 25 October 1911. See also Walter Weibel, 'Schwierigkeiten der Berichterstattung in Tripolis (Von unserem Spezialberichterstatter)', in *Frankfurter Zeitung* (27 November 1911).



even got there. He had said that the attaché's place was in the capital and that the General Staff would send its own observer straight from Berlin. This observer arrived in October, but because of the massive restrictions found little that he could report. By the end of November, the officer had departed again. The journey of the naval attaché and the dispatch of another General Staff officer in the spring of 1912 also yielded no results.<sup>24</sup> The conditions on the Turkish side were even worse because of the precarious situation in the African theatre of war. There is no evidence of a prolonged presence of an official German observer, a situation that might also have something to do with the fact that the Turkish side was displeased with the rather ambivalent response of the German diplomats to Italy's attack.<sup>25</sup>

By the outbreak of the First Balkan War on 8 October 1912, the German military had already experienced a restrictive information policy. The principle of keeping the attachés in the capitals and sending special General Staff officers into the theatres of war was to continue. The members of the German military mission to the Sublime Porte who were already in the region were available for the Turkish side. Prussian Major Ewald von Massow was sent to the headquarters of the Bulgarian army. He was joined by the Bavarian Captain Franz Freiherr von Gagern, whose accreditation to the tsar of Bulgaria had been achieved by the Bavarian crown, bypassing the Prussian General Staff.<sup>26</sup> Major Gerold von Gleich from Württemberg went to Athens. It was considered unnecessary to have an observer with the Montenegrin army. Furthermore, Emperor Wilhelm II had forbidden an officer to be sent to the Serbian army because 'it still had the regicides among its ranks'.<sup>27</sup>

For Germany, it was the relations with the Ottoman Empire that most determined the strategic framework on the Balkans. It had not entered

<sup>24</sup> PA AA, R 14215: Embassy in Rome to Chancellor, 2076, 31 May 1912.

<sup>25</sup> Walther von Diest, *Das Osmanische Reich einst und jetzt: Vortrag gehalten in der Militärischen Gesellschaft zu Berlin am 20. März 1912* (Berlin: E. S. Mittler & Sohn, 1912). Indications of the presence of German officers in Bengazi can be found in a later report of the embassy in Constantinople. These men were probably members of the German military mission who had made their way to the African front under the personal protection of Enver Pasha. PA AA, R 13256: Military attaché in Constantinople to Prussian Minister of War, Militärbericht 684, 9 February 1913 (copy).

<sup>26</sup> Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Abt. Kriegsarchiv (Munich; hereafter HStAM), OP 24677: Personal file Franz Freiherr von Gagern; sowie PA AA, R 14271: Bavarian embassy in Berlin to AA, 24 October 1912.

<sup>27</sup> PA AA, R 14271: memo to the unidentified document A 1776 pr., 14 October 1912. This statement refers to the murder of Aleksandar Obrenović, the King of Serbia, in 1903 by ultra-nationalist officers. For the Athens mission, see Generalmajor z. D. Gerold von Gleich, *Vom Balkan nach Bagdad: Militärisch-politische Erinnerungen an den Orient* (Berlin: August Scherl, 1921).

any formal alliance with the Sublime Porte, but had maintained a mission there for many years. It had been renewed in the course of the overthrow of 1909, and in the summer of 1912 consisted of twenty-four officers.<sup>28</sup> At the outbreak of the war, several officers declared their interest in front-line assignments with the army, a request which the Turkish army leadership was reluctant to comply with. Eventually, it was agreed that the German officers would not only have to enter into the service of Turkey completely, but that they would also need to take out Turkish citizenship.<sup>29</sup>

So far, we know of at least six officers who were assigned to Turkish commands or participated in the war in some other way. The most important person in this group was undoubtedly the Bavarian Lieutenant Colonel Otto von Lossow, who indeed temporarily gave up his citizenship for his assignment. He first assumed command of the Derkos Detachment, an improvised battle group comprised of three battalions and one ship of the line, and then from 17 November 1912 he commanded the Denizli Division in the defence battle in the Çatalca position.<sup>30</sup> Apart from him, the only other officer to acquire any direct combat experience was probably Lieutenant Colonel Veit from Prussia, who fought as commander of the 1st Lancer Regiment in the battles of Kirkkilise and Lüleburgaz.<sup>31</sup> Major Franz Carl Endres, also from Bavaria, was another officer who served in the Turkish army. He initially failed to obtain a command because of Turkish resistance. It was only in February 1913 that he was transferred to the General Staff of the Çatalca army under Abik Pasha, but as the chief of the intelligence division he felt that he had been shoved to one side.<sup>32</sup> Major Gustav von Hochwächter from Prussia had also been naturalised at the beginning of the war; he served at the headquarters of the Turkish III Army Corps and participated in its withdrawal in Thrace.<sup>33</sup> Major Lehmann from Prussia served as

<sup>28</sup> Jehuda L. Wallach, *Anatomie einer Militärhilfe: Die preußisch-deutsche Militärmission in der Türkei 1835–1919* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1976), pp. 108–21. See also Krethlow, Goltz, pp. 365–77.

<sup>29</sup> PA AA, R 13256: Chief of the General Staff to Prussian Minister of War, 15588 IV, 15 October 1912 (copy), and *ibid.*: Bavarian embassy in Berlin to AA, 24 October 1912.

<sup>30</sup> HStAM, Gen.Stab, Bd. 260: Berichte des bayer. Oberstleutnant Otto von Lossow aus dem türkischen Krieg 1912/13.

<sup>31</sup> HStAM, Gen.Stab, Bd. 259: Oberstleutnant Veit, 'Aus dem Balkankrieg' (unpublished print, 1912).

<sup>32</sup> HStAM, Gen.Stab, Bd. 257: Bericht des kaiserl. ottomanischen Majors Franz Endres über seine Teilnahme am Balkankrieg 1913.

<sup>33</sup> PA AA, R 13256: Embassy in Constantinople to Chancellor, 376, 22 November 1912, as well as Gustav von Hochwächter, *Mit den Türken in der Front, im Stabe Mahmud Mughtar Paschas: Mein Kriegstagebuch über die Kämpfe bei Kirk Kilsse, Lüle Burgas und Cataldza* (Berlin: E. S. Mittler & Sohn, 1913).

an artillery advisor. In comparison, First Lieutenant Kaspar Graf von Preysing-Lichtenegg-Moos from Bavaria, who had been refused a command, conducted a rather unorthodox military expedition in the spirit of Karl May. Not permitting himself to be prevented from undertaking an assignment, he bought a Turkish cavalry officer uniform and two horses, and headed for the front with a servant. Preysing got drawn into the withdrawal of the Turks from Thrace, though he eventually returned to Constantinople, where the German embassy put him on a train back to Germany.<sup>34</sup>

The German military mission had a long-standing tradition, but was not particularly large. In 1912/13, it was not the only military mission in the theatre of war. At that time, there were, for example, a French and a British naval mission for Greece and a British naval mission for the Ottoman Empire. From 1909 to 1912, the influence of German officers was rather limited, one of the reasons for this being the developments in the domestic situation in Turkey. The role of each officer and the insight they were able to gain into the military operations eventually depended to a large degree on the goodwill of individual Turkish commanders. Whatever the Turks thought of the impact of foreign military advisors and however the Germans assessed the military value of the Turkish army, one thing was certain: the Balkan War would be considered the litmus test for the success of the German mission.

### Observations and lessons

To answer the question regarding the lessons learned, it is necessary first to clarify what type of war the German officers faced. In Libya, the war turned into a long, undecided desert and guerrilla war after the landing and conquest of the main places, with separate minor maritime and landing operations on the Dodecanese islands. On the Balkans, the war largely took place on two basically unconnected fronts: in the west in Macedonia and in the east in Thrace, with the latter front being more important for the Turks because of its proximity to their capital. Initially, a classical mobile war was waged, and in both theatres of war the Turks were quickly and frontally pushed back.<sup>35</sup> Their withdrawal ended at the Çatalca line in Thrace, where the war turned into a trench war around November 1912 that went on for several months. The Turks'

<sup>34</sup> HStAM, Gen.Stab, Bd. 259: Kaspar Graf von Preysing-Lichtenegg-Moos, 'Mein Balkanabenteuer 1912: Erinnerungen eines deutschen Kavallerieoffiziers' (unpublished print, 1912).

<sup>35</sup> For the initial phase see Richard C. Hall, *The Balkan Wars, 1912–1913: Prelude to the First World War* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 22–68.

rapid loss of the initiative resulted in the protracted siege of a major fortress (Adrianople) and two fortified cities (Janina and Scutari).<sup>36</sup> The Second Balkan War was again a mobile war, only this time the fronts were different and the fighting took place on Bulgarian territory. Finally, both Balkan Wars brought about irregular warfare, with the fighting sometimes being detached from regular operations and sometimes accompanying them.

After the initial clashes in November, it was already apparent that the Ottoman Empire had failed to mobilise its army quickly enough and to field sufficiently strong forces in Europe. While the soldiers of all the armies were appreciated for being undemanding and obedient, the commanders at all levels were considered to have failed to come up to Central European standards. Where the conduct of foreign advisors would advise Turkish or Greek officers, the latter often responded with reluctance. For example, the ambassador in Athens reported: 'While the Greek soldier in general is not bad, the officer corps by no means has a sound grasp of the latest developments and is not willing to do serious work. Therefore, people like the French, who encourage them to work and criticize what they do suit them just as little as the Germans would.'<sup>37</sup> Reports on the Turkish army in particular showed a remarkable decline in appreciation. Only half a year before the outbreak of the fighting, the competent division of the German General Staff had underlined the quality of the Turkish army: it had said that 'continuous progress' was being made in training, that the officer corps was 'generally ambitious' and that the higher commanders were 'well educated'. Summing up, the division noted: 'The army should already be equal to its task in a war of defence, and in the foreseeable future probably also in offensive warfare.'<sup>38</sup> After the disaster in Thrace, the General Staff was forced to revise this assessment completely. Reasons given for the defeat were 'inadequate training', a lack of officers as well as the 'demoralisation of the officer corps, which is completely absorbed in politics and the discord between the parties'. The report continued: 'The praise which the European press had often given to encourage the Turkish army or for political reasons' had only served to 'instil among the Turkish officers an

<sup>36</sup> On the sieges, see *ibid.*, pp. 80–96.

<sup>37</sup> PA AA, R 7461: Embassy in Athens to Chancellor, Nr. A 4082, 22 February 1913, p. 3. The attaché in Sofia came to the conclusion that the soldier material was 'excellent', but that the higher commanders and General Staff officers were 'not up to' their tasks. The field of command and control was unknown to them (*ibid.*, R 4660: Military attaché in Sofia to Chancellor, Militärbericht 80, 28 September 1913, p. 2).

<sup>38</sup> HStAM, Gen.Stab, Bd. 252: Großer Generalstab 10. Abt., Länderbericht Türkei, 04/1911.

exaggerated opinion of themselves which usually made them unamenable to instruction'.<sup>39</sup> National differences in the assessment of commanders came about because of the fact that Ottoman commanders at all levels were rated as passive and unwilling to assume responsibility, whereas Serbian and Bulgarian commanders were rated as inclined to take the initiative and as being ruthless.

A close look at the individual branches of the army shows that the infantry came first. The conclusion Major Franz Endres, a member of the military mission, drew about Turkish soldiers was shattering: he said that Turkish soldiers were 'good soldiers only insofar as they patiently bear any kind of exertion and suffering'. By contrast, they showed 'no kind of liveliness, no joy in doing anything, no real courage'.<sup>40</sup> The *Redif* (the reserve formations) in particular had caused the disaster in Thrace through their failure.<sup>41</sup> The Bulgarian infantry was entirely different. It 'only conducted attacks with the express will to win' and seized the initiative by taking 'rapid action in the first encounter battles'. Initially, sensational press reports gave the impression that the Bulgarians had achieved their success primarily through the application of shock tactics and the use of bayonets.<sup>42</sup> This gave the German observers the opportunity to make recourse to the successes of the Japanese in 1904/05. Relatively quickly, there were two blueprints – on the one hand Turkish lethargy, and on the other Bulgarian and Serbian initiative. In this context, the kinetic and morale value of the machine-gun in the defence was generally acknowledged and an increase in the issue of the weapon in Germany was demanded. A more in-depth assessment continued to be difficult because of the poor degree to which the army was equipped with these weapons.<sup>43</sup> The assessment also revealed the certainty that the cold steel was indeed less frequently used than had been circulated. In order to avoid a heroic glorification of the events, the General Staff issued a caution in its first extensive compilation of lessons learned:

The idea that based on the lessons learned from this war it would be possible to attack during the day in large closed masses – *tambour battant* – with bayonets

<sup>39</sup> HStAM, Gen.Stab, Bd. 254: Großer Generalstab, 10. Abt., 2. Bericht über die Vorgänge auf dem Balkan: 25. mit 31. Oktober 1912, vom 1 November 1912, p. 5.

<sup>40</sup> HStAM, Gen.Stab, Bd. 257: Bericht des kaiserl. ottomanischen Majors Franz Endres über seine Teilnahme am Balkankrieg 1913, p. 31.

<sup>41</sup> Hochwächter, *Türken*, pp. 30, 35 and 125.

<sup>42</sup> Generalmajor Balck, 'Taktik der Infanterie und der verbundenen Waffen', *Jahresberichte über die Veränderungen und Fortschritte im Militärwesen (Loebellsche Jahresberichte)*, 40 (1913), pp. 249–79, here p. 249.

<sup>43</sup> Immanuel, *Balkankrieg*, vol. IV, p. 85; Generalstab, *Balkankrieg*, p. 145.

and without approaching arduously, slowly in small units is completely without foundation despite press reports to the contrary and is complete rubbish.<sup>44</sup>

After the initial battles, the expected *furor slavicus* left much to be desired. According to the Germans, the most astonishing thing about trench warfare was that it came about at all. After the Turkish army had been defeated at Lüleburgaz, it should not really have had the opportunity to get away and escape to the Çatalca line. The transition to positional warfare was therefore not a consequence of the effect of weapons, but rather of the tactical failure of the parties to the war and the geographical conditions. Once they got to the fortified positions, the Turks managed to dig themselves in. The momentum of the Bulgarian and Serbian attacks waned. The attackers' deficiencies in infantry, artillery and logistics became apparent in the battles against improvised fortified positions and larger fortifications. The Bulgarians and Serbs only achieved further successes in places where the aggressiveness of the infantry was under good command and control and assisted by proper support from other arms.<sup>45</sup> This reconfirmed the value of fortified positions, which had already been acknowledged in the war of 1904/05. The problem was just that this was no way to win the war. Looking at the Thracian front, which was bounded by the sea on both flanks, Friedrich Immanuel reasoned:

There is no evidence that fortified positions will determine the character of future wars. They will have enduring resistance only in areas where the conditions favour it, in particular where, as here, strategic and tactical envelopments are impossible. It does not, however, stand up to the operational element of warfare in the long term.<sup>46</sup>

The major lesson the Germans learned for their infantry was that their own doctrine was largely confirmed. Successes could be achieved neither by rushing madly onto the attack nor by 'fearfully clinging to defence'.<sup>47</sup> Both the material and morale demands on infantrymen had increased. Therefore, it was even more important to seek to decide battles by having

<sup>44</sup> Bundesarchiv, Abt. Militärarchiv (Freiburg; hereafter BArch), PHD 100/6: Großer Generalstab, 'Kriegserfahrungen von Mitkämpfern aus dem Balkankrieg', p. 11 (no date; spring 1913).

<sup>45</sup> HStAM, Gen. Stab, Bd. 254: Großer Generalstab, 10. Abt., 6. Bericht über die Vorgänge auf dem Balkan: 22. bis 28. November, 29 November 1912; HStAM, Gen. Stab, Bd. 254: Großer Generalstab, 10. Abt., 7. Bericht über die Vorgänge auf dem Balkan: 29. November bis 6. Dezember 1912, 7 November 1912. The final assessment was published in Generalstab, *Balkankrieg*, p. 140, and Immanuel, *Balkankrieg*, vol. IV, p. 83. See also Robert M. Citino, *Quest for Decisive Victory: From Stalemate to Blitzkrieg in Europe, 1899–1940* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), pp. 133, 138.

<sup>46</sup> Immanuel, *Balkankrieg*, vol. IV, p. 83. <sup>47</sup> Immanuel, *Balkankrieg*, vol. IV, p. 82.

controlled rifle fire delivered against the enemy and having it supported by machine-guns and artillery.<sup>48</sup>

In the opinion of the observers, the difficulty in assessing field artillery was because there were too few of them in the Balkans for waging a modern mobile war, and because the forces were inadequately trained and, above all, the mobility of the artillery was rather poor.<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, artillery became increasingly important as the transition to positional warfare took place in Thrace. In the end, however, it was impossible to reach a common opinion as regards this assessment. Eye witnesses like Lossow or Hochwächter were convinced that although the artillery was becoming increasingly visible, its actual impact remained doubtful. The fact that artillery attacks were often conducted with shrapnel, and poorly at that, because of the lack of heavy and indirect fire, caused Lossow to draw the following conclusion: 'Those who take cover in time face nothing or almost nothing in the way of danger.' Altogether, he concluded from his experiences that the procedures of German artillery had developed a Mannerist tendency to over-sophistication and over-mechanisation. As early as November, the General Staff noted that the Turkish infantry in fortified positions had survived the enemy's artillery preparation unscathed.<sup>50</sup>

William Balck, one of the leading infantry tacticians of his time, came to the conclusion in late 1913 that all the fighting had confirmed 'that attack against an enemy in a position during the day' was 'only possible by bringing the fire forward and ordering close interaction between the arms'. This linked success to clear conditions, though contrasting the armies on the Balkans to the ones his own army was expected to meet. Lieutenant General (ret.) August Ludwig von Reichenau, an artilleryman, went even further and assumed that major infantry attacks during the day would become 'more and more the exception'. Because of the taking up of covert artillery positions, it would no longer be possible to suppress the fire of the defenders during an attack. Therefore, fighting would be increasingly moved into the night.<sup>51</sup> As with the infantry,

<sup>48</sup> Rohde, *Gefechtsvorschriften*, p. 2; Generalstab, *Balkankrieg*, p. 140; Immanuel, *Balkankrieg*, vol. IV, p. 83.

<sup>49</sup> BArch, PHD 100/6: Großer Generalstab, 'Kriegserfahrungen von Mitkämpfern aus dem Balkankrieg', pp. 3–7 (unpublished print, 1913).

<sup>50</sup> For the quotation, see HStAM, Gen.Stab, Bd. 260: Oberstleutnant von Lossow, *Kriegserfahrungen. Geschoßwirkung. Artilleristische Fragen*, Darbogaz Tahufushane, 25 January 1913, p. 26. HStAM, Gen.Stab, Bd. 254: Großer Generalstab, 10. Abt., 6. Bericht über die Vorgänge auf dem Balkan: 22. bis 28. November, 29 November 1912, p. 1. For a vivid description of the artillery battles in the Derkos section of the Ottoman III Corps, see Hochwächter, *Türken*, pp. 105–10.

<sup>51</sup> Generalmajor Balck, 'Taktik der Infanterie und der verbundenen Waffen', *Jahresberichte*, 40 (1913), pp. 249–50 (for a discussion of both positions).



German observers believed that with the artillery too the success of individual arms could only be ensured if combined arms tactics were applied as specified in the regulations.

The transnational character of the debate about the lessons learned from the Balkans can be pinpointed to a French press campaign in which the defeat of the Turks was accounted for by the inferior quality of their German artillery materiel, which had been produced by F. Krupp. According to this interpretation, the Bulgarians had been the victors because they were equipped with guns made by the French competitor Schneider-Creusot. This interpretation somehow caught the German observers on the wrong foot since it was circulated quickly and globally – even the German consul in Costa Rica cautioned in his report to Berlin against the possible consequences of this for the German arms industry in the Americas.<sup>52</sup> The argument was, in fact, misleading in several respects. Firstly, most of the Balkan states had guns from both countries. And secondly, it was not the materiel that was the problem for the Turkish artillery, but the personnel. Its tactical training was inadequate, its weaponry was immobile and it was short on ammunition.<sup>53</sup>

When observing the fighting over fortifications, the German officers could look back on lessons learned from the fighting for Plevna (1877) and Port Arthur (1904/05). During their advance in Thrace, the Bulgarians had quickly laid siege to the largest Turkish fortress in Europe, Adrianople. Since the German armies would also have to deal with fortresses in a war with France or Russia, observing the course of the fighting for Adrianople became exceptionally important.<sup>54</sup> It soon became clear that both the defenders and attackers were waging a poor man's war. The Bulgarians carried out attacks without having adequate heavy artillery and suffered heavy losses. The Turks had fitted out the fortress inadequately for defence, but defended it all the more grimly. The consequences for the Bulgarians were that the large fortress to their rear restricted their operational freedom and increasingly tied up resources. But that was not all. German observers considered the fact that the Bulgarians were

<sup>52</sup> PA AA, R 13316: Consulate to the Free States Costa Rica and Nicaragua to Chancellor, Bericht 89, 15 November 1912. In a similar vein the warning of the military attaché in Brussels, see *ibid.*, Military attaché in Bruxelles to Chancellor, Bericht, 5 November 1912. For the French perspective on this topic, see Adrian Wettstein's chapter in this book (Chapter 10, pp. 185–8).

<sup>53</sup> See the German reply in Anon., 'Artilleriegerät', *Jahresberichte*, 39 (1912), pp. 394–422. Furthermore the report in HStAM, Gen.Stab, Bd. 259: [Major Veit], Ursachen der türkischen Niederlagen nach meinen Erfahrungen bei der Kavallerie-Division Salih Pascha, Tschataldscha, November 1912, pp. 45–9, here p. 49. Regarding the equipment of the Bulgarian army, there is a confidential analysis by the local representative of the Krupp Company, but on closer examination it has the character of an ingratiating study. See PA AA, Embassy in Sofia to Chancellor, Bericht A. 1212, 15 January 1913.

<sup>54</sup> Hall, *Balkan Wars*, pp. 38–42, 86–90.



forced to resort to accepting support from their Serb ally to be a political setback and a disadvantage for Bulgaria's demands at the expected peace negotiations.<sup>55</sup>

Even more than in the case of the Bulgarians and Serbs at Adrianople, this inability became apparent in the siege of Scutari by the Montenegrin army, which lasted until 22 April 1913. According to the General Staff, the operations there had been highly inadequate. The Turks had only been able to hold out for so long because the attacker had hardly had any artillery. 'The Montenegrin officers also lacked knowledge of how to attack fortified positions; heavy losses were particularly incurred at the wire obstacles sprayed by machine-gun fire.'<sup>56</sup>

What remained as a general lesson was the realisation that large fortresses had a risky operational attractiveness. There was dispute, however, over the implications this would have for war in France or Russia, and the answers given usually depended on the branch of the army, such as artillery or infantry, that the reporters came from. For example, a fortification specialist came to the conclusion in the *Loebellsche Jahresberichte* in late 1912 that Adrianople and Scutari had confirmed the lesson learned at Port Arthur, namely that a fortress defended by a diligent force had considerable powers of resistance.<sup>57</sup> By contrast, Balck, an infantryman, stated in the same publication a year later: 'It would be wrong to see trench warfare in combination with scheduled attacks as the war of the future; commanders who declare their aim to be that of destroying the enemy should not allow the twice defeated enemy to escape into such a position.'<sup>58</sup>

The assessment of the cavalry was a delicate matter since it did not take much to recognise that this branch of the army had not particularly been in evidence in any of its main tasks – reconnaissance, concealment and guarding of army movements, attack and pursuit. What was noticeable was most of the heavy losses incurred during marches, which were caused by the wrong handling of horses and bad terrain. Isolated attacks

<sup>55</sup> HStAM, Gen.Stab, Bd. 254: Großer Generalstab, 10. Abt., 5. Bericht über die Vorgänge auf dem Balkan: 15. bis 21. November, 22 November 1912, p. 5 (effect of the siege on the operations); *ibid.*, Gen.Stab, Bd. 258: Franz Freiherr von Gagern, Bericht 8, 14 December 1912 (first report based on Bulgarian General Staff documents). For information on the consequences for the alliance, see PA AA, R 4660: Embassy in Sofia to Chancellor, Militärbericht 80, 28 September 1913, p. 3, and Major Endres, 'Die Bedeutung Adrianopels als Festung', in *MWB*, 158, 12 December 1912, pp. 3643–5.

<sup>56</sup> HStAM, Gen.Stab, Bd. 254: Großer Generalstab, Lage auf dem Balkan vom 6. Juni 1913 10<sup>o</sup> Vormittags bis zum 30. Juni 1913 10<sup>o</sup> Vormittags, 30.06.1913, p. 6. For Skutari cf. Hall, *Balkan Wars*, pp. 91–5.

<sup>57</sup> Fr. [Oberstleutnant Frobenius], 'Festungswesen', *Jahresberichte*, 39 (1912), p. 314.

<sup>58</sup> Generalmajor Balck, 'Taktik der Infanterie und der verbundenen Waffen', *Jahresberichte*, 40 (1913), p. 250.

by the Turkish cavalry division remained martial episodes, though, of course, ones to which attention was drawn because a German officer had been involved in them.<sup>59</sup> The German cavalrymen were frustrated since the war was not suited to presenting their own cavalry, which was under enormous pressure to justify itself, with a way out of the crisis. Sometimes, it was necessary to use argumentative dodges, as the reporter for the *Loebellsche Jahresberichte* had done. He came to the conclusion that at least one lesson that could be learned from the Balkan War was that the cavalry would have had potential if it had been adequate in size and well commanded.<sup>60</sup> The fact that even infantrymen like Balck went out of their way to praise the cavalry is proven in an assessment of late 1912 that is disturbing in its absurdity:

The attack by a Turkish cavalry division near Lule Burgas on 1 November, which rode through the victorious Bulgarian infantry and only met with failure because of the machine-gun fire of the reserves, removed all doubt regarding the possibilities of mounting attacks against modern weapons.<sup>61</sup>

These were the kind of lessons learned and that would not prove to be particularly helpful in 1914. Was the cavalry's 'possibility of attacking' proved by the fact that it had been shot down by the machine-gun fire of the reserves? Or was there perhaps reason to assume that the French or Russian infantry would field fewer machine-guns than the Turkish infantry in a future war?

What struck all the observers was the lack of logistic capabilities and of food and medical support for the armies involved. The original causes of the Turkish collapse were the rushed mobilisation and the poor logistic support of the troops. The beginning of a period of bad weather saw the outbreak of cholera, which quickly spread not only to their own reinforcements, which were being moved up from Asia, but also to the enemy armies and had operational consequences as well.<sup>62</sup> Sieges in particular – a German physician wrote an emphatic account of the medical service conditions in Janina, a town under Greek siege – often turned into humanitarian disasters for the local civilians.<sup>63</sup> The German

<sup>59</sup> Generalstab, *Balkankrieg*, p. 145. Furthermore, HStAM, Gen.Stab, vol. 259: Major Veit, *Kavalleristische Erfahrungen aus dem Balkankriege*, pp. 34–9.

<sup>60</sup> Rittmeister Krell, 'Taktik der Kavallerie', *Jahresberichte*, 40 (1913), p. 279.

<sup>61</sup> Oberst Balck, 'Die Taktik der Infanterie und der verbundenen Waffen', *Jahresberichte*, 39 (1912), p. 253.

<sup>62</sup> HStAM, Gen.Stab, Bd. 254: Großer Generalstab, 10. Abt., 6. Bericht über die Vorgänge auf dem Balkan: 22. bis 28. November, 29 November 1912.

<sup>63</sup> Arnold Passow, 'Briefe vom griechisch-türkischen Kriegsschauplatz im Winter 1912/13', *MWB*, 118 (6 September 1913), pp. 2633–41, and *MWB*, 119 (9 September 1913), pp. 2647–53.

observers did not believe that there was any need to draw positive conclusions as they knew without a doubt that their own army logistic and medical support units were much better prepared. It had long been known, and was confirmed once again during the Balkan Wars, that the significance of this complex about siege warfare, in its broadest sense, increased with the growth of million-strong armies.<sup>64</sup>

The only event that caught the interest of the German officers in the Italo-Turkish War was the world's first use of aircraft in a combat role. Aircraft had not been in evidence in large numbers either in North Africa or on the Balkans. None of the powers involved had more than a dozen planes, and usually only a fraction of them was operational. They essentially had no share in the military events altogether. Nevertheless, experts at least immediately saw the first bombardments of Turkish positions by Italian aircraft and airships as a historical turning point. Aircraft had thus stepped out of the shadows of airships and were no longer seen as just a means of reconnaissance.<sup>65</sup>

The maritime dimension of the wars of 1911 to 1913 is a largely underexplored topic today. It was observed relatively closely, however, by contemporaries. There had been serialised coverage of both wars.<sup>66</sup> From the point of view of German naval officers, there was little to be learned from the maritime operations since the Germans' image of war was primarily based on the confrontations of blue-water navies, which – with the exception of Italy – the parties to the wars did not have. Naval warfare in the Eastern Mediterranean was characterised by landing operations and minor engagements. Individual warships intervened directly in the fighting on land. The most important maritime achievement in the Balkan Wars was undoubtedly the Greek blockade of the Aegean Sea, which prevented Turkish forces from being transported to the European theatre of war.<sup>67</sup> For German navalists, the poor performance of the largely inactive Turkish navy was further proof that real regional or global power was impossible without naval power.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>64</sup> A brief and very critical description is provided in Generalstab, *Balkankrieg*, pp. 133–4.

<sup>65</sup> Generalmajor z. D. Imhoff, 'Der Italienisch-Türkische Krieg. 21. Teil', *MWB*, 64 (21 May 1912), pp. 1457–60; Anon., 'Luftfahrzeuge im Italienisch-Türkischen Kriege', *MWB*, 128 (5 September 1912), pp. 2944–52; E. H., 'Das Militärflugwesen', *MWB*, 8 (18 January 1912), pp. 163–6.

<sup>66</sup> Beginning with v. D., 'Der italienisch-türkische Krieg: 1. Teil', *Marine-Rundschau*, 22 (1911), pp. 1418–40; and Grl., 'Der Balkan-Krieg: 1. Teil', *Marine-Rundschau*, 23 (1912), pp. 1429–35.

<sup>67</sup> Hans Rohde, *Die Ereignisse zur See und das Zusammenwirken von Heer und Flotte im Balkankrieg 1912/13* (Berlin: R. Oldenbourg, 1914), pp. 151–4.

<sup>68</sup> Anon., 'Die Rolle der Marinen im Tripolis- und Balkankriege', *Nauticus: Jahrbuch für Deutschlands Seeinteressen*, 15 (1913), pp. 247–68.

The conventional conflicts both in North Africa and on the Balkans were preceded by years of small-scale warfare between the Turkish army and ethnically organised brigands, paramilitary secret organisations and terrorist groups.<sup>69</sup> The Turks had supported the set-up of such groups among allied ethnic groups. The issue of irregular warfare and war crimes became more important because it was discussed at an international level in the form of white books. A commission funded by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, an international non-governmental organisation, for the first time investigated the incidents and military responsibilities under the public eye.<sup>70</sup>

For the Germans, the issue of irregular warfare and war against the civilian population was of particular interest since they themselves had been confronted with this dimension of war in the final stages of their own last war in 1871. And there was a strong connection with one of the most important military paradigms of Prussia-Germany in the nineteenth century, people's war. In German, the term *Volkskrieg* (people's war) often has an undefined, double meaning. The term can mean irregular warfare by civilians. It can also mean the mobilisation of all the resources society offers for the purposes of war.<sup>71</sup> Both meanings can be traced in the discussion on the Balkan Wars. The Germans observed the realities of irregular warfare on the Balkans with concern. In the end, war against irregular forces meant war against civilians, and after the experiences of 1871 this was a nightmare for the Prussian-German officer corps.

Even during Italy's occupation of Tripolitania, there had been a massacre among the Arab population near Sciara Sciat, which was widely covered in the German press.<sup>72</sup> When war began on the Balkans, the observers on the spot were sure that gangs and militias would be used by all the parties and that civilians would be involved in the fighting. After

<sup>69</sup> Edward J. Erickson and Mesut Uyar, *A Military History of the Ottomans: From Osman to Atatürk* (Santa Barbara CA: Praeger, 2009), pp. 211–19. See also the report of Colonel Günther Bronsart von Schellendorf, the military attaché who was responsible for Serbia, on the 'Black Hand' terrorist organisation. In Bronsart's assessment this organisation posed hardly any danger, precisely because it was chronically infiltrated by Serbian officers and politicians. PA AA, R 11516: Embassy in Belgrad to Chancellor, Bericht des Militärattachés 16, 3 February 1912.

<sup>70</sup> Daniel Marc Segesser, 'Kriegsverbrechen auf dem Balkan und in Anatolien in der internationalen juristischen Debatte während der Balkankriege und des Ersten Weltkrieges', in Angelow, *Weltkrieg*, p. 196.

<sup>71</sup> Stig Förster, 'Dreams and Nightmares: German Military Leadership and the Images of Future Warfare, 1871–1914', in Manfred F. Boemeke, Roger Chickering and Stig Förster (eds.), *Anticipating Total War: The German and American Experiences, 1871–1914* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 343–76.

<sup>72</sup> See the reports and newspaper clippings in PA AA, R 14214.

the end of the First Balkan War, Gagern assessed the situation as follows in Sofia:

Both the allies and the Turks gratefully accepted the support provided by volunteer gangs; their activities put the mark of cruelty and inhumanity on the whole war . . . Both sides therefore consider it obvious that the people living in the theatre of war are not simply spectators in the fight for their future, but have to take sides; as a consequence some of them encouraged the formation of gangs by providing arms and ammunition.<sup>73</sup>

Even though there were reports of war crimes by all sides, reports of Bulgarian cruelties consolidated in the course of the war. This was mainly because of the fact that most of the German officers received reports from the Turkish side and that there was also a critical observer in Sofia. The few existing observations indicate a trend, but a historian can hardly accept them as an adequate source. The reports are more of interest because it was impossible to make them consistent with the *military* assessment. This left a dark shadow over the fighting strength of the Bulgarians, a characteristic that had always been highlighted by the Germans. For example, the German ambassador in Sofia reported about the systematic expulsion and forced conversion of the Muslim population in the areas of Thrace occupied by the Bulgarian army: there one could truly talk of 'a complete failure of Orthodox Christianity towards Islam'.<sup>74</sup> In the summer of 1913, the German ambassador in Constantinople even went so far as to send a naval officer – disguised as the 'secretary' of a German journalist – on his own initiative to the areas of Thrace that had been reconquered by the Turks. This officer went on to submit a report with witness reports and photographs that showed the relatively humane way the Bulgarian population was treated by the Turks and the severe assaults Bulgarian militias and the army mounted against the Turkish population.<sup>75</sup> Although such a report would hardly stand up to a critical analysis methodically, it shows

<sup>73</sup> HStAM, Gen.Stab, Bd. 258: Major Franz Frhr. von Gagern, Bericht 17, 1 February 1913, pp. 1–2. See also an earlier observation of the General Staff: 'The Bulgarian and Greek people, most of whom own weapons, also did great harm to the Turks.' HStAM, Gen.Stab, Bd. 252: Großer Generalstab, 10. Abt., 3. Bericht über die Vorgänge auf dem Balkan: 1. mit 7. November, 8 November 1912, p. 5.

<sup>74</sup> R 14275: Embassy in Sofia to AA, Nr. 138, 8 August 1913. At the end of the Second War, even the General Staff agreed on the provisional assessment that the Bulgarian side in particular had distinguished itself by assaults. See HStAM, Gen.Stab, Bd. 254: Großer Generalstab, Lage auf dem Balkan vom 26.07.1913 10<sup>0</sup> Vormittags bis zum 30.07.1913 10<sup>0</sup> Vormittags, 26.07.1913, pp. 5–6.

<sup>75</sup> PA AA, R 14275: Embassy in Constantinople to Chancellor, Nr. 17266, 20 August 13, in particular the annex: Oberleutnant zur See Tschirschky, Bericht über meine Reise durch Thrakien, Thrapia, 8 August 1913.

that the German side took an active interest in the question of war crimes. The crimes were not seen as individual assaults either, but as a specific form of war. As early as October 1912, Gagern drew the following conclusion:

It is a century-old hatred which is breaking out in this war; this, the use of numerous irregular forces by both sides and the primitive level of culture of all the peoples involved will mark this war as a racial war and a war of extermination.<sup>76</sup>

It was not wrong *per se* to measure the level of civilisation of armies and societies by monitoring their observance of the *ius in bello*, and by the way, this was already a topos of the contemporary debate about international law. But this interpretation raised doubts when countries used it to qualify the danger of the dynamics of violence in wars by pointing to their own alleged superiority in terms of civilisation. Friedrich Immanuel did this in an exemplary way: he accounted for the war crimes by talking of the 'old hatred' and the 'half-culture which today still has an impact on some peoples on the Balkan Peninsula even if this issue is assessed benignly'.<sup>77</sup>

It was at least possible to conclude from this civilisation-based interpretation that similar excesses were not to be expected in the great war of the future. Even so, Gagern pointed out that the propagandist talk of the *levée en masse* in France and the recourse being taken there to the historical examples of the *franc tireur* could trigger a dangerous dynamism. He therefore demanded that in war any attempt to set up irregular French formations be nipped in the bud by 'the most ruthless and draconian measures'. What seemed to be even more important to him, however, was the need for this practice to be already announced officially and publicly in peacetime in order to avoid such escalations.<sup>78</sup>

With the exception of war crimes, German observers commented on the ruthless mobilisation of the armed forces and society as a whole in Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro with blatant appreciation. The situation in the Ottoman Empire was an appropriate background for them. The analysts were so receptive on this point since this aspect of war could be implemented in a domestic military discourse, which had been acute for a long time on the key issue: are wars decided by materiel or morale?

In the Balkan Wars, where the materiel dimension remained chronically weak, morale could not help but gain in importance and

<sup>76</sup> See HStAM, Gen.Stab, Bd. 258: Bericht Major Franz Frhr. von Gagern Nr. 1, 25 October 1912.

<sup>77</sup> Immanuel, *Balkankrieg*, vol. IV, p. 79. For the connection between level of civilisation and conduct of war, see Segesser, 'Kriegsverbrechen', p. 193.

<sup>78</sup> HStAM, Gen.Stab, Bd. 258: Major Franz Frhr. von Gagern, Bericht 17, 1 February 1913, p. 5.

observation. Force, cohesion and the quality of command and control at all levels manifested themselves as decisive factors.<sup>79</sup> Interestingly enough, it was the General Staff which in this context pointed out the value of morale aids like flags, music or bayonets, despite all the modernness of battle.<sup>80</sup> For those who had personally experienced war on the Balkans, the manner of peace training in their own country was a cause for criticism:

There is too much instruction, too little action; we are over-instructed and the primary importance is not attached to physical education and character building! . . . It should be said here: prohibition of alcohol, sports also for the common man: I recommend football, which is the most brutal sport, it hardens the body and makes the will ruthless and develops the ability to make quick decisions; the personal example of the officer and NCO is the most important support in the skirmish line! The officer should be demanded to have ruthless energy, have physical hardiness, be hard against himself, have personal courage, this is more important than theoretical knowledge or even social manners! Do away with anyone who does not fit into this framework!<sup>81</sup>

But the reality of modern battle could also be used as an argument in the domestic struggle for armed forces legislation. Otto von Lossow voiced this criticism of the champions of a militia army from within the social democratic camp: 'The people who believe in militia armies, improvised armies and the like – who believe an army could exist without years of extremely careful peacetime training, iron discipline and extremely high concepts of honour, they should study this war.'<sup>82</sup>

As the war on the Balkans had also shown, a society that was willing to share the burdens of war was a prerequisite for a strong fighting army. Arguments from the domestic debate could be heard here too. Even during his transit through Belgrade in October 1912, Baron von Gagern had referred to the mood in Serbia: the people were quite sure that they were in a 'life-and-death fight', a fight 'which is scarring the economic life so deeply that only a complete, unabbreviated victory can offset the damage that is already noticeable at every turn'.<sup>83</sup> Using contemporary

<sup>79</sup> Generalstab, *Balkankrieg*, p. 157; Rohde, *Gefechtsvorschriften*, p. 126.

<sup>80</sup> Generalstab, *Balkankrieg*, pp. 144–5.

<sup>81</sup> HStAM, Gen.Stab, Bd. 259: Oberstleutnant Veit, Einige Erfahrungen aus dem Balkankriege, pp. 26–33, here p. 27.

<sup>82</sup> HStAM, Bd. 260: Oberstleutnant von Lossow, Bericht an bayer. Kriegsministerium, 2 April 1913, p. 13 (copy). See also Bernhard Neff, 'Wir wollen keine Paradedruppe, wir wollen eine Kriegstruppe . . .': *Die reformorientierte Militärkritik der SPD unter Wilhelm II. 1890–1913* (Cologne: SH-Verlag, 2004).

<sup>83</sup> HStAM, Gen.Stab, Bd. 258: Major Franz Freiherr von Gagern, Bericht 1, 25 October 1912, p. 2.

social Darwinist rhetoric, the reviewer in the literary supplement *Militär-Literatur* came to the conclusion that unlike the Bulgarians, the Turks did not understand the 'existential character of fighting'.<sup>84</sup> The connection between military power and social cohesion was also clear to Friedrich Immanuel:

Although we have a high regard for the peace efforts, the Balkan War in particular shows us the vital necessity that a people can only maintain its right to exist if it maintains its martial characteristics . . . The flattening and deadening of national and martial characteristics, which is the objective of certain circles, cannot but result in the decline of a people.<sup>85</sup>

Yet in addition to these statements, which were sometimes motivated by domestic interests, there were observers who certainly saw the consequences of such a nationalist policy and manner of waging war. The reports of the military attaché in Sofia, for instance, ended with the sobering observation that the Bulgarians had hardly profited from their initial military successes because the chauvinist government had allowed the army to be sacrificed for a 'great-Bulgarian phantom'. In the review of the events of 1913 in the *Militär-Wochenblatt*, General Hans von Beseler made the readers understand the 'disproportionately heavy' losses of the Balkan armies and cautioned 'that the exertion of the highest strength of a people for the next war effort must not lead to their complete exhaustion'.<sup>86</sup>

The bitterest lesson for the Germans was the realisation that their own military mission could only be considered a complete failure. The early reports in particular presented a picture of disappointment. For example, Endres wrote: 'It must be clear to each participant in the war that Germany's reform efforts have caused a complete fiasco and that Germany's standing has suffered, quite irrespective of the fact that the Germans were not to blame for this.' Lieutenant Colonel Weidtmann from the military mission admitted that they had undoubtedly 'failed' because the Turkish had given their advisors only trivial military matters to attend to and had prevented structural reform. Lossow, who as a division commander in the trench war abandoned himself to the Çatalca blues in the winter of 1913, wrote home:

<sup>84</sup> [Generalleutnant Imhoff-Pascha?], 'Der Balkankrieg 1912/13', *Neueste Militär-Literatur. Wöchentliches Beiblatt zum MWB*, 45 (1914), p. 139.

<sup>85</sup> Immanuel, *Balkankrieg*, vol. IV, p. 79. In a similar vein: HStAM, Bd. 258: Major Franz Freiherr von Gagern, Bericht 17, 1 February 1913, pp. 16–18.

<sup>86</sup> AAPA, R 4660: Embassy in Sofia to Chancellor, Militärbericht 80, 28 September 1913, p. 2; Gen. d. Inf. von Beseler, 'Militärpolitischer Rückblick auf das Jahr 1913: 1. Teil', *MWB*, 1 (1 January 1914), pp. 12–13.



This country is beyond help. It knows only disputes over political power for egoistical motives and words, words, words! Nobody wants to hear anything of work and doing one's duty . . . The Turks will not be able to find the way upwards on their own. Only under foreign tutelage (like Egypt under England) will it be possible to teach the people to work, do their duty, to maintain discipline and order – then the healthy elements of the people will feel much better and be happier than under the current swinish mess.<sup>87</sup>

It was possible to interpret the harsh internal criticism as criticism of the Von-der-Goltz-system and his whitewashing of reports, even though they tried to account for it by the mismanagement and procrastination of their Turkish partners. The ensuing question was: what was to be done next? Veit's conclusion, to terminate the mission and political support for the Sublime Porte, was radical and remained the position of a minority:

A total final defeat of the Turkish army would be good fortune for them, the only possibility to rise again . . . The Orient cannot take contact with Europe! If the powers admit Turkey into Europe, they want a weak Turkey and it will disintegrate even faster!<sup>88</sup>

Endres and Lossow passed the ball into the court of the politicians. If they were determined to hold on to Turkey, it would be necessary to set up a completely new military mission, one that must be much more broadly based and headed by an active German general with real command authority. Furthermore, several corps would have to be trained under German command to become model units, and all the schools would also have to be under German command. As regards military matters, the Turks would have to put themselves largely into the hands of the Germans.<sup>89</sup>

It was quickly decided to renew and expand the mission. In the person of Otto Liman von Sanders, it was possible to appoint a high-ranking general to head it, and the number of advisors rose to forty-two officers by the time the war began. On paper, the agreements did indeed look like the beginning of a military protectorate.<sup>90</sup> The situation was different, however, in reality: the domestic situation within the Ottoman Empire

<sup>87</sup> HStAM, Gen.Stab, Bd. 257: Bericht des kaiserl. ottomanischen Majors Franz Endres über seine Teilnahme am Balkankrieg 1913, p. 30; AA-PA, R 13317: Oberstleutnant Weidtmann to military attaché in Constantinople, undated (May 1913; copy), pp. 5–6; HStAM, Bd. 260: Oberstleutnant von Lossow, Bericht über die augenblickliche Lage, Darbogaz Tahufushane, 4 February 1913, p. 9.

<sup>88</sup> HStAM, Gen.Stab, Bd. 259: [Major Veit], Ursachen der türkischen Niederlagen nach meinen Erfahrungen bei der Kavallerie-Division Salih Pascha, Tschataldscha, November 1912, p. 48.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* See also *ibid.*, Bd. 257: Bericht des kaiserl. ottomanischen Majors Franz Endres über seine Teilnahme am Balkankrieg 1913, pp. 32–3; Wallach, *Anatomie*, pp. 119–25.

<sup>90</sup> Wallach, *Anatomie*, pp. 126–62.

continued to be fragile and the Germans paid hardly any attention to the inter-cultural problems of the mentoring programme. In March 1914, the Chief of the General Staff had no option but to sit back and once again point to the Turks: 'Militarily, Turkey is a failure! The reports of our military mission are simply dismal. The army is in a state that defies description.'<sup>91</sup>

The fact that the Germans reinforced their mission after the Balkan Wars was therefore not an expression of their trust in the potential of the Turkish army, but rather an act of military face-saving. The real mistake and the great irony of the World War lay in the fact that the Germans were in the end wrong to assess the Ottoman Empire negatively. The military loser of 1912/13 was able to wage its next war for another four years by mobilising unimagined military and social powers and thus considerably improved the strategic situation of the Central Powers.

### Conclusion

The army and navy of the German Empire by no means ignored the wars in North Africa and on the Balkans. Rather, the military analysts observed the conflicts from various perspectives from the very beginning and implemented the knowledge they acquired in an established system of military learning. Nevertheless, the overall picture remained to a large extent superficial and sketchy. This, however, was because of the fact that it was difficult or even impossible to get first-hand experience of these wars. The picture also had to remain incomplete because there was not enough time in the end to learn further lessons before the next war in which Germany was involved broke out, just eleven months later.<sup>92</sup> This was a timeframe which was simply too narrow for the military organisations of those years.

The conclusion that must be drawn from an assessment of the military observations is that there was not much for the German officer corps to learn. These wars did not provide military lessons which would have made even the slightest difference to the performance of the German army in the summer of 1914 if they had been implemented. The differences in the conditions under which the wars were fought were too great,

<sup>91</sup> Chief of the Prussian General Staff, Generaloberst Helmuth von Moltke, to Chief of the Austrian-Hungarian General Staff, General Franz Freiherr Conrad von Hötzendorf, 13 March 1914; quoted in Wallach, *Anatomie*, p. 150.

<sup>92</sup> A problem that was common to all the major European military powers as the chapters by Adrian Wettstein and Günther Kronenbitter in this book show ([Chapters 10 and 11](#), pp. 178 and 196).

in particular as regards organisation, armament, training and the military cultures of the armed forces involved as well as the theatres of war. Looking back, of course, it is easy to spot assessments that were biased or uninformed. It is just as easy, however, to spot assessments that were eerily correct. It only becomes interesting when the personal opinions of the participants and observers have been condensed into lessons learned.

A central lesson that can be noted is that the basic tactical procedure followed by the Germans – combined arms combat – proved correct in principle. It was also obvious that the battles of the future would last longer, be more complex in terms of tactics and more debilitating for men and materiel. Here, the Balkan Wars once again confirmed an insight gained in the war of 1904/05. In the era of machine-guns and rapid-fire artillery, those who just dashed off valiantly were sure to encounter defeat and death. But those who dashed off valiantly after the attack had been well prepared by artillery fire and the infantry had been moved up to the enemy in open order while firing and making good of the terrain had a fair chance – this at least was the level of knowledge on 31 July 1914.

Longer battles and debilitating operations meant, however, that the physical and mental demands on the soldiers would increase. The appeal to the martial spirit was therefore not a nationalist stock phrase, but rather a prerequisite for military success. Materiel alone would not be enough, but morale alone would not be enough either. Only the combination of the two offered the prospect of success. To preserve this martial spirit among the troops, it was necessary for society itself to adopt it, and to do so already in peacetime. Thus, the Balkan Wars pointed towards a totalisation of war and the mobilisation of entire societies, in the way these wars became constitutive of the twentieth century.<sup>93</sup> The few German observers of the fighting on the Balkans certainly did perceive this change and they demanded the use of the martial spirit of the Balkan peoples as a blueprint for gearing their own society for war.

<sup>93</sup> See Roger Chickering and Stig Förster (eds.), *Great War, Total War: Combat and Mobilization on the Western Front, 1914–1918* (Cambridge University Press, 2000).



*Part III*

The wars and Great Power politics



## 13 Austro-Hungarian foreign policy and the Balkan Wars

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*Alma Hannig*

The Habsburg Monarchy was strongly interested and involved in the Balkans, both economically and politically.<sup>1</sup> Since the occupation in 1878 and the later annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908, Austria-Hungary pursued a rather conservative policy of territorial status quo, while the other Great Powers competed in imperialist expansion. The rivalry between Austria-Hungary and Russia over hegemony in the Balkans intensified since the beginning of the twentieth century and led to a deterioration in their relations. The creation of the Balkan League in 1912, initiated by St Petersburg and followed by a war against Turkey, worried and even frightened Vienna.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse Austro-Hungarian perceptions of the territorial and political changes in south-eastern Europe and the impact on their own position in the region during the Balkan Wars. What were the options for action and what consequences could arise from them? What role did the other Great Powers play in Vienna's decision-making process, especially Germany and Russia?

This study focuses on the main protagonists of Austro-Hungarian foreign policy: Foreign Minister Count Leopold Berchtold and his Ministry (*Ballhausplatz*), the heir-apparent Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the chief of the General Staff Conrad von Hötzendorf and the Hungarian Prime Minister István Tisza.<sup>3</sup> Although 'ultimately responsible' for foreign

<sup>1</sup> F. R. Bridge, *From Sadowa to Sarajevo: The Foreign Policy of Austria-Hungary, 1866–1914* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972); Samuel R. Williamson, *Austria-Hungary and the Origins of the First World War* (New York: Macmillan, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> Alma Hannig, 'Angst und die Balkanpolitik Österreich-Ungarns vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg', in Patrick Bormann, Thomas Freiburger and Judith Michel (eds.), *Angst in den internationalen Beziehungen* (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2010), pp. 93–113, here pp. 96–7.

<sup>3</sup> John Leslie, 'The Antecedents of Austria-Hungary's War Aims: Policies and Policy-Makers in Vienna and Budapest before and during 1914', in E. Springer and L. Kammerhofer (eds.), *Archiv und Forschung: Das Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv in seiner Bedeutung für die Geschichte Österreichs und Europas* (Vienna/Munich: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1993), pp. 307–94. For domestic and economic factors, see Fritz Klein, 'Politische und wirtschaftliche Interessen in der Balkanpolitik Deutschlands und

policy, Emperor Franz Joseph delegated almost everything to his Imperial and Royal Minister of Household and Foreign Affairs in the last years before the Great War.<sup>4</sup> The aim of this study is to scrutinize the predominant historiographical opinion that the Dual Monarchy acted aggressively in searching for a pretext to begin a war against Serbia in the period before the Great War.<sup>5</sup>

In February 1912 the former Austro-Hungarian ambassador to Russia, Berchtold, became the youngest Foreign Minister in Europe (at the age of forty-nine). He had no experience in the Viennese headquarters at the Ballhausplatz or in the Balkans, but as he took over Aehrenthal's personal staff, political continuity seemed to be guaranteed. During the Italo-Turkish War in Libya in 1911–12, the Habsburg Monarchy was concerned about Italian expansion and the weakening of the Ottoman Empire as well as its impact on the national movements in the Balkans. Its most important ally, Germany, did not share Austrian concerns and supported Italy; Berlin even failed to inform Vienna about the existence of the Bulgaro-Serb alliance, so Austria found out about it shortly before the First Balkan War broke out.<sup>6</sup> Berchtold's reaction was an announcement of the Austrian conservative policy of the status quo and peace, and at the same time a plea for support from the European powers.<sup>7</sup>

When the Balkan League began a war against the Ottoman Empire, the Danube Monarchy first followed a policy of 'wait and see' which was supported not only by the Foreign Ministry and the emperor, but also by Archduke Franz Ferdinand. They agreed that military involvement

Österreich-Ungarns 1912', in Fritz Klein (ed.), *Neue Studien zum Imperialismus vor 1914* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1980), pp. 109–34; Dörte Löding, 'Deutschlands und Österreich-Ungarns Balkanpolitik von 1912–1914 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung ihrer Wirtschaftsinteressen', PhD thesis (Hamburg, 1969); Jürgen Angelow, *Kalkül und Prestige: Der Zweibund am Vorabend des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Cologne/Weimar/Vienna: Böhlau, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> For example, the emperor presided during the 1870 crisis over five ministerial conferences in twelve days; in the three years prior to the First World War he attended none of the council's thirty-nine meetings. See Anatol Schmied-Kowarzik (ed.), *Die Protokolle des Gemeinsamen Ministerrates der Österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie 1908–1914* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Lothar Höbelt, *Franz Joseph I: Der Kaiser und sein Reich. Eine politische Geschichte* (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar: Böhlau, 2009), p. 144; Jürgen Angelow, 'Der "Kriegsfall Serbien" als Willenstherapie: Operative Planung, politische Mentalitäten und Visionen vor und zu Beginn des Ersten Weltkrieges', *Militär-geschichtliche Zeitschrift*, 21 (2002), pp. 315–36, here p. 319.

<sup>6</sup> Holger Afflerbach, *Der Dreibund: Europäische Großmacht- und Allianzpolitik vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar: Böhlau, 2002), pp. 692–708.

<sup>7</sup> *Österreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik von der bosnischen Krise 1908 bis zum Kriegsausbruch 1914: Diplomatische Aktenstücke des österreichisch-ungarischen Ministeriums des Äussern (ÖUA)*, vol. IV (Vienna: Österreichischer Bundesverlag für Unterricht, Wissenschaft und Kunst, 1930), no. 3687, pp. 339–40. See also nos. 3633, 3744, pp. 285, 388.



made no sense for various reasons: Austria-Hungary had no further aims in the region, Russia could enter the war, Italy would probably ask for compensation, the costs would be too high and, finally, the support of Germany was not certain.<sup>8</sup>

After the rapid defeat and withdrawal of the Ottoman Empire from Europe, Austria-Hungary, a multinational state with a slight Slav majority, was concerned it was the next 'sick man of Europe' and a target of a future Serbian attack. Austria-Hungary found itself forced to rethink its Balkan policy. Almost daily a group of leading diplomats in the Ballhausplatz discussed different concepts of future policy in south-eastern Europe.<sup>9</sup> The result was a definition of the vital interests of Austria-Hungary: the status quo in the Balkans and the prevention of the settlement of any other state on the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea. In order to achieve it, an Albanian state needed to be founded, and in the worst case protected by military action.<sup>10</sup> Serbia's wish for free access to the sea could not be accepted, as Vienna feared that Russia could use this port as a naval base. Abandoning the option of its own territorial expansion, Austria-Hungary was in fact willing to accept the territorial expansion of the Balkan states, if they promised to cooperate economically and to accept small adjustments to the Austrian borders as well as a free commercial port at Saloniki.<sup>11</sup> In the case of Bulgarian expansion, the Monarchy demanded territorial compensation for her ally Romania.<sup>12</sup> The purpose was to demonstrate the importance of the alliance and at the same time to maintain the rivalries between the Balkan states. Austria-Hungary acted on this basis during both Balkan Wars.

After the idea of a customs union with Belgrade – a project taken seriously but with little hope of success – had failed and Serbia's expansion reached the Adriatic, Russia carried out a trial mobilization along the Galician border.<sup>13</sup> Austria-Hungary responded by increasing troops in Galicia and Bosnia. Germany officially supported the Danube Monarchy, but kept its military activity low, while England and France heightened

<sup>8</sup> Franz Ferdinand to Berchtold, 1 October 1912, in Private Papers Berchtold, Státní oblastní archiv Brno (SOA), G 138, Inv. 457, K. 133. Berchtold to Franz Ferdinand, 16 October 1912, in Franz Ferdinand Papers, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (HHStA) Wien, K. 9.

<sup>9</sup> See *ÖUA*, vol. IV, nos. 4118, 4128, 4140, 4170, pp. 659–61, 668–70, 676, 698–702.

<sup>10</sup> *ÖUA*, vol. IV, no. 4170, pp. 698–9.

<sup>11</sup> Franz-Josef Kos, *Die politischen und wirtschaftlichen Interessen Österreich-Ungarns und Deutschlands in Südosteuropa 1912/1913: Die Adria-hafen-, die Saloniki- und die Kaval-lafrage* (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar: Böhlau, 1996), pp. 15–48.

<sup>12</sup> *ÖUA*, vol. IV, nos. 4140 and 4170, pp. 676, 698–702.

<sup>13</sup> Kos, *Die politischen und wirtschaftlichen Interessen*, pp. 51–62, 65–7.

their military readiness.<sup>14</sup> Now the members of the Common Ministerial Council and the leaders of the military in Vienna had to discuss the measures 'in case of . . . the eventuality of a winter war, which could no longer be excluded'.<sup>15</sup> While Emperor Franz Joseph and Count Berchtold were still looking for a peaceful solution, the heir to the throne, Franz Ferdinand, and the military pleaded for war.<sup>16</sup> The Archduke planned to make arrangements with Germany, Romania and Russia in preparation for a war against Serbia. The designated special envoys for the negotiations in St Petersburg and Bucharest were two well-known 'hawks': the former military attaché in Russia, Prince Hohenlohe, and the former Chief of the General Staff, Conrad. The archduke himself went to Berlin, accompanied by the Chief of the General Staff, Schemua. While Hohenlohe's task was to pacify the Russian tsar and to keep Russia out of a war against Serbia, the archduke and Conrad sought assurances of support in case of a war. After the first conversation, the archduke wrote to the Foreign Minister Berchtold: 'Conversation with Emperor Wilhelm came out extraordinarily well . . . Emperor Wilhelm says that as soon as our prestige demands it we should take energetic action in Serbia, and we can be certain of his support.'<sup>17</sup> Later that same day, he let the Viennese ambassador in Berlin telegraph that the emperor would not fear 'even a world war'.<sup>18</sup> One week later Conrad could confirm that the Romanian king promised the same.<sup>19</sup>

But the German secretary of foreign affairs, Kiderlen-Wächter, who favoured a Great Powers' conference for the solution of oriental affairs, put a spanner in the works. Even before Franz Ferdinand came to Berlin he warned Berchtold and tried to put him off sending Hohenlohe to Russia.<sup>20</sup> The next step was an article in the semiofficial *Norddeutsche*

<sup>14</sup> David Stevenson, 'Military and Diplomacy in Europe before 1914', *International Security*, 22, 1 (1997), pp. 125–61, here pp. 140–5. See also military attachés' reports from October to December 1912, in Kriegsarchiv Wien, AhOB Gst Evidenzbüro, K. 1077.

<sup>15</sup> Berchtold Memoirs, 3 November 1912, Berchtold Papers, SOA Brno, K. 140.

<sup>16</sup> Alma Hannig, 'Wir schauen in der Loge zu': Thronfolger Franz Ferdinand und die Außenpolitik Österreich-Ungarns vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg', *Etudes Danubiennes*, 27 (2011), pp. 51–66, here pp. 63–6.

<sup>17</sup> Telegram from Franz Ferdinand, 22 November 1912, in *ÖUA*, vol. IV, no. 4571, p. 979. See also Franz Ferdinand to his wife Sophie, 21 November 1912: 'Everything goes brilliantly. I am very happy', and 22 November 1912: 'I feel gorgeous, I am very happy that everything went very well . . . I have already telegraphed to our Emperor.' Private Papers Sophie Hohenberg, Archiv Artstetten, K 668.

<sup>18</sup> Telegram, 22 November 1912, in *ÖUA*, vol. IV, no. 4559, p. 971.

<sup>19</sup> *ÖUA*, vol. IV, no. 4719, p. 1082. See also Conrad von Hötzendorf, *Aus meiner Dienstzeit 1906–1918*, vol. II (Vienna: Rikola, 1922), pp. 354–63.

<sup>20</sup> Hohenlohe Diaries, 20 and 21 November 1912, Hohenlohe Private Papers, Private Archive Fischer-Colbrie Vienna.

*Allgemeine Zeitung*, the so-called 'cold shower' (*kalter Wasserstrahl*), in which he insisted that all questions would have to be settled by the powers jointly and not by any one power alone.<sup>21</sup> Although the German chancellor Bethmann Hollweg declared a few days later in the Reichstag that, should Austria-Hungary be attacked by a third party, Germany 'would have to step resolutely to the side of our ally',<sup>22</sup> Berchtold cancelled the Hohenlohe mission to Russia and accepted a British proposal for a conference in London. The heir to the throne still advocated war and achieved the re-appointment of Conrad as Chief of the General Staff; the Triple Alliance was renewed. Still, Berchtold convinced the emperor in a common audience with Franz Ferdinand that the peaceful solution of a Great Power conference would be the better option for the Habsburg Monarchy.<sup>23</sup>

The entire episode demonstrates that without the clear and explicit support of Germany an Austro-Hungarian war plan would fail. Even though he was deemed the 'Prince of Peace',<sup>24</sup> Franz Ferdinand caused the most dangerous war scare for the Danube Monarchy during the Balkan Wars.<sup>25</sup> It was the only time that Austria-Hungary made plans for a war against Serbia before July 1914 and it could only be prevented by the rational calculation of the German Foreign Secretary and the commitment of Berchtold and Franz Joseph to the peace.

As Britain and Germany had no vital interests in the Balkans and their main concern was Russo-Austrian antagonism threatening the European peace, they cooperated to produce an ambassadors' conference of the

<sup>21</sup> Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, 25 November 1912. See also Ernst Jäckh (ed.), *Kiderlen-Wächter, der Staatsmann und Mensch*, vol. II (Berlin/Leipzig: DVA, 1924), p. 191.

<sup>22</sup> *Die Große Politik der europäischen Kabinette 1871–1914: Sammlung der diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes* (henceforth *GP*), vol. 33 (Berlin, 1927), pp. 445–6. Germany used a 'double strategy': it signalled to Vienna that it would not support the latter's belligerent policy and at the same time indicated in public, especially to the Triple entente, that Germany still stood by its ally. See Jost Dülffer, Martin Kröger and Rolf-Harald Wippich, *Vermiedene Kriege: Deeskalation von Konflikten der Großmächte zwischen Krimkrieg und Erstem Weltkrieg 1865–1914* (Munich, Oldenbourg, 1997), p. 652. Canis has argued against the 'double strategy': Konrad Canis, *Der Weg in den Abgrund: Deutsche Außenpolitik 1902–1914* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2011), p. 487.

<sup>23</sup> Hugo Hantsch, *Leopold Graf Berchtold: Grandseigneur und Staatsmann*, vol. I (Graz: Styria, 1963), pp. 362–4.

<sup>24</sup> Robert A. Kann, *Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand Studien* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1976), pp. 21, 85. Rudolf Kiszling, *Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand von Österreich-Este: Leben, Pläne und Wirken am Schicksalsweg der Donaumonarchie* (Graz/Cologne: Böhlau, 1953), p. 99.

<sup>25</sup> For example, Berchtold allowed the Austro-Hungarian embassy in Russia to secure all political papers in the embassy, as was usual in the case of war. HHStA Wien, PA I 493 Liasse XLV: Balkan-Konflagration 1912–1913 (Nrs. 1–14). See also Alma Hannig, *Franz Ferdinand: Die Biografie* (Vienna: Amalthea, 2013), pp. 177–84.

Great Powers.<sup>26</sup> Before the conference began, Berchtold defined his non-negotiable aims and instructed his ambassador Mensdorff to pursue the following: an autonomous Albania, compensation for Romania, a Serbian guarantee of peacekeeping and the ethnic principle for all territorial expansion. The Danube Monarchy was ready to accept the new borders, if the Balkan states declared them to be definitive and irreversible, which consequently would have prevented future expansion of Serbia. Again, Berchtold underlined the Austrian renouncement of its own expansion and the importance of peacekeeping.<sup>27</sup> Although the first conversations went well for Vienna, the discussion of the Albanian frontiers proved to be complicated and required concessions from the Danube Monarchy and Russia.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, Franz Joseph paved the way for a détente when he sent Prince Gottfried Hohenlohe to St Petersburg to explain that Austria did not have any aggressive intentions. The result was the disarmament agreement in March 1913.<sup>29</sup>

However, the ensuing weeks of the London conference were characterized by discussions on territorial questions between Russia and Austria-Hungary, insufficient support from Austria's allies, Serbian and Montenegrin disrespect of the resolutions adopted by the Great Powers and feeble reactions from the Great Powers.<sup>30</sup> Not until the Austrian threat of the use of military force did the Montenegrin troops withdraw from Albanian Scutari. And a few months later, Serbia provoked Vienna in the same way, backing down at the last possible moment, after the Habsburg Monarchy again issued an ultimatum in order to force Serbia to respect the treaties and to withdraw from Albania.<sup>31</sup> The enormous costs of the

<sup>26</sup> R. J. Crampton, 'The Balkans as a Factor in German Foreign Policy, 1912–1914', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 55 (1977), pp. 370–90, here p. 372. Richard Crampton, *The Hollow Detente: Anglo-German Relations in the Balkans, 1911–1914* (London: G. Prior, 1979). See also Herbert Michaelis, 'Die deutsche Politik während der Balkankriege 1912/13', PhD thesis (Waldenburg, 1929).

<sup>27</sup> *ÖUA*, vol. V, nos. 4924, 4925, pp. 126–31.

<sup>28</sup> Robert R. Kritt, 'Die Londoner Botschafterkonferenz 1912–1913', unpublished PhD thesis (University of Vienna, 1960), pp. 204–10. See also Dülffer, *Vermiedene Kriege*, p. 654 and Canis, *Weg*, pp. 488–90.

<sup>29</sup> *ÖUA*, vol. V, several reports from St Petersburg (4–10 February 1913), pp. 634–69. Günther Kronenbitter, 'Krieg im Frieden' *Die Führung der k.u.k. Armee und die Großmachtpolitik Österreich-Ungarns 1906–1914* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2003), p. 413. See also Alma Hannig, 'Prinz Gottfried zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst (1867–1932): Ein Liebling der Kaiserhöfe', in Alma Hannig and Martina Winkelhofer (eds.), *Die Familie Hohenlohe: Eine europäische Dynastie im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Cologne/Vienna/Weimar: Böhlau, 2013), pp. 240–2.

<sup>30</sup> The *Austrophobic* German ambassador Lichnowsky was of no help to Mensdorff, which even the German chancellor criticized. Bethmann Hollweg to Lichnowsky, 30 January 1913, *GP*, vol. 34/I, no. 12763, pp. 281–2.

<sup>31</sup> Williamson, *Austria-Hungary*, pp. 151–4.

mobilizations and the lack of support from Austria-Hungary's allies and other Great Powers made Berchtold doubt the efficacy of conference diplomacy. The Viennese ruling circles realized that 'the middle road of armed diplomacy was reaching a dead end'.<sup>32</sup>

A sharp difference of opinion between Vienna and Berlin over the future Balkan strategy started after the sudden death of Kiderlen-Wächter at the end of 1912. The new German State Secretary for Foreign Affairs was Jagow, a convinced Social Darwinist, who pleaded for Austrian cooperation with the non-Slavic states of Romania and Greece in order to 'contain the Slav wave on the Balkans'.<sup>33</sup> While the bulgarophile Kiderlen-Wächter supported Austrian plans of closer cooperation with Bulgaria, Jagow refused any further rapprochement towards Sofia and even recommended cooperation with Serbia.<sup>34</sup> Emperor Wilhelm II also demanded an alliance with Turkey, Romania and Greece as a 'bulwark against the alleged Panslavic danger'.<sup>35</sup> Not only Jagow and the emperor mistrusted Bulgaria and its king, but also Archduke Franz Ferdinand was convinced of King Ferdinand's unreliability and dependence on Russia and France.<sup>36</sup> The Ballhausplatz, however, stated simple reasons for Bulgaria's integration into the Triple Alliance: the strength and success of the Bulgarian army in the First Balkan War, and the shared interest in checking Serbia.<sup>37</sup>

One might assume that the conflict over the territories, which broke out between Serbia and Bulgaria in June 1913, provided the Austrians with the opportunity they had been waiting for, as the Balkan League came apart at that moment. In fact it created an even bigger problem, with Romania joining Serbia in the fight against Bulgaria. On the one hand, Austria felt obliged to support the interests of her Romanian ally (according to the mentioned aims from 1912); on the other, she pursued the prevention of a Greater Serbia, which could best be implemented by cooperation with Bulgaria. Berchtold's manoeuvring between his prospective allies was fatal: he put pressure on Bulgaria for bigger

<sup>32</sup> David Stevenson, *Armaments and the Coming of War: Europe, 1904–1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 275.

<sup>33</sup> *ÖUA*, vol. V, no. 6275, Jagow to Berchtold, 23 March 1913, pp. 1039–41, here p. 1039. See the very similar argumentation of the chancellor Bethmann Hollweg: *GP*, vol. 34/II, no. 13108, p. 641; see also Patrick Bormann's chapter in this volume (Chapter 14, pp. 257–61).

<sup>34</sup> *GP*, vol. 34/II, nos. 12965, 13012, 13292, pp. 492, 548–51, 825–7.

<sup>35</sup> *GP*, vol. 39, no. 15716, p. 337. *ÖUA*, vol. VI, no. 7566, p. 778.

<sup>36</sup> Franz Ferdinand to Berchtold, 16 January 1913, Berchtold Papers, SOA Brno, K. 133. *ÖUA*, vol. V, nos. 6127, 6275, pp. 941, 1040. *ÖUA*, vol. VI, nos. 6862, 7566, pp. 318, p. 777. *GP*, vol. 34/II, no. 13012, pp. 549–50.

<sup>37</sup> *ÖUA*, vol. V, nos. 5903, 6126, pp. 796–7, 939.

territorial compensations for Romania and, vice versa, demanded King Carol to content himself with minor gains.<sup>38</sup> Both sides were upset in the end, as they did not receive any concrete support from Vienna. King Ferdinand was actually wondering why Austria-Hungary did not take the opportunity to 'settle up with Serbia'.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, why not? Vienna was convinced that Bulgaria's military forces were better than those of the Turks, and was surprised at their rapid defeat. Franz Ferdinand as well as German leading circles refused any kind of intervention for the benefit of Sofia.<sup>40</sup> Unexpectedly, Conrad, who had argued for war against Serbia throughout the spring of 1913, proposed in July to support Serbia, only if it were to accept a position like that of Bavaria within the German Empire.<sup>41</sup> Finally, in addition to Emperor Franz Joseph and Count Berchtold, the Hungarian Prime Minister István Tisza supported a non-interventionist policy.

The Peace of Bucharest from August 1913, which ended the Second Balkan War, damaged Austro-German relations. The Habsburg Monarchy insisted on modifications of the peace settlement supporting Bulgarian interests, and Germany denied any possibility of revision.<sup>42</sup> While Vienna feared an enlarged Serbia in an alliance with Romania, Wilhelm II decorated and congratulated the King of Romania in a published telegram upon the conclusion of peace in his capital.<sup>43</sup> Finally, Austria had to submit and her defeat was total: Romania was alienated and Bulgaria greatly disappointed, while Serbia again expanded and the victory cemented the cooperation between Romania and Serbia. Vienna felt 'betrayed and sold out'<sup>44</sup> by Germany and it could neither rely on Romania nor on Bulgaria in the last months before the First World War.

In the aftermath of the Balkan Wars, the diplomats of the Dual Monarchy wrote several memoranda on future Balkan policy, not least because of disagreements with Germany. The first one was from 1 August 1913 and the last one from 24 June 1914, the so-called 'Matscheko'-memorandum. Based on selected published and unpublished documents

<sup>38</sup> *ÖUA*, vol. VI, nos. 6833, 6903, 7152, 7399, pp. 298–9, 358, 521, 664–5.

<sup>39</sup> *ÖUA*, vol. VI, no. 7838, p. 944.

<sup>40</sup> Crampton, 'Balkans', pp. 386–7. Franz Ferdinand to Berchtold, 4 July 1913 and 24 July 1913, Berchtold Papers, SOA Brno.

<sup>41</sup> Conrad to Berchtold, 2 July 1913, 12 July 1913, Berchtold Papers, SOA Brno. See also Horst Brettner-Messler, 'Die Balkanpolitik Conrad v. Hötzendorfs (Dezember 1912 bis Oktober 1913)', unpublished PhD thesis (University of Vienna, 1966) pp. 82–5.

<sup>42</sup> Williamson, *Austria-Hungary*, pp. 148–9; Ludwig Bittner, 'Die Verantwortlichkeit Österreich-Ungarns für den Ausbruch des Weltkrieges', in Josef Nadler and Heinrich Srbik (eds.), *Österreich: Erbe und Sendung im deutschen Raum* (Salzburg/Leipzig: Pustet, 1936), p. 195.

<sup>43</sup> *GP*, vol. 35, nos. 13732, 13733, 13734, 13741, pp. 359–67.

<sup>44</sup> *GP*, vol. 35, no. 13750, p. 379.

from this period, the following analysis indicates that, contrary to predominant opinion, the Ballhausplatz had formulated a consistent Balkan policy without any war plans against Serbia.<sup>45</sup> These concepts were fundamental for the policy-making process in Vienna until the assassination of the archduke. The main topics of the memoranda were always the same, but their importance and emphases varied.

'Of all Balkan problems the south-slavic or, rather, the Serbian question is the one of the greatest importance for the monarchy. It is closely aligned to our vital interests, its resolution in terms of Greater Serbia would be suitable to call our conditions of existence into question.'<sup>46</sup> With these words the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister addressed Germany after the great defeat of Bulgaria in the Second Balkan War and only a few days before the Bucharest Peace treaty was signed. The purpose of this communication was not to influence German attitudes towards the peace treaty, but to explain the dangerous situation that developed from the Balkan Wars and to present Austro-Hungarian ideas for a future Balkan policy. One message the Ballhausplatz repeatedly communicated was the necessity of adopting a common approach and acting jointly with Germany.<sup>47</sup> In an additional document written the same day Berchtold criticized Germany for deviating from the principle that it was understood that Austria-Hungary, because of the 'vital importance' of the Balkans for it, should shape the policy there and Germany would only adapt to it.<sup>48</sup> He reproached Berlin for its lack of understanding of Austro-Serbian antagonism and for giving unsolicited well-meaning advice for cooperation with Serbia, which only illustrated German 'misjudgement of the fundamental clash of interests'.<sup>49</sup> On the one hand, Berchtold used dramatic terminology describing Austro-Serbian hostility as 'permanent and unbridgeable' because of the Greater Serbian aspirations for Austrian territories. On the other, he underlined that Vienna had no aggressive intentions towards Serbia and territorial extension or annexation of Serbian territories were not desired.<sup>50</sup> The real purpose of this diplomatic

<sup>45</sup> The first study with a similar approach was Karl Schwendemann, 'Grundzüge der Balkanpolitik Österreich-Ungarns von 1908–1914', *Berliner Monatshefte*, 8 (1930), pp. 203–26.

<sup>46</sup> *ÖUA*, vol. VII, no. 8157, pp. 1–7, here pp. 1–2.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* See also *ÖUA*, vol. VII, no. 8708, pp. 353–8, no. 9482, pp. 974–9; *ÖUA*, vol. VIII, no. 9918, pp. 186–95.

<sup>48</sup> *ÖUA*, vol. VII, no. 8159, p. 8. <sup>49</sup> *ÖUA*, vol. VII, no. 8157, p. 3.

<sup>50</sup> *ÖUA*, vol. VII, no. 8157, p. 3. See the very similar argument when he addressed Romania, *ÖUA*, vol. VII, no. 9032, pp. 588–94, here pp. 591–2. The heir to the throne refused a war against Serbia firmly and warned Berchtold of Conrad's war-mongering. Franz Ferdinand to Berchtold, 4 July 1913 and 12 October 1913, Berchtold Papers, SOA Brno, K. 133.



offensive was to convince Germany of the political imperative of integrating Bulgaria into the common alliance. In order to prevent a conflict against Serbia or at least to create the best preconditions for a possible conflagration (Vienna expected it because of the perceived aggressiveness of Russia and Serbia), he suggested a 'configuration' of 'natural allies', which implied Sofia. Picking up the typical German counter-argument of Bulgaria's closeness to Russia, Berchtold disproved it, pointing out Russia's lack of support for Bulgaria during the Balkan Wars.<sup>51</sup> Finally, he explained that an alliance with Greece (the favourite solution of the German emperor and Jagow) would be no adequate substitute for Bulgaria, as Vienna would have no chance to win a war against Russia, Serbia and Bulgaria. Berchtold tirelessly repeated the arguments for cooperation with Sofia, as he knew that the 'Russian peril' and the belief in a forthcoming war between the Slavs and Teutons dominated the thinking of the German elites, which was the reason they stood for closer cooperation with Romania, Greece and Turkey.<sup>52</sup> These patterns recurred in all important diplomatic considerations in 1913 and 1914.<sup>53</sup>

For the period under examination, the Hungarian Prime Minister Tisza became one of the most important decision-makers and shapers of foreign policy in Austria-Hungary. His political memoranda were presented to the emperor, who appreciated his opinion, and Tisza's vote in the ministerial council became decisive. He often criticized the inaction and debility of the Great Power system, indicating the dangers of weakness especially for Vienna's position not just in the system itself but also in the Balkans.<sup>54</sup> He also stressed the importance of 'intimate cooperation' and the necessity of 'thorough debate' with Berlin regarding south-eastern Europe.<sup>55</sup> The Prime Minister pursued the idea of rapprochement between Romania and Bulgaria as a basis for stronger cooperation between the Central Powers and Bulgaria in order to block Russian and Serbian expansion in the Balkans. His tactic was to play on

<sup>51</sup> *ÖUA*, vol. VII, no. 8157, p. 4.

<sup>52</sup> Gottlieb von Jagow, *Ursachen und Ausbruch des Weltkrieges* (Berlin: Reimer Hobbing, 1919), p. 193; see also the contribution of Patrick Bormann in this volume ([Chapter 14](#), pp. 257–63) and Fritz T. Epstein, 'Der Komplex "Die russische Gefahr" und sein Einfluß auf die deutsch-russischen Beziehungen im 19. Jahrhundert', in Imanuel Geiss and Bernd-Jürgen Wendt (eds.), *Deutschland in der Weltpolitik des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* (Düsseldorf: Bertelsmann 1973), pp. 143–59.

<sup>53</sup> *ÖUA*, vol. VII, no. 9032, pp. 588–94; *ÖUA*, vol. VIII, no. 9674, pp. 42–3, no. 9739, pp. 80–1.

<sup>54</sup> *ÖUA*, vol. VII, no. 8474, pp. 198–201, here p. 199. See also *ÖUA*, vol. VII, no. 8778, p. 400.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 200–1. In March 1914 Tisza considered 'complete harmony' with Germany to be necessary in political questions. See *ÖUA*, vol. VII, no. 9482, pp. 974–9, here p. 976.



German fear of Russia, always referring to the 'encirclement' of the Habsburg Monarchy and, thus, the Triple Alliance in general.<sup>56</sup> If Austro-Hungarian military forces were to be tied up by Russian, Serbian and eventually Romanian troops, then Germany could not expect any Austrian help on a probable eastern front, which would put Germany at an extreme risk.<sup>57</sup> According to Tisza, the only way out of this 'iron ring' was an alliance with Bulgaria, flanked by Romanian, Greek and Turkish benevolence.<sup>58</sup> The Hungarian prime minister made no plans for a war against Serbia, but preferred the diplomatic isolation of the aggressive neighbour. He urged calm and advised to 'keep cold blood' and to preserve the peace.<sup>59</sup>

The disagreements between Germany and Austria-Hungary in the autumn of 1913 created the need to send a special envoy, János Forgách, to Berlin to make Vienna's position clear in a direct conversation with Jagow. He actually reiterated Berchtold's and Tisza's arguments: no aggressive plans against Serbia, stronger cooperation with Bulgaria, a wish for better relations with Romania and Greece, which should be provided by Berlin, and a concordance of German and Austrian Balkan policies.<sup>60</sup> While Jagow was pessimistic about the future of Albania, Forgách revealed his pessimism about Romania. Ultimately, the special mission to Berlin ended without success.

In the last months before the outbreak of the war, the reliability of Romania came to the fore of Austro-Hungarian Balkan policy. Most of the reports from Romania and Bulgaria outlined the Austrophobic atmosphere among the leading circles, as well as the Romanian population, which was based on Hungarian-Romanian problems. This Austrophobia increased during the Second Balkan War, when Austria-Hungary failed to support Romania against Bulgaria.<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, Romania established a strategic alliance with Serbia, the 'deadly enemy'<sup>62</sup> of the Habsburg Monarchy, and the Ballhausplatz wondered what value the alliance with Romania now had. In order to improve and clarify relations between Vienna and Bucharest, an intimate of the heir-apparent, Ottokar Czernin, was appointed envoy to Romania.<sup>63</sup> The archduke was the only one among the Austrian ruling elites who still refused to cooperate with Bulgaria and who trusted in the loyalty and

<sup>56</sup> *ÖUA*, vol. VII, no. 8474, p. 200.

<sup>57</sup> *ÖUA*, vol. VII, no. 9482, pp. 974–9, here p. 976.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 977; Franz Ferdinand to Berchtold, 6 July 1913, Berchtold Papers, SOA Brno.

<sup>59</sup> *ÖUA*, vol. VII, no. 9482, pp. 974, 978. <sup>60</sup> *ÖUA*, vol. VII, no. 8708, pp. 353–8.

<sup>61</sup> *ÖUA*, vol. VII, no. 8699, pp. 346–7, no. 9032, pp. 588–94.

<sup>62</sup> *ÖUA*, vol. VII, no. 8708, p. 355. <sup>63</sup> *ÖUA*, vol. VII, no. 9032, p. 588.

authority of the Romanian king.<sup>64</sup> He expected Czernin to restore the confidence of other Romanian circles and to find a way to strengthen ties between Romania and Austria-Hungary.<sup>65</sup> The new envoy was supposed to explain to Romanian nationalist politicians that further maintenance of the Romanian-Serbian alliance was not 'compatible' with the Romanian-Austrian alliance, for a possible conflict between the Dual Monarchy and Serbia would lead to a 'clash of interests and duties' in Bucharest.<sup>66</sup>

Contrary to Franz Ferdinand's wishes, the foreign minister had instructed and authorized Czernin to put pressure on Romania to make the alliance with Vienna public. Should Vienna refuse, then Berchtold could at least estimate the 'real value' of the alliance and draw the necessary conclusions (fortification of the borders to Romania).<sup>67</sup> The Ballhausplatz was convinced that Romania was about to change alliances. All the efforts of the envoy to improve the relationships finally failed. His reports from the spring of 1914 painted a gloomy, Austrophobic ambience. The uncertainty about what would happen after King Carol's death was of particular concern. The risk of losing an ally and the probable consequences made Czernin demand a clarification of relations at all costs. His suggestion was to put more pressure on Romania to commit to the alliance, or even to publish the contract in the form of an apparent indiscretion.<sup>68</sup> In his report of 22 June 1914, Czernin proposed to test Romanian loyalty by supporting it in public and suggesting an alliance with Serbia. In the case of a negative reply, the alliance with Romania would be written off and an alliance with Bulgaria forged.<sup>69</sup> This plan was still mentioned in the so-called Matscheko-memorandum of 24 June, although the chances for Romanian loyalty decreased when the Russian royal visit heralded the deepening of Russo-Romanian relations.<sup>70</sup> As the addressee of the memorandum was Germany, it is very likely

<sup>64</sup> Franz Ferdinand to Berchtold, 16 January 1913, 6 July 1913, 8 August 1913, 12 October 1913, 10 April 1914, Berchtold Papers, SOA Brno. Many authors explain this attitude by citing his uncritical and rather emotional relationships to the Romanian king. Georg Franz, *Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand und die Pläne zur Reform der Habsburger Monarchie* (Brünn/Munich/Vienna: Rohrer 1943), p. 74. Friedrich Weissensteiner, *Franz Ferdinand: Der verhinderte Herrscher* (Vienna: Kremayr & Scheriau, 2007), pp. 198–9.

<sup>65</sup> Ottokar Czernin, *Im Weltkrieg* (Berlin/Vienna: Ullstein, 1919), p. 105.

<sup>66</sup> *ÖUA*, vol. VII, no. 9032, p. 592. <sup>67</sup> *ÖUA*, vol. VII, no. 9032, pp. 593–4.

<sup>68</sup> *ÖUA*, vol. VII, no. 9463, pp. 951–7. See also Czernin to Franz Ferdinand, 2 April 1914, Franz Ferdinand Papers; *ÖUA*, vol. VIII, no. 9902, p. 174. The archduke strictly rejected both solutions as well as putting any pressure on Romania.

<sup>69</sup> *ÖUA*, vol. VIII, no. 9902, pp. 173–6, here p. 176. He had already made similar suggestions in his correspondence with the archduke in April and May 1914. Czernin to Franz Ferdinand, 2 April 1914, 16 May 1914, Franz Ferdinand Papers.

<sup>70</sup> *ÖUA*, vol. VIII, no. 9918, pp. 186–95, here p. 193.

that Austria-Hungary's proposal of an alliance with Serbia was only an attempt to demonstrate Romanian disloyalty to her German ally in order to convince it of the necessity of an alliance with Bulgaria. After several urgent appeals from Tisza, Czernin and the Austro-Hungarian ambassador in St Petersburg, Szápáry, Berchtold charged two of his officials (Flotow and Matscheko) with the formulation of the memorandum that essentially dealt with the unreliability of Romania as a result of Russo-French efforts to destroy the Dual Monarchy.<sup>71</sup> Thus the principal endeavour of Viennese statesmen became the prevention of an encirclement by a new Balkan League (Serbia, Montenegro, Romania, Greece and eventually Bulgaria and Turkey) backed by Russia and France.<sup>72</sup> Berlin still refused Bulgaria as an alternative partner and criticized Berchtold for putting King Carol under pressure to make the Austro-Romanian alliance public.<sup>73</sup> Matscheko tried to shake Berlin when he underlined the dangers of Russian and French aggressiveness and their activity in the Balkans not only for the Habsburg Monarchy, but also for the Triple Alliance.<sup>74</sup> He stated that Romania had already deviated from her traditional foreign policy and that the situation had become risky because of Romanian-Serbian cooperation. The memorandum ended up asking Berlin to adopt Austro-Hungarian plans: should Bucharest refuse the aforementioned proposal, the Central Powers must form an alliance with Bulgaria and take military measures to fortify the frontiers.<sup>75</sup>

The Chief of the General Staff had serious doubts about Romanian reliability, and he demanded the fortification of the Hungarian-Romanian frontiers in Transylvania.<sup>76</sup> During the period under examination, Conrad and the Minister of War, Krobatin, pleaded for war against Serbia. The Austrian Prime Minister Stürgkh and the Common Minister of Finance Bilinski agreed and supported them.<sup>77</sup> Only a few diplomats discussed war as an option and most of them rejected it in the end.<sup>78</sup> So the only real 'military party' in Austria-Hungary consisted of these four people, who were outvoted by the 'doves'.

Analysing the last memoranda drafted only weeks before the assassination of the heir to the throne, the statement of Samuel Williamson

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* ÖUA, vol. VIII, no. 9627, pp. 1–3.

<sup>72</sup> Alfred F. Pribram, *Austrian Foreign Policy, 1908–1918* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1923), p. 50.

<sup>73</sup> ÖUA, vol. VIII, no. 9639, p. 14, no. 9739, p. 80.

<sup>74</sup> ÖUA, vol. VIII, no. 9918, pp. 187–9. <sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 194–5.

<sup>76</sup> Conrad, *Aus meiner Dienstzeit*, vol. III, pp. 647, 757.

<sup>77</sup> See ÖUA, vol. VII, no. 8779, pp. 397–403.

<sup>78</sup> For example Wilhelm von Storck, legation counsellor in Belgrade as well as Ottokar Czernin. See ÖUA, vol. VII, no. 8693, 9463, pp. 343, 951–7.

rings true: 'Of these the Rumanian question had the most urgency, the Serbian the most emotions, the Russian the most danger and the alliance-entente competition the most complications'.<sup>79</sup> The remarkable fact is that all important Austro-Hungarian initiatives for Balkan policy from the civil servants and diplomats of the Ballhausplatz, including the archduke and the Hungarian prime minister, did not contain aggressive war plans against Serbia.<sup>80</sup> There were no war aims either. Nor was there anything in these documents that would support the thesis that Vienna was looking for a pretext for war against Serbia. The Austro-Hungarian plan was a typical plan of classical diplomacy, with the final objective of preserving the peace and status quo: Austria-Hungary's fear of Serbia calling Austria's integrity into question and the danger of 'encirclement' by Serbia, Russia and Romania was to be overcome by a new Balkan League under Habsburg leadership. Bulgaria would be added to the alliance with Romania, and Germany would work to recruit Turkey and Greece as far as possible.

One of the main problems for Austro-Hungarian diplomacy was the differences between Vienna and Berlin. For months, German policy-makers had alternated between moments of support and declarations of extreme caution. Kiderlen-Wächter defused the only dangerous situation when Franz Ferdinand acted belligerently. Berlin was not willing to accept Bulgaria as a new partner and it lacked an understanding of the vital interests of a multi-ethnic state.<sup>81</sup> In Vienna, the prevailing impression was of a dominant Germany disregarding Austrian interests. There was even suspicion that Austrian interests were being relinquished to strengthen the Anglo-German détente. Szápáry remarked that Austro-Hungarian interests were sacrificed for German economic interests and better relations with Russia.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, Berlin was willing to respect Austrian vital interests only as far as Berlin 'considered them vital',<sup>83</sup> so the Austrian foreign office could never feel certain of German support. This finally caused distrust, disillusion and the feeling of being isolated

<sup>79</sup> Williamson, *Austria-Hungary*, p. 170. <sup>80</sup> Bridge, *From Sadowa*, p. 368.

<sup>81</sup> Berchtold and Hoyos regarded German refusal of Bulgaria as one of the crucial reasons why the peaceful alternative for Balkan policy failed. Berchtold to Hoyos, 29 August 1927 and Hoyos' response, 31 August 1927, Berchtold Private Papers, Private Archive of Count Hardegg, Vienna.

<sup>82</sup> See Jagow to Tschirschky, 17 March 1913, *GP*, vol. 34/II, no. 12982, p. 517; *ÖUA*, vol. VIII, no. 9656, p. 25.

<sup>83</sup> Günther Kronenbitter, 'Bundesgenossen? Zur militärpolitischen Kooperation zwischen Berlin und Wien 1912 bis 1914', in Walther L. Bernecker and Volker Dotterweich (eds.), *Deutschland in den internationalen Beziehungen des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Vögel, 1996), p. 160.

and not being taken seriously.<sup>84</sup> A further interesting aspect was that the Habsburg Monarchy failed to factor Great Britain and Italy in its Balkan plans, although Italy was her ally and had some common interests regarding Albania.<sup>85</sup>

While the 'military party' pleaded for war, Berchtold, his diplomats, Franz Ferdinand and Tisza worked on peaceful solutions.<sup>86</sup> They were clear on the dangers connected with a war: they were unsure of the loyalty of their own allies; the integrity of the state and military were doubtful in the case of a war against a Slavic country; the danger of revolution; the high financial costs and the unpredictable reaction of the other Great Powers were all grave arguments against war. Besides, there was nothing to achieve in a war that could not be achieved peacefully, and territorial expansion was not desirable for domestic reasons. According to the archduke, Vienna could not gain anything in a war against Serbia but 'a pack of thieves and a few more murderers and rascals and a few plum trees'.<sup>87</sup> Austria-Hungary's military development, inherent military weakness and comparatively low military investments were also good arguments against war.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, no (great) power refused war as an instrument of policy, including Austria-Hungary. Therefore, it is not a paradox that most of the documents refer to a possible war: however, most assumed that Serbia or Russia would begin it. Vienna was definitely not waiting to provoke a conflict. It would have been perfectly happy if only Serbia had played the part of a small state respecting the prerogatives of the Great Powers. It was not any sort of pacifism on the part of Austria's leading officials, but rather their rational power-political calculations that kept them from intervening during the Balkan Wars and prompted them to seek a peaceful solution to the difficult situation in the Balkans.

Vienna's decisions to create Albania and prevent Serbian access to the Adriatic Sea were reached only after long negotiations during the

<sup>84</sup> Flotow to Bethmann Hollweg, 29 November 1913, *GP*, vol. 39, no. 15804, p. 461. Aleš Skřivan, *Schwierige Partner: Deutschland und Österreich-Ungarn in der europäischen Politik der Jahre 1906–1914* (Hamburg: Dölling und Galitz, 1999), p. 372.

<sup>85</sup> Afflerbach, *Dreibund*, pp. 803–10. See also Oliver J. Schmitt, *Die Albanen: Eine Geschichte zwischen Orient und Okzident* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2012), pp. 140–9.

<sup>86</sup> Forgách to Berchtold, 30 August 1919, Berchtold Private Papers, Private Archive Hardegg. See also Paul W. Schroeder, 'Stealing Horses to Great Applause: Austria-Hungary's Decision in 1914 in Systemic Perspective', in Holger Afflerbach and David Stevenson (eds.), *An Improbable War? The Outbreak of World War I and European Political Culture before 1914* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007), pp. 17–42, here pp. 18–23; Skřivan, *Schwierige Partner*, p. 257.

<sup>87</sup> Franz Ferdinand to Berchtold, 1 February 1913, Berchtold Papers, SOA Brno.

Balkan Wars, and accompanied by the threat of violence, thus shaking the credibility of the European concert. An alliance with Bulgaria became the main priority in the Austro-Hungarian Balkan plans because of the successes of Serbia and Romania and their mutual cooperation during the Second Balkan War. There was no clash of interests between Vienna and Sofia, and they shared a vital interest: preventing the formation of a Greater Serbia. In the case of war against Serbia or Russia, an alliance with Bulgaria as a Slavic state could be of critical importance. The ideal constellation for Vienna, however, was an additional alliance with Romania and Turkey barring Russian influence in the West. Serbia would thus be isolated and Russian influence in the Balkans blocked. This would have diminished the general war risk and strengthened Austria-Hungary's position in south-eastern Europe. This peaceful alternative could not be implemented as long as Germany refused to accept Bulgaria as a new partner.

It is well known that the situation and, thus, the plans changed after the assassination of the heir to the throne.

## 14 German foreign policy and the Balkan Wars, 1912–1914

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*Patrick Bormann*

For a considerable time, research on Anglo-German relations before the First World War dominated the historiography of the international system. ‘The great naval game’ with its theatrical staging not only impressed contemporaries but also historians of various generations.<sup>1</sup> Wolfgang J. Mommsen’s thesis established the widespread notion that in Germany war was considered inevitable after the Second Moroccan Crisis, making 1911 the beginning of the prewar period.<sup>2</sup> But this traditional approach overestimates the importance of Anglo-German tensions and disregards the fact that the war broke out over Balkan matters, where Russia, Austria-Hungary and the Balkan states were the pivotal players – none of whom took any relevant part in the Second Moroccan Crisis. So it is not surprising that recent studies shift our focus to the complex situation on the Balkans on the eve of the war.<sup>3</sup> Other scholars have focused on the resurgence of Russia and its impact on the European system, while our understanding of British entente policy has been revised.<sup>4</sup> Comprehensive studies of the German case remain rare, although

<sup>1</sup> Jan Rüger, *The Great Naval Game: Britain and Germany in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 2009). Paul Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism* (London and Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1980) remains the key text.

<sup>2</sup> Wolfgang J. Mommsen, ‘Der Topos vom unvermeidlichen Krieg: Außenpolitik und öffentliche Meinung im deutschen Reich im letzten Jahrzehnt vor 1914’, in Wolfgang J. Mommsen (ed.), *Der autoritäre Nationalstaat: Verfassung, Gesellschaft und Kultur des deutschen Kaiserreichs* (Frankfurt: Fischer-Taschenbuch Verlag, 1992), pp. 380–406.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher M. Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (London: Allen Lane, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> An early pioneer was Keith Wilson, *The Policy of the Entente: Essays on the Determinants of British Foreign Policy 1904–1914* (Cambridge University Press, 1985); also Keith Neilson, *Britain and The Last Tsar: British Policy and Russia 1894–1917* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), Stephen Schröder, *Die englisch-russische Marinekonvention: Das Deutsche Reich und die Flottenverhandlungen der Tripelentente am Vorabend des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006); Andreas Rose, *Zwischen Empire und Kontinent: Britische Außenpolitik vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2011).

occasional remarks on the German fear of Russian predominance are commonplace.<sup>5</sup>

With this new perspective on Russo-German relations, the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 require more analysis. This study will take up these new historiographical directions and examine German Balkan policy between 1912 and 1914. The focus will be on the relevance of racial stereotypes in press perception and official politics. Crucially, the Balkan Wars were more significant in the widespread emergence of the perceived 'Slav Peril' than any other event in the prewar years. But the idea of an imminent clash of Germandom and Slavdom did not emerge suddenly out of nowhere. In fact, the occurrence of this racist perception was connected with German imperial politics or 'Weltpolitik'. Considering a worldwide struggle of Great Powers for 'a place in the sun', many Germans and the whole radical right believed that only a few powers could survive independently. It seemed certain that Great Britain and the US would be two of them and – crucially in our context – Russia.

In spite of Russia's economic backwardness no European power – Germany included – had doubts about the potential power of the tsar's empire. The immense Russian landmass with its tremendous, unexploited natural resources certainly had a strong basis for power politics and the huge population with its high birthrates promised a golden future. In addition to these traditional factors of power more and more German observers were concerned about the cultural ties or – in terms of the radical right – racial connections between Russia and Slav populations in eastern and south-eastern Europe. Especially after the Russian Revolution of 1905–6 and the following Russian reorientation on oriental matters, German nationalists imagined something like a 'battlespace' (Kampfzone) between Germandom and Slavdom in Eastern Europe with hotspots in Poland, Austria-Hungary and the Balkans. Within the so-called German Ostmark, which included Western Prussia and Posen, Poles were in the majority in many places. Moreover, a higher birthrate and immigration from Russia and Galicia changed the demographic balance, while many Germans were migrating to industrial cities in the west. These population movements produced the widespread impression of a Slavization of eastern Germany. A similar process was observed in Austria-Hungary: Slavic parties claimed more political rights and in the long run self-government or even political independence. This was seen to endanger the Great Power status of the Habsburg Monarchy,

<sup>5</sup> Especially Schröder, *Marinekonvention*; Thomas Lindemann, *Die Macht der Perzeptionen und Perzeptionen von Mächten* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2000), who emphasizes the racial aspect of the perceptions.



Germany's most important ally. Last but not least, the success of the young Balkan states during their war against Turkey was interpreted as another Slav threat to Austria-Hungary and to the German imperial aims in the orient.

The term 'battlespace' is used consciously, because military metaphors prevailed in many descriptions of developments in Eastern Europe by German nationalists. An article by Alfred Geiser, a leading member of the society *Das Deutschtum im Ausland* (*Germandom abroad*), claimed late in 1912 that people were accustomed to the idea that 'decisions on the fate of powers could only be reached on the battlefield'. As a matter of fact, there would be 'an incessant struggle without peace and truce . . . which is fought for every town and every village, for every clod of field and every inch of path and not least for every child's soul at the edges of our ethnicity, a struggle for the existence of German soil and German traditions, while Slavdom is pressing ceaselessly forward against Germandom in the areas of culture and economy'.<sup>6</sup> Another article, published in the *Dresdner Nachrichten* during the Balkan Wars, read like a battle-report: 'In Galicia, the most radical mutation of Slavdom, the Polishdom ("Polentum"), takes an almost decisive position. In Bohemia and Moravia the Czechdom ("Tschechentum") pushes unstoppably forward and spreads its extensions to the gates of Vienna, as far away as Lower Austria. The Alpine countries are overrun by Slovenes. They solidly established themselves in Carniola and try to enlarge their special nationalist position over there by benefiting from state resources . . . The Slovenes do the same in the formerly strongly German Styria . . . They slowly shift from Carniola to Lower Styria and try to agitate the Windish people and to gradually outvote the German Styria by a tough Settlement policy . . . It's alarming that especially the larger cities were overrun by Slovenes, while the German rural communities are suffering less by the immigration.'<sup>7</sup>

During the last decade before the First World War, the 'Slav Peril' was a current and intense issue for the German right wing. But until the Balkan Wars, this interpretation remained a radical position. It was only after the experience of the quick and decisive victory of the Slav states Serbia, Bulgaria and Montenegro, accompanied by Greece, against the Ottoman Empire in 1912 that the moderates on the right adhered to racial interpretive stereotypes of European politics. The Russophile historian Otto Hoetzsch detected that the 'catchword of Pan-Slavism

<sup>6</sup> Alfred Geiser, 'Die südslawische Gefahr und das Deutschtum', *Das Deutschtum im Ausland N.F.*, 4 (1912), pp. 683–9.

<sup>7</sup> Anon., 'Slawentum und Trialismus', *Dresdner Nachrichten*, 5 April 1913.

virtually became a common property of our political discussion'. The Russian military attaché Basarow also recognized the phrase as commonplace.<sup>8</sup> For example, Emperor Wilhelm II interpreted the Balkan Wars not merely as transient events but rather as 'a world-historical process to be ranked in the same category as the Migration period'. For him, the crucial point was the 'mighty advance of Slav-power'. Although, as he further explained to the Austrian Foreign Minister Count Berchtold, in October 1913, Russia and Pan-Slavism had not succeeded in their endeavours, he thought 'a war between East and West inevitable in the long run' and was concerned about the aspiring Slav Balkan states threatening the Austro-Hungarian flank with their formidable military power. This development, he feared, 'could be fateful for the outcome of race-struggles'.<sup>9</sup> Like the use of racial stereotypes, the emperor's certainty that the Balkan Wars were expressions of a world-historic pivotal turn was shared by many Germans. The leader of the National Liberals, Ernst Bassermann, described the Pan-Slavism movement as a 'movement of the people and the race' enforcing 'the move of the Eastern peoples to the West'.<sup>10</sup> The *Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung* was also convinced that the shattering of European Turkey 'ended one and a half thousand years of constant struggle for the possession of South-east Europe... The Slavs, who raised their hands for succeeding the Byzantines, are now the occupier of Southeast Europe'.<sup>11</sup> In the *Preußische Jahrbücher*, the journalist Berthold Molden spoke about a 'historical advance' of Slavdom, another example for the common use of military metaphors.<sup>12</sup> Hardly any article on Balkan politics to the right of the left-liberal newspapers spared to mention racial stereotypes. The number of publications with a racial argumentation increased, though in most cases there was no immediate qualitative radicalization. To some extent,

<sup>8</sup> Otto Hoetzsch, 'Der "Kampf zwischen Germanentum und Slawentum, *Der Tag*, 16 May 1913; Sergejew Jewgenij, "'Diplomaten mit Schulterstücken" und ihre Sicht der deutsch-russischen Beziehungen am Vorabend des Ersten Weltkrieges', in Karl Eimermacher and Astrid Volpert (eds.), *Verführungen der Gewalt: Russen und Deutsche im Ersten und Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2005), p. 90.

<sup>9</sup> Bulletin by Berchtold, 28 October 1913, in *Österreich-Ungarns Außenpolitik von der Bosnischen Krise 1908 bis zum Kriegsausbruch 1914: Diplomatische Aktenstücke des österreichisch-ungarischen Ministeriums des Äußeren*, 9 vols. (Vienna and Leipzig: Österreichischer Bundesverlag für Unterricht, Wissenschaft und Kunst, 1930), vol. VII, no. 8934, pp. 512–13.

<sup>10</sup> Ernst Bassermann, parliamentary speech, 8 April 1913, reprinted in Ernst Bassermann, *Sein politisches Wirken: Reden und Aufsätze*, ed. and introduced by Fritz Mittelman (Berlin: Curtius, 1914), p. 230.

<sup>11</sup> Anon., 'Eine ernste Zeit', *Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung*, 1 January 1913.

<sup>12</sup> Berthold Molden, 'Politische Korrespondenz', *Preußische Jahrbücher*, 150 (1912), p. 160.

existing stereotypes were strapped into a conceptual corset. This simplification supported a Manichean worldview and reduced options to resolve a potential conflict.

This discursive background is important for the interpretation of German foreign policy. Instead of presenting a detailed description of diplomatic actions during the Balkan Wars this chapter will focus on certain aspects in the light of the decision to risk a war in July 1914. The first, often underestimated, point is that the Balkan Wars altered the focus of European and especially German politics: right up to the Balkan Wars, the prominent Anglo-German antagonism had dominated Berlin's foreign policy for more than fifteen years and most Germans viewed Britain as the main competitor in international politics. Despite the fact that Britain had the world's leading navy, Wilhelmine Germany thought it a wise idea to challenge the dominant sea power at its own game with an extensive naval programme. Most Germans were confident of winning what was considered an inevitable war against Britain, which already had the telling moniker: 'The British War of Succession' (Max Lenz). Time seemed to be on the German side, particularly given its intense economic development.

But even though this optimistic attitude was prevalent, it was never unconditional during the first years of German 'Weltpolitik' and began to crumble rapidly in the Bülow era. After the failure of alliance talks between the two competitors at the turn of the century, London improved its relationship with Tokyo, Paris and last but not least St Petersburg. Germany now felt isolated among the Great Powers during successive crises, with only a reluctant Austria on its side. Moreover, the naval competition was lost around 1908, when Great Britain introduced the Dreadnought. When Bethmann Hollweg took charge in 1909 the earlier optimism had disappeared and the new chancellor tried to come to an understanding with England.

Despite Bethmann Hollweg's honest efforts, negotiations regarding a naval agreement only progressed slowly and did not reach a turning point until the shock of the Second Moroccan Crisis in 1911. This Crisis has often been interpreted as the ultimate beginning of the prewar period, because of the widespread emergence of a pessimistic outlook about an inevitable war. But as Friedrich Kießling has shown, the impulse for détente also resulted from the Moroccan Crisis.<sup>13</sup> Henceforth both England and Germany firmly sought an improvement in their relations,

<sup>13</sup> Friedrich Kießling, *Gegen den 'Großen Krieg'* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2002); see also Otte's and Kießling's contributions to this volume (Chapters 15 and 16, pp. 266–7 and 289–90).

and they cooperated to contain the Balkan Wars on the Peninsula. Although London and Berlin did not come to a full understanding, the tensions of the former years were mitigated considerably. At the same time the 'Slav Peril' became the most important threat in German perceptions. While during the previous years, England was deemed the primary enemy, accused of encircling Germany under the direction of King Edward VII, it was now Russia and its Slav-brethren who were allegedly challenging Germanism, orchestrated by the Russian ambassador in Paris, Count Iswolsky.

This development was even more important, because the 'Slav Peril' was felt to be more dangerous. The struggle with England was always seen as a lengthy affair with many ups and downs, but time seemed to be on Germany's side. Even after the defeat in the naval race, the maintenance of continental power alongside some colonial compromises with Great Britain was interpreted as a tactical retreat. On the other side, the threat of the 'Slav Peril' was deemed to be imminent, almost inevitable and crucial to German 'Weltpolitik'. Without a rapid solution, a war for life or death was supposed to be unavoidable.<sup>14</sup>

The second important impact of the Balkan Wars was the shifting view in Berlin of the Russian government. Besides naval negotiations with England, Bethmann Hollweg's foreign policy did not follow grand concepts, but tried to establish trusted relations with all powers. The visits of Tsar Nikolaus to Potsdam in 1910 and of Wilhelm to Baltischport in 1912, both accompanied by leading members of their government, established a well-functioning working relationship at governmental level. Bethmann Hollweg and his Russian counterpart, Count Kokowzow, were on good terms with each other, because they shared a similar bureaucratic and pragmatic political style. During the Balkan Wars, however, German trust in the Russian government was challenged not so much by its specific actions but by the doubts about its capability to resist the demands of Pan-Slavism.

The national-liberal *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten* proclaimed that the 'current government representatives pursued a peaceful policy', but 'in the country itself, there is an aggressive mood, which is widespread . . . and blatantly directed against Germany'.<sup>15</sup> The nationalistic *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten* took the same line and emphasized that the

<sup>14</sup> Patrick Bormann, 'Furcht und Angst als Faktoren deutscher Weltpolitik 1897–1914', in Patrick Bormann, Thomas Freiberger and Judith Michel (eds.), *Angst in den Internationalen Beziehungen* (Göttingen: Bonn University Press, 2010), pp. 82–7.

<sup>15</sup> Anon., 'Die auswärtige Lage', *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, 2 April 1913, emphasis in the original.

Pan-Slavism movement 'more than once counteracted the official diplomacy of [Russian Foreign Minister] Sasonow'. A system change in Russia, bringing an aggressive government to power, seemed to be easily conceivable.<sup>16</sup> These concerns were shared by the German government. During the first weeks of the Balkan Wars, Bethmann Hollweg and Foreign Secretary Alfred von Kiderlen-Wächter read every single note about Russia and the Pan-Slav movement with the utmost attention, the more so as they expected a Turkish victory, which could have brought forth public pressure in Russia to leap to the Slav states' defence. Even after the rapid success of the Balkan states and the slight calming of Russian public opinion, German officials remained anxious. Time and again the German ambassador in Russia, Friedrich von Pourtalès, predicted that Pan-Slav public opinion would sweep away the government, if Austria-Hungary interfered in the Balkan struggles. Pourtalès' dispatches shaped the view of the leaders in Berlin and they tried to restrain Vienna.<sup>17</sup> While any active step of Vienna in the Balkans risked a European war, the peaceful defence of Austria's interests also became more difficult.

The importance of this development leads to the third point, the imperial aims of Germany. In the envisioned conflict between Germans and Slavs the former were much less optimistic that they would prevail. While in contrast to Britain Germany could be seen as more dynamic, Russia's great potential was overwhelming and it seemed only a matter of time before the sleeping giant would awake. Even more importantly the 'Slav Peril' threatened the site of Germany's major imperial aim, Asia Minor. The perceived decline of the Ottoman Empire raised both fears and hopes in all of Europe. While each power had its own interests in this area and tried to secure them, they also felt a peaceful outcome was extremely unlikely, so every small event in the orient was closely watched. In Germany officials were prepared to take great risks to secure their own interests. As Baron von Marschall, the former German ambassador in Constantinople, pointed out in 1910, Germany would have to take part, along with the other countries, in the economic opening of the Ottoman provinces. 'If political frictions occur through this process, we must accept them, and be prepared to come to an understanding in individual cases.'<sup>18</sup> In January 1913 Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg warned Lichnowsky, the ambassador in London, not to underestimate

<sup>16</sup> Anon., 'Rückblick', *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten*, 7 April 1913.

<sup>17</sup> See also the contribution of Alma Hannig to this volume (Chapter 13, pp. 235–7).

<sup>18</sup> Marschall to Bethmann Hollweg, 8 November 1910, cited in Gregor Schöllgen, 'Die Großmacht als Weltmacht: Idee, Wirklichkeit und Perzeption deutscher "Weltpolitik" im Zeitalter des Imperialismus', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 248 (1989), p. 90.

these economic matters because they could change into 'political matters of the first order', if a third power tried to alter the status of the Ottoman Empire: 'We would be forced to step in to secure our part of the heritage. Because Germany is not only committed in Asia Minor with hundreds of millions but also with its prestige. That areas which were culturally developed and opened for world traffic by German labour would pass over to other hands cannot be borne by the German people's assertiveness (Volksbewusstsein).'<sup>19</sup> Right after he had taken office, Foreign Secretary Gottlieb von Jagow declared to Wilhelm in 1913, 'he himself would be the first to recommend a war to His Majesty, if anyone tried to infringe German rights in Asia Minor',<sup>20</sup> and he stated the same in his long conversation with the English ambassador Rennell Rodd a few weeks earlier.<sup>21</sup> Time seemed to be running out: after the war between Italy and Turkey, the First Balkan War was the second consecutive and successive attempt to conquer Ottoman lands. Although the Ottoman Empire was able to retake some territories in the Second Balkan War, the collapse of the Empire seemed imminent.

As noted already, the outcome of the Balkan Wars was perceived as an advance of Slavdom at the expense of Austria-Hungary. The dangerous impact of this process on German 'Weltpolitik' lay in the strategic relevance of the Balkans to the German approach to Asia Minor. South-eastern Europe was seen as a bridge to the orient and Austro-Hungarian influence in the area was supposed to pave the way for German dreams. But the rise of the Slav Balkan states, believed to be satellites of Russia, appeared to block access to the orient. Moreover their success in the war against Turkey fuelled desires among Pan-Slavs on both sides of the Austro-Hungarian border, so fears of an irredentist Slav movement emerged in Austria-Hungary as well as in Germany. And last but not least Russia was suspected of exploiting the Armenian matters to initiate the partition of the Ottoman Empire.

In this altered strategic situation the appointment of Gottlieb von Jagow as Foreign Secretary was highly significant. His predecessor, Alfred von

<sup>19</sup> Bethmann Hollweg to Lichnowsky, 27 January 1913, in *GP*, vol. 34/I (*Die Große Politik der Europäischen Kabinette 1871–1914: Sammlung der Diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes*, ed. Johannes Lepsius, Albrecht Mendlssohn Bartholdy and Friedrich Thimme, 40 vols. (Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte, 1922–7), no. 12744, p. 266.

<sup>20</sup> Walter Görlitz (ed.), *Der Kaiser . . . : Aufzeichnungen des Chefs des Marinekabinetts Admiral Georg Alexander von Müller über die Ära Wilhelm II* (Göttingen: Musterschmidt, 1965), p. 202.

<sup>21</sup> Rodd to Grey, 6 January 1913, in *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898–1914* (hereafter *BD*), ed. George P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, 11 vols. (London: HMSO, 1926–38), vol. X, no. 454, p. 660.

Kiderlen-Wächter, was a disciple of the Realpolitik of Otto von Bismarck, even if in his mind imperial aims ranked higher. Kiderlen was an experienced and highly valued diplomat, although his capabilities were overestimated as the Second Moroccan Crisis had shown. However, during the first month of the Balkan Wars he proved himself adept in handling the diplomatic initiatives to avoid a general war. After Kiderlen's death, Jagow was the only candidate for the post apart from Undersecretary of State Arthur Zimmermann. Unlike Kiderlen's general conception, in which Russia was only a minor issue, Jagow's foreign policy was shaped by fear of the eastern neighbour. At least from the Bosnian Crisis of 1909 Jagow warned of a possible Russian advance on the Balkans. He observed a reorientation of Russian policy to the Peninsula after the defeat against Japan and stated: 'That Russia can never lose track of far-reaching schemes on the Balkans – maybe a confederation of Slav states, whose natural protector would be the czar, maybe to step in as the successor of Constantinople – is in her history.'<sup>22</sup> In the following year Jagow warned against a 'predominance of Pan-Slavism on the Balkans'.<sup>23</sup> The secretary of state felt himself proven correct by the events of the Balkan Wars and he despaired over the way he believed Italy was underestimating the Russian threat. Rome was only anxious, Jagow stated, that Austria-Hungary would establish itself in Valona or Durazzo. The possible establishment of a Balkan state seemed less alarming to the Italians: 'For local average minds it is too extensive a notion, that Russia as the protector of Slavdom is behind it and that Russia could expand its sphere of interest to a critical extent for Italy.'<sup>24</sup> And when the Italian Prime Minister Giovanni Giolitti criticized Austria for making the case of a Serbian port on the Adriatic a matter of war and peace, Jagow declared: 'Slavdom, and Russia behind it, has in my opinion no right to thrust out one of its tentacles to the Adriatic.'<sup>25</sup>

Unfortunately – as far as we know – Jagow never formulated a comprehensive memorandum of his view on foreign politics during his days as a diplomat. The most extensive statement was his post-war book 'Causes and Outbreak of the World War',<sup>26</sup> but even here the remarks are strikingly superficial. Jagow's depiction of prewar European policy was a mixture of realpolitik in the tradition of Bismarck, imperialistic thinking of the Wilhelmine era and racial stereotypes, similar to the convictions of

<sup>22</sup> Jagow to Bethmann Hollweg, 19 November 1909, in *GP*, vol. 27/I, no. 9889, p. 427.

<sup>23</sup> Jagow to Bethmann Hollweg, 17 February 1910, PA AA (Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes), R 14345.

<sup>24</sup> Jagow to Bethmann Hollweg, 13 November 1912, in *GP*, vol. 33, no. 12382, p. 343.

<sup>25</sup> Jagow to Bethmann Hollweg, 27 November 1912, in *GP*, vol. 33, no. 12460, p. 432.

<sup>26</sup> Gottlieb von Jagow, *Ursachen und Ausbruch des Weltkrieges* (Berlin: Hobbing, 1919).



the prewar radical right in Germany. What stitches them together is the focus on the Russian peril. Tellingly, Jagow began with a lengthy description of the German-Russian relationship during the nineteenth century. Referring to Bismarck, he characterized the Russian-German friendship as a matter of self-interest. Jagow declared the German-Austrian alliance to be the watershed because of the antagonism between Vienna and St Petersburg, which 'had to become always more acute with the rise of the Pan-Slav idea'.<sup>27</sup> It is noteworthy that Jagow used racial stereotypes almost exclusively for analysing the situation in south-east Europe and the conflict between Germany and Austria and Russia. Perhaps the most significant example was Jagow's explanation for the so-called 'blank cheque' to Austria in July 1914: 'A gradual decomposition of Austria, a subjugation of the whole Slavdom under Russian hegemony had to strongly endanger the situation of the German race in Central Europe and our interests. A morally weakened Austria, collapsing under the advance of Russian Pan-Slavism would not be an ally to count on.'<sup>28</sup> Jagow held the antagonism of Slavdom and Germandom responsible for the First World War: 'All great catastrophes of world history have their deeper reasons. In this case it was the antagonism of the Slav against the German world, which, preparing itself for a long time, and being delayed for a long time, resulted in the clash. That the latter, despite the victories of arms ("Waffensiege") over Russia, despite the crash of the Czardom, now, bleeding from deep wounds as well, is laying low, that now Russian Bolshevik armies, Poles, Czechs, Southslavs are pressing forward, trying to grab areas of Germanic Kultur ("Kulturgebiete"), was the fault of our Anglo-Saxon cousins.'<sup>29</sup>

The war radicalized Jagow's racial interpretations, but they were not unusual for him in prewar years. In a conversation with Rodd on 6 January 1913, just before he took his post at the *Auswärtiges Amt*, Jagow tried to build bridges by emphasizing the racial relationship between the two countries: 'He believes wholly and only in the Germanic stock. He does not think the unadulterated Slav will ever have the dominion – he lacks what he calls the "staatsbildender Geist", the qualities essential to the vital maintenance of the State. He thinks the Russian Empire would have been nowhere without the virtues of the non-Slav element in the Baltic provinces and the dynasty of the Romanows; and he holds that the Latin nations have mostly run their course and that their mentality is too different for the Germanic nations ever to be permanently associated with them. The assimilative Germanic nations have learned much from them and are able to put what they have learned to profitable use.' Immediately

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.      <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.      <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.



after this geopolitical analysis with a racial twist, Jagow claimed that 'it ought not to be impossible for England and Germany to clear up their misunderstandings'.<sup>30</sup> Apparently the racial relationship between the two powers was, in Jagow's opinion, a positive factor that could support a policy of détente.

This conversation illustrates the importance of racial stereotypes in Jagow's thinking, even though it should be stressed that this was only one facet of the way in which he framed international politics. With the appointment of Jagow as secretary of foreign affairs these patterns gained influence on German foreign policy on Balkan matters. This was possible because Bethmann Hollweg not only gave Jagow a free hand in the conduct but also widely shared the attitude of his secretary, though he was less dogmatic. His best-known remark on a Germanic-Slav antagonism may be his explanation of the German army bill in the Reichstag in April 1913. Although he did not consider a clash of Slavdom and Germanism inevitable, he said: 'If it ever comes to a European conflagration confronting Slavs and Germans, it will be a disadvantage that the role of Turkey in the system of counterweights is now substituted partly by the South-Slav states'.<sup>31</sup> Even if the conflict of races did not cause a war on its own, Bethmann Hollweg declared it to be well known that 'the Pan-Slav movement . . . was mightily promoted by the victories of the Balkan states'.<sup>32</sup> Bethmann Hollweg's advocacy of such a Prussian policy towards the Polish minority as 'to avoid the danger of a future Slavization of the East German mark'<sup>33</sup> in his time as interior secretary of Prussia has been almost entirely missed by historians so far. During the First World War the chancellor explained the objectives of this policy by stating it to be imperative 'to strengthen the German element, so it would not be eaten up by the fertile Polish race'.<sup>34</sup> Better known are his remarks noted by his aide Kurt Riezler during the July crisis, in which Bethmann Hollweg also repeatedly mentioned the Russian peril and the dangerous Pan-Slavism.

<sup>30</sup> Rodd to Grey, 6 January 1913, in *BD*, vol. X, no. 454, p. 660; see Thomas Otte, 'Détente 1914: Sir William Tyrell's Secret Mission to Germany', *Historical Journal*, 56, 1 (2013), pp. 175–204.

<sup>31</sup> Bethmann Hollweg, 7 April 1913, in *SBRT* (*Verhandlungen des Reichstags, Stenographische Berichte*, Berlin: Verlag der Buchdruckerei der Norddeutschen Allgemeinen Zeitung, 1871–1939), vol. 289, pp. 4512–13.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4513.

<sup>33</sup> Meeting of the Prussian state ministry, 31 March 1906, GStA PK (Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz), I. HA Rep. 90a B III 2 b no. 6, fiche nos. 908–9; vol. 152 1906, fols. 142–85.

<sup>34</sup> Meeting of the 8th Federal Council for Foreign Affairs, 30 October 1916, HStA (Hauptstaatsarchiv) Stuttgart, NL Weizsäcker, Q 1/18, Bü. 48

Therefore Bethmann Hollweg did not oppose the new strategy in handling Balkan matters, which Jagow implemented on taking office, although it was an important shift in the methods of German foreign politics: for the first time German diplomats developed and tried to precipitate a system of alliances based essentially on racial stereotypes. Just like the interpretation of the outcome of the Balkan Wars as a Slav advance, Jagow's new concept of an Anti-Slav-Balkan Bloc was not free of contradictions. He wanted to bind the non-Slav states, Greece and Romania, to the Austro-German alliance, but this scenario also included an understanding with Serbia, the most distinct opponent of Austria. Besides economic interests in Serbia the main reason for this plan was the good terms Serbia was on with the must-have states of the intended Anti-Slav-Balkan Bloc, Greece and Romania. Of course, Vienna did not agree with German demands for such a rapprochement and preferred an alliance with Bulgaria. But the latter had just fought a war with Greece and Romania, so it was hardly probable that these three states could come to an agreement.

This is not the place for a detailed description of the diplomatic situation on the Balkans, merely to note that Jagow's conception failed entirely. However, the plan of an Anti-Slav-Balkan-Bloc as such demonstrates the importance of racial stereotypes for German policy-making in the Balkans. The German government and especially Jagow considered the Balkan matters almost exclusively in the light of competition with Russia and the Slavs. In Jagow's view, the main task for the foreign policy of Austria-Hungary and Germany was 'to work against the Slavic flood and the Russian influence' in the Balkans.<sup>35</sup> He was highly sceptical towards Bulgaria, because he believed Sofia to be under the control of St Petersburg after asking for mediation at the end of the Second Balkan War.<sup>36</sup> The foreign secretary also anxiously observed Russian efforts to separate Romania – still partner of the Triple Alliance – from Germany and Austria-Hungary.<sup>37</sup> But he thought it could be possible to win over Greece and he warned Vienna not to alienate Athens, because Greece 'could serve well in breaking up the Slav wave'.<sup>38</sup> Obviously he appreciated ongoing discussions between Greece and Romania as a

<sup>35</sup> Jagow to Berchtold, 23 March 1913, in *GP*, vol. 34/II, no. 13012, p. 549; for the Austro-Hungarian view, see Hannig's chapter in this volume ([Chapter 13](#), pp. 239–48).

<sup>36</sup> Note from Jagow, 11 May 1913, in *GP*, vol. 34/II, no. 13292, p. 826; for an example of this scepticism, see Jagow to Tschirschky, 1 August 1913, in *GP*, vol. 35, no. 13700, p. 328.

<sup>37</sup> Note from Jagow, 11 May 1913, in *GP*, vol. 34/II, no. 13292, p. 826.

<sup>38</sup> Jagow to Tschirschky, 14 March 1913, in *GP*, vol. 34/II, no. 12965, p. 492. Jagow repeated the metaphor of a 'Slav wave' a few days later: for example, Jagow to Tschirschky, 17 March 1913, in *GP*, vol. 34/II, no. 12982, p. 516.

further understanding of non-Slav Balkan states. An alliance between Greece and Turkey was also interpreted by him to be an advance for anti-Slav politics, although those states were divided by their quarrels regarding several islands. Jagow was nonetheless convinced that Greece was 'in an antagonism with Slavdom'<sup>39</sup> and therefore would drift towards Constantinople.

This new approach caused many problems for German politics. First of all, the idea of reorganizing the Balkans and creating a new strategy for the whole of Southeastern Europe was entirely inappropriate. It missed the crucial point of the actual developments on the Peninsula. The movement of the young Balkan states was about nationalism rather than race. This was most obviously the case for the leading Slav powers Serbia and Bulgaria, which were emphatic opponents. Of course Pan-Slavism was a vociferous movement that could cause troubles during international crises, but every attempt to establish transnational Pan-Slav organizations either failed from the start or gained only marginal support. Because the Balkan states pursued national interests, looking for both money to develop their countries and support for further expansion, rather than racial matters, Jagow's hopes that the Balkan states would more or less divide themselves along racial lines failed. The contradictions were too plentiful. This starts with Austria-Hungary. It had neither the ability nor the will to implement a racist policy, which undoubtedly would have ignited nationalist resistance among its Slav population; Romania leaned towards Russia rather than Austria-Hungary because it had an eye on Hungarian Transylvania; and Greece had to secure its long coastline and its numerous islands and therefore could not oppose the naval power of England. It was simply a concept that did not fit the circumstances.

It was even more fateful that the emphasis of race in the south-east European context increased the fear of Russia and Pan-Slavism and at the same time decreased the options to work out the problem. The perceived antagonism of race was an everlasting conflict, which at best could be contained temporarily, but never permanently solved. Neither Bethmann Hollweg nor Jagow ever really thought about a comprehensive understanding with Russia or an attempt to create a consensual new order on the Balkans. Of course, both would have been very difficult to achieve, perhaps impossible. Although the Russian government did not pursue a Pan-Slav policy, St Petersburg nevertheless followed a risky policy regarding the Straits. During the July crisis this led Russia to accept

<sup>39</sup> See Jagow to Tschirschky, 6 April 1913, in *GP*, vol. 34/II, no. 13091, p. 624.

the German challenge and took its share in the escalation.<sup>40</sup> However, to rule out any possibility of a future European system including a durable understanding with Russia left a substantial *détente* with England as the only option to improve Germany's position in Europe significantly. But although the relationship with London improved during the Balkan Wars, so that former tensions diminished considerably, it was highly unlikely that Great Britain would risk its relationship with Russia and France in favour of Germany. The negotiations for a naval agreement between St Petersburg and London in spring 1914, well known in Berlin, clouded the prospects for German foreign politics considerably.

The Balkan Wars were crucial for the development of German analyses of the prewar situation. They caused a massive increase in worries and fears of Russia and Slavdom in public opinion and in German foreign policy. The appointment of Gottlieb von Jagow intensified these tendencies even more. In turn they had a determining impact on the decision-making in July 1914. The diaries of Bethmann Hollweg's aide Kurt Riezler are full of the chancellor's fear of Russia, whose military power he observed to be growing so fast that the situation would soon be 'unsustainable'. 'The future is with Russia, which is growing and growing and is laying itself down on us like a nightmare.' Simultaneously, Austria appeared to him 'to become invariably weaker and is more inflexible; the undermining from North and Southeast well advanced'.<sup>41</sup> Once again, Bethmann Hollweg pointed out the increasing demands of Russia and its enormous explosive power. And after considering some theoretical solutions to the current crisis he concluded that an understanding with Russia would be very expensive: 'It has become too mighty and just has to concur with Pan-Slavism for internal reasons as a counterweight to the revolutionary movements.'<sup>42</sup>

This perception of the political situation in Southeast Europe was undoubtedly an important factor in the German decision-making of July 1914 and it emerged above all during the Balkan Wars. But as I pointed out, this development was not entirely new. The idea of a German-Slav clash had been widespread among the radical right long before the quarrels on the Balkans started and the early use of racial stereotypes can also be demonstrated for German officials and even for Bethmann Hollweg. The Balkan Wars were the pivotal point, when racial interpretations

<sup>40</sup> See Ronald Park Bobroff, *Roads to Glory: Late Imperial Russia and the Turkish Straits* (London: Tauris, 2006); Sean McMeekin, *The Russian Origins of the First World War* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

<sup>41</sup> Kurt Riezler, *Tagebücher, Aufsätze, Dokumente*, intro. and ed. Karl Dietrich Erdmann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972), pp. 182–3.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

became common at least in the parties which supported the government and in the government itself. In fact, the German government's feeling of anxiety was authentic, even if Berlin knew how to exploit the idea of a Germanic-Slav antagonism to justify the army bill of 1913 or to make the 'Burgfrieden' of 1914.<sup>43</sup> The straight answer of the analyses of the eastern developments was the creation of an anti-Slav policy in order to defend interests in the Ottoman Empire and to push back the perceived Slav wave. The frontline along the German-Slav 'battlespace' and the conditions for a staged racial war in the East during the First World War, and more so during the Second World War, were set.

<sup>43</sup> Patrick Bormann, *Die 'Slawische Gefahr' – Das außenpolitische Jahr 1913 in seiner Bedeutung für die deutsche Vorkriegspolitik*, in Philippe Alexandre and Reiner Marcowitz (eds.), *L'Allemagne en 1913: culture mémorielle et culture d'avant-guerre. Deutschland im Jahre 1913: Erinnerungs- und Vorkriegskultur* (Nancy: Presses Universitaires de Nancy, 2013), pp. 397–416.

## 15 Entente diplomacy *v.* détente, 1911–1914

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*T. G. Otte*

Historians are wont to treat the concatenation of crises centring on the Balkans peninsula in the years prior to the First World War as a precursor to that conflict itself. The argument that the two were connected has been advanced in various different guises. To some scholars the crises and wars in that troubled region were a dress rehearsal for the events of 1914; for others, the July crisis was a regional crisis that escalated into a continental conflict.

The argument advanced here is of a different kind. Underpinning it are two distinct, though linked, insights. The first of these is philosophical in nature. It posits that all historical situations are open, their outcome not predetermined. The practical consequence for the student of the 'wars before the war' is that these conflicts ought to be seen on their own terms, and not as a series of beads threaded together to make a chain with the bead marked '1914' at its centre – in a more frivolous mood one might say with Ranke that all crises are equal to God. It is by examining the pre-1914 crises in their own specific contexts that any broader ramifications for Great Powers relations can be identified.

The second consideration concerns the meaning of international crises. As a phenomenon of international relations they have always exercised a macabre fascination on scholars of international relations. This is not to be wondered at. Crises are 'international politics in microcosm'; they tend to force out into the open a host of factors and processes that shape international relations: '[I]n a crisis they tend to leap out at the observer, to be combined in a revealing way, and to be sharply focused on a single, well-defined issue.'<sup>1</sup> It is, perhaps, the conceit of International Relations theorists to assume that Great Power politics can be reduced to one single issue. But this does not weaken the general argument about the heuristic value of crises for the purposes of historical analysis. In the broader sweep of international history, crises mark moments of

<sup>1</sup> G. Snyder, 'Crisis Bargaining', in C. F. Hermann (ed.), *International Crises: Insights from Behavioural Research* (London: Free Press, 1972), p. 127.

readjustment in Great Power relations. Their study, then, repays in more ways than one. The process of readjustment reveals much about the relative position of each of the Powers within the wider constellation of the Great Powers. Throughout the long nineteenth century, the crisis behaviour of the Powers was characterised by attempts to moderate and reconcile the two diverging objectives of avoiding war while obtaining a competitive advantage over the others, the threat of conflict being central to all crisis diplomacy. The ‘wars before the war’, then, are useful in identifying the evolving crisis management tools and strategies employed by the chancelleries of Europe. But they allow also for delineating the continuities and, more especially, the discontinuities between the conflicts before 1914.

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In the aftermath of the Agadir crisis further international turmoil was widely anticipated by British diplomats. Once a Franco-German settlement hove into view, an Italian move against Tripoli was expected.<sup>2</sup> The Italo-Turkish War was nevertheless a source of international complications. ‘The whole world seems topsy-turvy’, complained Sir Arthur Nicolson, the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office.<sup>3</sup> Some British diplomats, such as Sir Rennell Rodd, the ambassador at Rome, welcomed it as an opportunity to reshape Mediterranean politics: ‘With Egypt on one side and [French] Tunis on the other the good will of England and France will be of paramount importance to her [Italy]. The bidding for Italian friendship at the international auction may have to be rapid.’<sup>4</sup>

Prising Italy away from the *Dreibund*, however, was precisely what Sir Edward Grey and the Foreign Office wished to avoid; in this British policy had been consistent for a number of years. If Italy ever left the alliance, ‘it would open up possibilities of other combinations which might prove more dangerous than those actually existent’.<sup>5</sup> More especially, it was feared that Italy’s abandoning of the combination with the two Germanic Powers would force the latter to secure their interests in the East in concert with Russia, the spectre of a reconstituted *Dreikaiserbund* having haunted policy-makers in London since the

<sup>2</sup> Rodd to Grey (private), 4 September 1911, Rennell of Rodd Mss., Bodleian Library, Oxford, box 14.

<sup>3</sup> Nicolson to Rodd (private), 20 December 1911, *ibid.*; see also R. Bosworth, ‘Britain and Italy’s Acquisition of the Dodecanese, 1912–1915’, *Historical Journal*, 8, 4 (1970), pp. 683–705.

<sup>4</sup> Rodd to Grey (private), 4 September 1911, Rennell of Rodd Mss., box 14.

<sup>5</sup> Min. Hardinge, n. d., on Egerton to Grey, 22 March 1909, FO 371/683/11613.

1880s. In this respect, Italy was the key to the current constellation of the Powers. Italy, Grey had concluded in 1909, 'is best as she is – an ally of Germany by Treaty, with a strong leaning to friendship with us & France'.<sup>6</sup> The status quo also had the decided advantage that '[t]he Italians will, owing to their inherent weakness, always be an excellent drag on the two Central European Powers'.<sup>7</sup>

There was no denying, however, that Italy's Tripolitanian adventure had potentially far-reaching ramifications. Not the least danger was the spreading of the conflict to the Ottoman dominions in the Balkans: 'with the French occupation of Morocco and the Italian annexation of Tripoli, and above all, the seizure of the [Aegean] islands, the whole balance of power in those seas is becoming radically altered', noted Nicolson.<sup>8</sup> This had implications for wider European politics, but also for Admiralty plans to redistribute Royal Navy vessels from the Mediterranean to home waters.<sup>9</sup> To an extent, the Italo-Turkish War thus sharpened Foreign Office thinking about the need for a naval arrangement with France, which ultimately resulted in Anglo-French notes in November 1912.<sup>10</sup>

In the Balkans, meanwhile, '[t]hings [were] naturally kaleidoscopic'.<sup>11</sup> Already before the conflict erupted, Grey had established the broad parameters of British diplomacy. Given Britain's strategic interests in the Eastern Mediterranean, non-intervention was not a viable option. Yet exclusive action by the entente powers was equally fraught with risk.<sup>12</sup> If anything, Grey refused to move without the two Germanic powers.

<sup>6</sup> Min. Grey, n. d., on Rodd to Grey (no. 47), 14 February 1909, FO 371/599/6296; for some of this see also my "'Makeweight in the Balance": Italian Diplomatic Documents, 1893–5', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 11, 3 (2001), pp. 272–7.

<sup>7</sup> Hardinge to Rodd (private), 12 November 1909, Hardinge Mss., Cambridge University Library, vol. 17. London had known of the 1902 agreement in its outlines since 1907, see min. Orde, n. d., on tel. Rodd to Grey (no. 150), 12 November 1912, FO 371/1384/46542.

<sup>8</sup> Nicolson to De Bunsen, 29 May 1912, De Bunsen Mss., Bod., box 15.

<sup>9</sup> Memo. Crowe, 'Effects of a British Evacuation of the Mediterranean on Questions of Foreign Policy', 8 May 1912, FO 371/1560/19598. For further discussion of the Mediterranean situation, see K. Neilson, "'Greatly Exaggerated": The Myth of the Decline of Great Britain before 1914', *International History Review*, 12, 4 (1991), pp. 703–5.

<sup>10</sup> For the notes, see Grey to Cambon (private), 22 November 1912, *BD*, vol. X/II, no. 416; also P. G. Halperin, *The Mediterranean Situation, 1908–1914* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 90–109; H. I. Lee, 'Mediterranean Strategy and Anglo-French Relations, 1908–1912', *Mariner's Mirror*, 57, 3 (1971), pp. 267–85; Hilda Lee, 'The Grey – Cambon Exchange of 22 November 1912: A Note on the Documents', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 46, 113 (1973), pp. 115–18.

<sup>11</sup> Lowther to Nicolson (private), 16 October 1912, Lowther Mss., FO 800/193B; E. C. Thaden, *Russia and the Balkan Alliance of 1912* (University Park PA: Penn State University Press, 1966), pp. 99–108; R. C. Hall, *The Balkan Wars, 1912–1913: Prelude to the First World War* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 9–18.

<sup>12</sup> Tel. Grey to Buchanan (no. 508), 9 July 1913, *BD*, vol. IX/I, no. 547.



Isolated action made it more likely that Vienna and St Petersburg would fall out. In that case, 'we, and . . . the French also, would have to consider the lengths to which we would be prepared to go in support of Russia'.<sup>13</sup> It was also with this prospect in mind that Grey hoped that the three Powers would be 'on the best of terms with Germany without losing touch with each other or impairing the confidence which exists between us'.<sup>14</sup>

Grey's object, then, was a direct Austro-Russian settlement. In turn, this required Germany's cooperation. For without it Vienna would cleave more resolutely to the German alliance. In this manner, Grey hoped to contain the risk of a Great Power conflagration, and at the same time to loosen the internal cohesion of the existing groupings. The two were linked and were meant to facilitate cooperation among the Powers.

Such a strategy was not without problems, however. For one thing, Grey consistently overestimated Austria-Hungary's dependence on Germany; for another, he was reluctant to offend the remaining moderate elements in the Turkish government.<sup>15</sup> Finally, Russia's role in the formation of the Balkan League had left an unpleasant impression.<sup>16</sup> It certainly complicated matters; and there was already a growing conviction among senior diplomats that a clash between two regional Great Powers was likely. Impressed by Russia's recent military revival and the size of her 'reserve-power', Sir Fairfax Cartwright, the ambassador at Vienna, prognosticated that 'when the day of action comes . . . Austria [will] act promptly and without hesitation'. He sketched a likely European crisis scenario arising from further Balkan complications that bore an uncanny resemblance to what was to occur in July 1914. Cartwright was by no means unsympathetic to Austria-Hungary's regional predicament. Serbia's provocative stance, after all, ran counter to the accepted norms of European politics: 'a Great Power cannot allow herself to be annoyed by the anarchy prevailing in, or by the inflated ambitions of, a small neighbouring country'. The greatest danger, however, was that 'people in Russia may lose their heads and . . . may commit themselves by the assumption of an attitude of menace towards Austria from which Russia will find it very difficult to withdraw peacefully without the loss

<sup>13</sup> Grey to Bertie (no. 53, confidential), 3 February 1912, FO 371/1490; R. J. Crampton, 'The Balkans, 1909–1914', in F. H. Hinsley (ed.), *British Foreign Policy under Sir Edward Grey* (Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 257–8.

<sup>14</sup> Grey to Goschen (private), 13 May 1912, *BD*, vol. VI, no. 584.

<sup>15</sup> See min. Mallet, n.d., on Lowther to Grey (no. 521, confidential), 30 July 1910, FO 371/1012/28546; T. G. Otte, "'Knavery or Folly?': The British Official Mind and the Habsburg Monarchy, 1856–1914", in Otte and L. Höbelt (eds.), *A Living Anachronism? European Diplomacy and the Habsburg Monarchy: Festschrift für Francis Roy Bridge* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2010), pp. 150–3.

<sup>16</sup> Onslow to Paget (private and secret), 26 July 1912, Paget Mss., BL, Add. Mss. 51253.

of dignity'. Cartwright therefore suggested sounding out Sazonov as to the extent of Russian support for 'Servian pretensions'. In this way, it would be possible to steer diplomacy's fragile craft between the Scylla of a diplomatic defeat for Russia, with all the incalculable consequences that this might entail, and the Charybdis of a descent into war owing to Anglo-French hesitation at the outset of any Balkan conflict.<sup>17</sup>

Although Grey and his officials were only imperfectly informed of the Balkan League, they deplored it for removing the restraints that mutual jealousy had previously placed on the Balkan states. Grey also deprecated St Petersburg's active encouragement of the alliance: 'We shall have to keep out of this and what I fear is that Russia may resent our doing so... On the other hand Russia will resent still more our attempting to restrain her now in a matter that she would at this stage say did not concern us.'<sup>18</sup> As indications of likely Balkan complications increased in number and intensity throughout the summer of 1912, Grey stuck to this position.

Grey was reluctant to endorse Berchtold's idea of coercing Turkey to implement further reforms, but he supported joint action by the Powers. Maintaining the Concert of Europe was the best means of preventing an open Austro-Russian split. For that reason he also rejected Raymond Poincaré's scheme for a naval demonstration off the Turkish Straits.<sup>19</sup> Any such move by France and Russia, with Britain in tow, would reinforce the impression of a Europe divided into two camps. He therefore supported Vienna and St Petersburg when they, for once, agreed on a joint note to the Sublime Porte on 8 October 1912, some misgivings over its wording notwithstanding.<sup>20</sup> The move came too late, of course, Montenegro having declared war on Turkey on that same day and the remaining Balkan Leaguers following her lead on 18 October. Hostilities ended as abruptly as they had begun. By the end of the month, apart from the besieged outposts of Adrianople, Janina and Scutari, Ottoman power in Europe had collapsed. For Britain, the precise cartographical rearrangement of the Turkish jigsaw was 'somewhat of a detail'. The main problem was the intense Austro-Russian rivalry and the threat of escalation this entailed.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Cartwright to Nicolson, 27 August 1912, Cartwright Mss., Northamptonshire Record Office, Northampton, C(A) 45; S. R. Williamson, *Austria-Hungary and the Origins of the First World War* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), pp. 100–22.

<sup>18</sup> Min. Grey, 15 April 1912, FO 371/1493.

<sup>19</sup> Tel. Grey to Bertie (no. 445), 25 September 1912, *BD*, vol. IX/I, no. 745; cf. Berchtold to Thurn (no. 3564), 29 August 1912, *ÖUA*, vol. IV, no. 3744.

<sup>20</sup> Tel. Grey to Bertie (no. 510), 6 October 1912, *BD*, vol. IX/I, no. 781.

<sup>21</sup> Nicolson to Rodd, 30 November 1912, Rennell of Rodd Mss., box 14.

The incipient regional antagonism between the Habsburg and Romanov Empires, then, shaped British calculations. Another factor that mattered was the recent improvement in Anglo-German relations. As the naval antagonism had begun to wane, so London and Berlin gradually gravitated towards each other, and this seemed to improve the chances of maintaining general peace, even if it came to localised conflict in south-eastern Europe. On the eve of the Balkan War, at Grey's instigation, his private secretary, Sir William Tyrrell, sounded out Richard von Kühlmann of the German embassy about the prospects for cooperation between the two governments.<sup>22</sup> Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg reciprocated in kind and impressed upon the British chargé d'affaires at Berlin that 'these Balkan troubles might be of some use in that respect'.<sup>23</sup> The talks between Grey and the German embassy need not be explored in depth here. Suffice it to say that both sides agreed to continue their confidential exchanges with a view to strengthening Anglo-German cooperation in the Balkans. That Grey was firmly committed to such cooperation may be deduced from his assurances to Lichnowsky that he would approach the other Powers only after agreement was reached with Berlin.<sup>24</sup>

Against this background Grey advanced his scheme for an informal ambassadorial conference to agree a new regional settlement.<sup>25</sup> Significant in the context of the 'wars before the war' is Grey's aim of containing the Austro-Russian antagonism within the framework of a revived Concert. For this to work, close cooperation with Germany was essential. There were nevertheless potential tensions between the two objectives. Lest the unity of the Powers be disrupted, Grey rejected isolated Anglo-German initiatives, for instance, on Turkey's evacuation of Adrianople and later Scutari, or the Bulgaro-Romanian dispute in early 1913.<sup>26</sup> For Grey that unity was 'the anchor by which we must hold to preserve peace'.<sup>27</sup>

This was sensible enough, but difficult to put into practice. At Paris pessimistic voices grew louder: '[t]here are many Frenchmen who think that war is inevitable within the next two years and that it might be

<sup>22</sup> Kühlmann to Bethmann Hollweg (no. 969), 15 October 1912, *GP*, vol. 33, no. 12284.

<sup>23</sup> Granville to Grey (no. 454, very confidential), 19 October 1912, FO 371/1371.

<sup>24</sup> Kühlmann to Bethmann Hollweg (no. 969), 15 October 1912, *GP*, vol. 33, no. 12284; for the implications, see T. G. Otte, 'Détente 1914: Sir William Tyrrell's Secret Mission to Germany', *Historical Journal*, 56, 1 (2013), pp. 175–207.

<sup>25</sup> For the French perspective on the origins of the conference, see Kießling's contribution to this volume ([Chapter 16](#), pp. 285–7).

<sup>26</sup> E. C. Helmreich, *The Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1938), pp. 269–78.

<sup>27</sup> Grey to Goschen (no. 120), 12 April 1913, FO 371/1770.

better for France to have it soon'.<sup>28</sup> French diplomacy was certainly less inclined now to restrain Russia; if anything the reverse was the case.<sup>29</sup>

As for the Balkans, the region's ancient feuds had not staled the infinite variety of its politics and their ability to spring unpleasant surprises on the Great Powers. The stand-off between Montenegro and the Powers over the fate of Scutari in April–May 1913 revealed the potential fault-line in Grey's policy, his lack of influence over Russia. There were now grave risks involved, Grey ruminated at the height of the crisis, in acting 'against the wishes of Russia and [in] separating ourselves from France at a moment when it seems most necessary that we should keep in close touch with her and Russia'.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, by this stage, Grey exchanged views with the French and Russian ambassadors before he met Lichnowsky.<sup>31</sup> It would be tempting to conclude that Grey attached greater importance to preserving the entente than to the unity of the Powers. But this would mean missing an important point. For the two objectives were connected. Without Anglo-German cooperation, Vienna's restraint could not be counted on; without coordination with France and Russia, the latter's policy could not be moderated. It was for that reason that Grey had cooperated with France and Russia on previous occasions in diverse Balkan questions which were of little intrinsic interest to Britain.<sup>32</sup> The challenge was to balance these competing demands. His ability to do so had been the key to his success so far. Ultimately, Grey hoped to be able to avoid having to choose between the two. But there can be no doubt that he was fully alive to the inherent risks of his policy.

Concern about Russian recklessness was in the ascendant in London. Following Turkey's rapid military collapse at the turn 1912/13 there was now the risk that Russia, 'running after success of prestige rather than

<sup>28</sup> Bertie to Grey (private), 3 March 1913, Bertie Mss., FO 800/166. Grey reacted swiftly, impressing upon Bertie that '[i]f France is aggressive to Germany there will be no support from Great Britain', vice versa (private), 4 March 1913, *ibid.* 'It was curious to find that Castelnau is in favour of a war now as being a good opportunity, France Russia being ready, Austria in a state of confusion. Germany unwilling', Wilson diary, 13 February 1913, IWM, DS/MISC/80. C. E. Callwell (ed.), *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: His Life and Diaries*, 2 vols. (London: Cassell, 1927), vol. I, p. 122).

<sup>29</sup> Poincaré to Izvolsky, 16 November 1912, *DDF* (3) vol. 4, no. 468; Izvolsky to Sazonov, 17 November 1912, *Internationale Beziehungen im Zeitalter des Imperialismus*, series 3, vol. 4/I, no. 258.

<sup>30</sup> Partially reproduced in *BD*, vol. IX/II, no. 920. The minister-resident at Cetinje later reflected that Montenegro was stung into action by Austria's perceived passivity and the rapid Serbian advance into Albania, De Salis to Grey (no. 13), 10 March 1914, FO 371/2041/14874.

<sup>31</sup> Grey to Bertie (no. 292), 28 April 1913, FO 371/1771.

<sup>32</sup> For instance in the question of the Danube-Adriatic railway project, see min. Grey, n. d., on Serb note, 8 February 1911, FO 371/1244/4958.

success of real interests', would opt for 'independent action'. Relations between Vienna and St Petersburg were deteriorating steadily, and the risk of escalation was significant:

Servia will some day set Europe by the ears and bring about a universal war on the Continent . . . [T]he Serbs may lose their heads and do something aggressive against the Dual Monarchy which will compel the latter to put the screws on Servia . . . [The situation] may be compared to a certain extent to the trouble we had to suffer through the hostile attitude formally assumed against us by the Transvaal Republic under the guiding hand of Germany. It will be lucky if Europe succeeds in avoiding a war as a result of the present crisis.<sup>33</sup>

Grey's concert diplomacy was not only meant to contain the Austro-Russian antagonism; it was also designed to tackle the wider fall-out of the collapse of Ottoman power, now seemingly on the cards. Turkey's complete military collapse in late 1912 seemed to vindicate earlier prognostications of such an eventuality.<sup>34</sup> Certainly, the Prime Minister, Herbert Henry Asquith, had no confidence in Turkey's long-term survival, though he accepted that its preservation was a short-term requirement.<sup>35</sup>

This was all the more necessary as the death throes of the Ottoman Empire had the potential to destabilise British rule in the Near East and Central Asia. '[A]s the great Mussulman Power', the demise of Osmanli rule could not be a matter of indifference for Britain.<sup>36</sup> Nicolson feared a general implosion of the Turkish Empire, followed by a wider war of the Ottoman succession. The 'various non-Turkish races in Asia' were likely to rise up, leading to 'a general welter in Asia and a consequent scramble among European Powers over the débris of that Empire, and it would be surprising if we got through all this liquidation of the Ottoman Empire without some collision among the Great Powers themselves'.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Cartwright to Nicolson, 31 January 1913, Nicolson Mss., FO 800/363.

<sup>34</sup> See Lowther to Nicolson (private), 14 November [1912], Lowther Mss., FO 800/193B; R. A. Bobroff, *Roads to Glory: Late Imperial Russia and the Turkish Straits* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), pp. 46–52.

<sup>35</sup> Asquith to George V, 9 July 1913, CAB 41/31/25.

<sup>36</sup> Bertie to Nicolson (private), 8 November 1912, Bertie Mss., BL, Add. Mss. 63030. This was a subtext of policy discussions, see also Rumbold to father, 10 November 1912, Rumbold Mss., Bod., MS Rumbold dep. 15; for insightful comments on the issue of prestige and the fear of an Islamic revolt before 1914, see also D. French, 'The Dardanelles, Mecca and Kut: Prestige as a Factor in British Eastern Strategy, 1914–1916', *War & Society*, 5, 1 (1987), here pp. 48–51.

<sup>37</sup> Nicolson to Cartwright, 17 March 1913, Cartwright Mss., C(A) 42; also Nicolson to De Bunsen (private), 8 May 1913, De Bunsen Mss., box 15.

Managing the fall-out of Turkey's collapse was likely to be beset with difficulties. Bertie pointed an accusing finger at Russia, whose policy it was 'to bleed Turkey' and to prevent her reorganisation 'in order that she may in future be at the mercy of Russia'. Britain, he advised, should give Russia plainly to understand 'that our policy is to maintain what remains of the Ottoman Empire as a going concern with proper means to be independent of Russian tutelage'.<sup>38</sup> How to deal with Russia caused profound disagreements among British diplomats. Nicolson urged Grey to assist Russia. If Russia ever came to 'question the value of a friendship with us', renewed Anglo-Russian friction in Central Asia was the likely consequence.<sup>39</sup> It was thus essential 'to maintain our understanding with Russia that we could not possibly run the risk of seriously impairing it [by] . . . adopt[ing] an attitude which she might consider not very friendly'.<sup>40</sup>

Grey's skilful presiding over the London ambassadorial conference had maintained the unity of the Powers, and so diffused the disagreements within Britain's diplomatic elite. No amount of patient statesmanship, however, could prevent a second round of fighting, this time among the Balkan states themselves. There was an indubitable element of weariness of the affairs of south-eastern Europe among senior British diplomats: 'everybody seemed to kick against inconvenient obligations'.<sup>41</sup> Grey himself was not particularly perturbed by renewed conflict in the Balkans: 'there is every hope that the Great Powers will continue to act in harmony'.<sup>42</sup> This was no mere complacency. To an extent, the London conference established the principal features of a new Balkan settlement. Bulgaria's defeat and the subsequent Treaty of Bucharest did not challenge that new order and, in the short term, made Sofia more pliable. Grey's non-interventionism, therefore, made good sense as least likely to disrupt the Concert. His policy came apart only when Turkey re-conquered Adrianople in July 1913, a development that threatened to unravel the Treaty of London. To compound matters further, Sazonov threatened unilateral Russian intervention to force the Turks out of Adrianople. This latest turn of events threatened all three of Grey's

<sup>38</sup> Memo. Bertie, 29 June 1913, Bertie Mss., Add. Mss. 63031.

<sup>39</sup> Nicolson to Townley (private), 21 October 1912, Nicolson Mss., FO 800/359; for the dissensions see T. G. Otte, *The Foreign Office Mind: The Making of British Foreign Policy, 1865–1914* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 375–92.

<sup>40</sup> Nicolson to Cartwright, 7 January 1913, Cartwright Mss., C(A) 42; K. Neilson, *Britain and the Last Tsar: British Policy towards Russia, 1894–1917* (Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 329.

<sup>41</sup> Memo. Bertie, 23 July 1913, Bertie Mss., Add. Mss. 63031.

<sup>42</sup> Asquith to George V, 2 July 1913, CAB 41/34/24.

objectives. Russian intervention, in whatever guise, was ‘the worst conceivable course’.<sup>43</sup> It would disrupt the unity of the Powers, and bring about an open breach with Austria-Hungary. Under such circumstances, Berlin’s continued cooperation was doubtful. Finally, Russia’s intervention threatened to undermine Grey’s attempts to safeguard British interests in Turkey-in-Asia. Indeed, if Russia intervened militarily, Grey would have found himself in the embarrassing situation of having to act on the 1878 Cyprus Convention, a *de facto* Anglo-Turkish alliance. At any rate, it was Britain’s ‘material interests’ in the Near East – the ongoing talks with the Sublime Porte on matters pertaining to the Baghdad railway and the Persian Gulf – that determined Grey’s preference for non-intervention.<sup>44</sup> He was not prepared to sacrifice them for Bulgaria’s somewhat dubious claims on Adrianople. But neither was he ready to endanger the negotiations with the Germans on Near Eastern questions by accepting a Turkish alliance proposal.<sup>45</sup>

Ultimately, Turkey retained Adrianople, but Grey pressured the Powers to make progress on other issues, most notably the status of Southern Albania. Agreement in principle at the end of 1913, however, still left a significant amount of unexploded ordnance in that part of the Balkans, as was highlighted by Albania’s descent into chaos and civil war in May 1914. Indeed, if any international difficulties were anticipated, they were expected to arise from that quarter.<sup>46</sup> There was also the prospect that Bulgaria and Turkey, the two erstwhile enemies, would now be pushed together by their common animosity towards Serbia, Greece and Romania.<sup>47</sup>

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that, by the spring of 1914, the various intractable legacies of the Balkan and Italo-Turkish Wars – here the Aegean islands question – had sapped the energy of the Concert. While the ambassadorial conference had warded off the danger of imminent war, it had not created the basis for a lasting peace, warned Sir Vincent Corbett, the minister-resident at Munich:

<sup>43</sup> Grey to Bertie (private), 31 July 1913, Grey MSS, FO 800/54.

<sup>44</sup> See Parker’s draft dispatch to Mallet, 24 July 1914, summarising the railway talks with Turkey, and min. Crowe, 29 July 1914: ‘This must now be held back’, FO 371/2126/2463.

<sup>45</sup> The offer is in FO 371/1826/27117.

<sup>46</sup> Nicolson to Hardinge (private), 11 June 1914, Nicolson Mss., FO 800/374.

<sup>47</sup> See Mallet to Grey (no. 20), 13 January 1914, FO 371/2126/2463; Bax-Ironside to Grey (no. 32, confidential), 14 March 1914, FO 371/1918/13934. This was the scheme advocated by Tisza, the Magyar Prime Minister, memo. Tisza, 1 July 1914, *ÖUA*, vol. VIII, no. 9978.



A permanent settlement could only have been attained by the hegemony of Bulgaria and her débâcle was an international disaster. After all, the Bulgarians – you may think what you like of King Ferdinand – are the most respectable elements in the Balkans. The Greeks with the single exception of Venizelos, who is a Cretan, are a poor lot and their King combines the obstinacy of the Schleswig-Holsteiner with the stupidity of his Russian mother and, alas!, the swelled-headedness of a brother-in-law of the German Emperor!<sup>48</sup>

Vying with each other for a privileged position in Albania, Austria-Hungary and Italy were nevertheless united in their efforts to thwart international diplomacy in the affairs of that country: 'To remain in the Concert on these terms is neither useful nor dignified. If we were to retire it would not be so much laying down our flute, as calling attention to the fact that we are not admitted to the orchestra.'<sup>49</sup>

There was, moreover, the danger that Britain and the Concert were used as a sticking plaster to keep Rome and Vienna together: 'It is clear what the Italian game is. They see the hopelessness of a condominium with Austria, and are using these efforts to secure the real cooperation and commitment of all the 6 Powers.'<sup>50</sup> For the moment, Grey decided that '[w]e can await developments & consider conditions when they arise'.<sup>51</sup> For the moment, Franco-Russian pressure made it difficult for Grey to withdraw from the affairs of the south-east.<sup>52</sup> Ultimately, the July crisis relieved Grey from having to deal with the matter any further. Even so, there was a noticeable neo-isolationist trend in Foreign Office thinking now. This, Crowe warned, was 'not the moment or occasion for a Quixotic crusade on our part on behalf of a conglomerate of noble bandits struggling to remain free. The general political situation counsels us to keep out of entanglements that might embarrass us when we were least able to afford such a luxury.'<sup>53</sup>

The further expansion of Serbia focused London's attention on the future of the Habsburg Monarchy. The collapse of that ancient empire was now openly discussed. In view of that prospect, the Vienna embassy was instructed to compile monthly reports 'explaining the political

<sup>48</sup> Corbett to De Bunsen (private), 20 January 1914, De Bunsen Mss., box 14.

<sup>49</sup> Min. Crowe, 9 March 1914, on tel. Elliot to Grey (no. 49R), 8 March 1914, FO 371/1893/10259.

<sup>50</sup> Min. Crowe, 19 June 1914, on Lamb to Grey (no. 126, confidential), 11 June 1914, FO 371/1889/27364.

<sup>51</sup> Min. Grey, n. d., *ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> E.g. tel. Buchanan to Grey (no. 98R), 22 April 1914, FO 371/1893/17890.

<sup>53</sup> Min. Crowe, 29 May 1914, FO 371/1895; also min. Crowe, 25 May 1914, on tel. Barclay to Grey (no. 8, most confidential), 24 May 1914, FO 371/2089/23138, counselling against joint action with Russia at Bucharest.



relationships between the various nationalities'.<sup>54</sup> No doubt, were the empire to collapse, 'it would give rise to pandemonium in this part of the world'.<sup>55</sup> Crowe was more optimistic: 'On the whole I am not disposed to look upon the demolition of that ancient sand-castle, the Dual Monarchy, as due by the next rising tide.' Yet he, too, acknowledged that the 'forces of disintegration' were gaining in strength, and that '[s]tartling changes . . . are evidently certain to come'. For Britain, he concluded, 'the lesson remains clear and imperative: keep up strength, and keep your eyes open; trust no one, except yourself'.<sup>56</sup>

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Crowe's concluding comment was instructive. It reflected a certain loosening of ties with both France and Russia. French reluctance to restrain Russia had caused some dismay, though little surprise, in London. By early 1914, there were 'some clouds in regard to our relations with France'.<sup>57</sup> Since mid-1913, Paris had been pressing for something more tangible than the recent exchange of notes on naval defence. Bertie accepted that a full alliance was inadvisable, as it 'might encourage the French to be too defiant to Germany'. Still, he suggested that a further exchange of notes 'of a less vague character' was politic.<sup>58</sup> Nicolson shared some of Bertie's unease. In the event of a Franco-German collision, he feared, the Liberal government 'would waver as to what course we should pursue until it was too late'.<sup>59</sup>

As for France, British diplomacy was faced with a conundrum. If French disinclination to exert a moderating influence at St Petersburg counselled against too firm an undertaking to Paris, French irresolution also posed a danger, 'as it encourages the Balkan States to believe that they have it in their power, if they resolutely stick to their pretensions, to split Europe into two camps'.<sup>60</sup> By the spring of 1914,

<sup>54</sup> Min. Craigie, 13 March 1913, on Cartwright to Grey (no. 34), 28 February 1913, FO 371/1575/9807.

<sup>55</sup> Cartwright to Nicolson, 25 April 1913, Cartwright Mss., C(A) 45. For Nicolson, the key to peace lay in Vienna, vice versa, 30 April 1913, *ibid.*, C(A) 42; F. R. Bridge, *From Sadowa to Sarajevo: The Foreign Policy of Austria-Hungary, 1866–1914* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 337–53.

<sup>56</sup> Crowe to Howard, 10 August 1913, Howard of Penrith Mss., Cumbria Record Office, Carlisle, DHW 4/Personal/19.

<sup>57</sup> Nicolson to Hardinge (private), 15 January 1914, Hardinge Mss., vol. 93.

<sup>58</sup> Memo. Bertie (on conversation with Grey), 23 June 1913, Bertie Mss., Add. Mss. 63031; see also Halperin, *Mediterranean Situation*, pp. 95–8.

<sup>59</sup> Nicolson to Hardinge (private), 29 October 1913, Hardinge Mss., vol. 93.

<sup>60</sup> Cartwright to Nicolson, 11 April 1913, Cartwright Mss., C(A) 45; K. A. Hamilton, 'Great Britain and France, 1911–1914', in Hinsley (ed.), *Foreign Policy*, pp. 338–9.

Nicolson complained of 'the exceedingly loose ties' with both entente partners.<sup>61</sup>

British irritation at Russia's lack of cooperation during the Balkan Wars was real enough. Thus, when, during the Liman von Sanders crisis at the turn of 1913/14, Bertie 'pointed out the danger of leaving Russia tête à tête with Germany', it reflected growing suspicions of Russia's moderation and reliability. There was also the danger that the Russian and German governments might come to a separate understanding, as they had done in 1911 over the Baghdad railway, on 'terms advantageous to themselves and to the detriment of British and French interests in breach of Russian assurances to England and France'.<sup>62</sup> While there was a general acceptance at the Foreign Office that 'Russia is naturally anxious to re-establish her much damaged prestige in the Balkans', there were nevertheless fears of Russia's lack of restraint.<sup>63</sup> Izvolsky's recklessness at Buchlau in 1908 and Sazonov's timidity at Potsdam two years later cast a long shadow over British perceptions of Russia in the final years before 1914. As for Grey, his support for Russia was grudging at best: '[T]he whole thing is [not] worth all the fuss that Sazonov makes about it; but so long as he does make a fuss it will be important and embarrassing to us for we cannot turn our backs on Russia.' On no account was Britain to be dragged into a Russo-German conflict.<sup>64</sup>

Nicolson's insistence on the necessity of closer ties with Russia was a reflection of his increased apprehensions about the current state of Anglo-Russian relations. Russia's recent economic progress and the growth of her military power made her 'a formidable factor in European politics', and it was essential 'that we should remain on the best terms with her'.<sup>65</sup> This was a more urgent consideration as the 1907 arrangement was no longer functioning smoothly. Developments in Central Asia made a revision necessary when the agreement was due for renewal in 1915. Given the likely problems involved in this, Nicolson was anxious to avoid discussions about a 'radical revision' as this might lead to the

<sup>61</sup> Nicolson to De Bunsen, 27 April 1914, De Bunsen Mss., box 15.

<sup>62</sup> Memo. Bertie, 2 December 1913, Bertie Mss., Add. Mss. 63032; Buchanan to Crowe, 8 January 1914, FO 371/2090/3140.

<sup>63</sup> Min. Vansittart, 17 February 1914, on de Bunsen to Grey (no. 32), 13 February 1914, FO 371/1899/6901.

<sup>64</sup> Grey to Goschen (private), 2 January 1914, *BD*, vol. X/I, no. 457; and min. Grey, n. d., on Buchanan to Crowe (private), 8 January 1914, FO 371/2090/3140 (quote from the former).

<sup>65</sup> Nicolson to Goschen (private), 11 March 1913, Nicolson Mss., FO 800/364; P. Gatrell, *Government, Industry and Rearmament in Russia, 1900–1914: The Last Argument of Tsarism* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 161–96.

break-down of the talks.<sup>66</sup> Nicolson was haunted by the ‘present uncertainty’ in relations with Russia, and feared that the beleaguered government under Vladimir Nikola’evich Kokovtsov would become less friendly.<sup>67</sup>

Buchanan at St Petersburg shared some of Nicolson’s pessimism about Britain’s future relations with Russia. He anticipated that Russia would in future pursue a more vigorous policy towards all the Powers. St Petersburg was not ‘committed to a policy of peace at any price’ as had been the case in the years after Russia’s double crisis of 1905. If the other Powers acted on that mistaken assumption, they endangered the peace of Europe. All of this had implications for Anglo-Russian relations: ‘it is useless to blind our eyes to the fact that, if we are to remain friends with Russia, we must be prepared to give her our material as well as our moral support in any conflict in which she becomes involved in Europe’. Crucially, Buchanan considered Anglo-Russian relations in Europe to be separate from those in Asia.<sup>68</sup> A host of Anglo-Russian squabbles in Persia had sown the ‘seeds of discord’, and Buchanan anticipated ‘awkward questions [being] raised’ when it came to renegotiating the convention in 1915.<sup>69</sup>

Senior diplomats and officials shared Buchanan’s dismay at the surreptitious growth of Russian influence in Asia. In the aftermath of the Liman von Sanders crisis, Mallet at Constantinople warned that the Russian government would raise ‘the question [of the Turkish Straits] again in the not distant future’, an assessment that was widely shared in Whitehall.<sup>70</sup> The frequently clandestine means employed by the Tsar’s ‘men-on-the-spot’ and Russian efforts to hamper British commerce in Persia were registered with growing dismay. ‘Our treatment at the hands of Russia . . . is really most inconsiderate and unfair’, complained Lancelot Oliphant of the Eastern department.<sup>71</sup> Crowe, meanwhile, warned of ‘the real danger of our continuing to remain closely associated in one and the same region with the absolutely dishonest policy of the Russian authorities’.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Nicolson to Buchanan, 13 January 1914, Nicolson Mss., FO 800/372.

<sup>67</sup> Nicolson to Hardinge (private), 25 February 1914, *ibid.*; also memo. Bertie, 25 June 1914, Bertie Mss., Add. Mss. 63033.

<sup>68</sup> Buchanan to Grey (no. 60), 4 March 1914, FO 371/2092/10333.

<sup>69</sup> Buchanan to Nicolson, 21 January 1914, Nicolson Mss., FO 800/372; see J. Siegel, *Endgame: Britain, Russia and the Final Struggle for Central Asia* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002), pp. 143–94.

<sup>70</sup> Mallet to Grey (no. 400), 2 June 1914, and mins. Russell and Crowe, 9 and 14 June 1914, FO 371/2135/25458.

<sup>71</sup> Min. Oliphant, 16 January 1914, on tel. Buchanan to Grey (no. 16R), 15 January 1914, FO 371/2059/2103.

<sup>72</sup> Min. Crowe, 11 March 1914, on tel. Townley to Grey (no. 45), 9 March 1914, FO 371/2073/10383.

Opinions, however, were divided. Accommodating Russian expansion in Persia was a necessary evil, argued G. R. Clerk, senior clerk in the Eastern department, in July 1914. In contrast to Crowe's argument, Clerk's rested on the premise 'that the first principle of our foreign policy must be genuinely good relations with Russia'. On that basis, he argued 'that if we do not make relatively small sacrifices, and alter our policy in Persia now, we shall both endanger our friendship with Russia and find in a comparatively near future that we have sacrificed our whole position in the Persian Gulf, and are faced in consequence with a situation where our existence as an Empire will be at stake'.<sup>73</sup>

Clerk's memorandum struck a somewhat alarmist tone, and was at odds with the views of his immediate superiors, who were more concerned about the affairs of the Gulf region.<sup>74</sup> And here Crowe and Grey struck a new, much firmer tone in their conversations with Russian diplomats in the first moves towards renegotiating the 1907 convention, an agreement that Crowe regarded as, for all practical purposes, defunct.<sup>75</sup> Whatever the future course of Britain's policy in the Persian Gulf region, relations with Russia had reached a crossroads.

All of this mattered because of the palpable sense of détente in relations with Germany. At the root of this was the much-reduced significance of the naval race. As Grey and the Foreign Office had anticipated, the competition at sea had severely strained Germany's financial capacity. This was compounded by the resurgence of French and, more especially, Russian military power. The substantial armaments programmes by the *Franco-Russe* forced Germany to divert funding from the navy to the army. This was well understood by British diplomats. The practical consequences were clear, as Crowe spelt out: '[O]ne of the reasons why Anglo-German relations are now more cordial . . . is that we have entirely ceased to discuss the question of a limitation of armaments.'<sup>76</sup> The 1913

<sup>73</sup> Memo. Clerk, 'Anglo-Russian Relations in Persia' (confidential), 23 July 1914, FO 371/2076/33484; see also K. M. Wilson, 'The Struggle for Persia: Sir George Clerk's Memorandum on Anglo-Russian Relations in Persia of 21 July 1914', *Proceedings of the 1988 International Conference of Middle Eastern Studies* (Leeds, 1988), pp. 290–334; and, for a correction, T. G. Otte, 'The Foreign Office and Imperial Defence, 1856–1914', in G. Kennedy (ed.), *Imperial Defence: The Old World Order, 1856–1956* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 23–4.

<sup>74</sup> Min. Crowe, 23 July 1914, FO 371/2076/33484; Siegel, *Endgame*, p. 193.

<sup>75</sup> Memo. Crowe, 3 June 1914, and min. Grey, 5 June 1914, FO 371/2059/25918; Grey to Buchanan (no. 217), 10 June 1914, *BD*, vol. X/II, no. 547.

<sup>76</sup> Min. Crowe, 17 February 1913, on Goschen to Grey (no. 58), 10 February 1913, FO 371/1649/7482; see also J. H. Maurer, 'Churchill's Naval Holiday: Arms Control and the Anglo-German Naval Race, 1912–1914', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 15, 1 (1992), pp. 47–8.

German army bill was an implicit admission by Berlin ‘that a competition in armaments with France and Russia on land and Great Britain at sea is an expensive amusement . . . There seems good reason to hope that the time will not be far distant when public opinion in the [German] Empire generally will force the Junkers in Berlin to abstain from a demand for further sacrifices’. To bring about the desired outcome, however, it was necessary for Britain not to ‘slacken . . . in our determination to maintain our naval position’. In that case, Corbett predicted, ‘we shall be within measurable distance of saner conditions’.<sup>77</sup>

Crowe argued that the force of geopolitical circumstances would lead to some form of realignment between Britain and Germany. The developments in south-eastern Europe carried ‘the growing risk of a weakened Austria and a strengthened Russia’. This alone was ‘more likely to bring and keep us and Germany in touch than any amount of twaddle, Tirpitzian or otherwise, about naval standards and arithmetical equations’.<sup>78</sup> Already the recent convulsions in the Balkans had brought London and Berlin together. Tyrrell interpreted this as vindication of Britain’s recent policy towards Germany: ‘I have always thought that once the two Gov[ernmen]ts could find their common field of action, they would be found acting together almost automatically. For that reason I have always thought the efforts to create cooperation when one’s interests are substantially in opposition a mistake: artificial ententes make for bad relations.’<sup>79</sup>

Talk at Berlin of a ‘détente’ with Britain did not go unnoticed in London. Grey welcomed it: ‘we are on good terms with Germany now and we desire to avoid a revival of friction with her’.<sup>80</sup> Thus, if Anglo-Russian relations had reached a fork in the road, then so had relations with Berlin. Goschen summed up Britain’s predicament: ‘I am

<sup>77</sup> Corbett to De Bunsen (private), 20 January 1914, De Bunsen Mss., box 14. In one of his recent dispatches the minister-resident at Munich had stressed the incipient ‘movement towards democracy’ in Germany: see Corbett to Grey (no. 3), 16 January 1914, FO 371/1986/2529. For some of the background, see D. G. Herrmann, *The Arming of Europe and the Making of the First World War* (Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 180–91; D. Stevenson, *Armaments and the Coming of War: Europe, 1904–1914* (Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 329–408.

<sup>78</sup> Crowe to Oppenheimer, 25 February 1913, Oppenheimer Mss., Bod., box 17.

<sup>79</sup> Tyrrell to Howard (private), 28 December 1912, Howard of Penrith Mss., DHW 5/33.

<sup>80</sup> Quotes from Goschen to Grey (no. 48), 5 February 1914, FO 371/1987/5608; and memo. Bertie (on conversation with Grey), 25 June 1914, Bertie Mss., Add. Mss. 63033; see also R. T. B. Langhorne, ‘Anglo-German Negotiations concerning the Future of the Portuguese Colonies, 1911–1914’, *Historical Journal*, 16, 2 (1973), pp. 361–87; J. D. Vincent-Smith, ‘The Anglo-German Negotiations over the Portuguese Colonies in Africa, 1911–14’, *Historical Journal*, 17, 3 (1974), pp. 620–9.

sure we cannot have it both ways: i.e. form a defensive alliance with France and Russia and at the same time be on cordial terms with Germany.’<sup>81</sup>

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Goschen’s observation touched on an important point. British foreign policy was on the cusp of major change. The ‘wars before the war’ had thrown into sharper relief the recent shifts in the international landscape. More especially, along with developments in Asia, these conflicts heightened a growing awareness of the innate complexities of Anglo-Russian relations.

It was clear to Grey and his senior advisers that a phase in British foreign policy was coming to an end. The principal purpose of the 1907 convention with Russia had been to safeguard imperial interests in Asia. But the arrangement had the beneficial side-effect that closer Anglo-Russian ties helped to check Germany in Europe at a time when Berlin was willing to throw its weight about. By 1914, Russia’s revival called into question the central plank of the 1907 convention, coexistence and cooperation in Central Asia. Far from stabilising Europe, it threatened the prospect of disquietude – further illustration, if any were needed, that Anglo-German relations were a function of Anglo-Russian relations.<sup>82</sup> While the events of 1911–13 thus indicated an impending readjustment in Great Power relations, what was not clear was how the pieces would arrange themselves with the next turn of the kaleidoscope.

Grey’s diplomacy during the Italo-Turkish and Balkan Wars was British strategic foreign policy in microcosm. It was wedded to the maintenance of the status quo in Europe, tenuous and fragile though it had become. This explains the significance that Grey and his officials attached to insulating Italy as a source of potential instability.<sup>83</sup> In his concert diplomacy Grey resorted to a tried and tested instrument of Great Power crisis management. Above all, it was a means of containing the Austro-Russian antagonism in south-eastern Europe. For Grey, though not for some of his senior advisers, this implied a degree of loosening the existing ties between the Powers. Key to this was cooperation with Germany, as was seemingly appreciated by Wilhelmstrasse.

<sup>81</sup> Goschen to Nicolson (private), 27 April 1914, Nicolson Mss., FO 800/374.

<sup>82</sup> Nicolson to Hardinge (private), 11 June 1914, *ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> The perception of Italian politicians as prone to making ‘oily’ proposals and as being ‘incapable of straightforwardness’ did not help matters, see mins. Vansittart and Crowe, 9 February 1914, on Rodd to Grey (no. 42, confidential), 30 January 1914, FO 371/2113/5554.

It also explains Grey's willingness to use Austro-Italian tension to keep both of them in check – with implications for Austro-Russian relations. This was a form of double-check on Austria and a double insulation of Italy.

There were difficulties, however. Much as he wished to prevent a hardening of the two European groupings, Grey's diplomatic strategy also required reassurances to France and Russia, and this had the potential of undermining any cooperation with Germany, as was the case in May 1913.<sup>84</sup> Even so, British diplomacy was not *ententiste* beyond what was deemed politic to meet the demands of the moment. In 1911, Crowe had commented on the flexible nature of the arrangement with France: 'an Entente is nothing more than a frame of mind, a view of general policy which is shared by the governments of two countries, but which *may* be, or become, so vague as to lose all content'.<sup>85</sup> In his dealings with the 'wars before the war' Grey was ready to empty that frame of some, though not of all content. And here Grey came up against the limits of a policy whose rationale rested on a degree of constructive ambiguity, when, at the same time, Paris and St Petersburg were pressing for clarity of objectives as a guarantee of stability. Similarly, British diplomacy was not sufficiently attuned to the security concerns of Habsburg diplomacy, and in consequence underestimated the willingness of the Ballhausplatz to act off its own bat.

That these competing demands could be balanced was demonstrated by the London ambassadorial conference. Here Grey's skilful diplomacy – a mixture of conciliation, cajoling and coercion – prior to and during this international gathering helped to establish a new Balkans settlement. True, there was a degree of discontinuity between his diplomatic interventionism during the First Balkan War and his aloofness during the Second. But, in mitigation, the second round of fighting did not touch the fundamentals of the Treaty of London. Any overt interference, by contrast, had the potential of disrupting all the delicate balances that made up British diplomacy in 1913–14. This latter consideration also explains the relative confidence of senior British diplomats that, the likely changes in international politics notwithstanding,

<sup>84</sup> Austro-German relations were the mirror image of this: see Goschen to Nicolson (private), 23 May 1914, Nicolson Mss., FO 800/374.

<sup>85</sup> Min. Crowe, 2 February 1911, on Bertie to Grey (no. 58), 31 January 1911, FO 371/1117/3884; see also L. M. Penson, 'Obligations by Treaty: Their Place in British Foreign Policy, 1898–1914', in A. O. Sarkissian (ed.), *Studies in Diplomatic History and Historiography: Essays Presented to G. P. Gooch* (London: Barnes and Noble, 1961), pp. 87–9.

‘Europe seems to have settled into general calm’.<sup>86</sup> The ‘wars before the war’ had thus created the conceptual framework for Grey’s *sotto voce* diplomacy during the final crisis of the long nineteenth century.

<sup>86</sup> Nicolson to Mallet, 11 May 1914, Nicolson Mss., FO 800/374.



## 16 Anglo-French relations and the wars before the war

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*Friedrich Kießling*

The Balkan Wars are important for our understanding of Europe before 1914 in more than one respect. The wars, for example, very much shaped public discourses on peace and war throughout Europe.<sup>1</sup> Military elites observed the wars on the Balkan Peninsula very closely. Furthermore, there is the question of whether warfare on the Balkan Peninsula was part of a broader history of military violence in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> While concentrating on international relations, on the reactions and actions of politicians and diplomats, I am certainly well aware of other dimensions and their importance for foreign policy. However, the focus of this chapter is very much on high politics.

In order to show the impact of the Balkan Wars on the foreign policy of the Entente Cordiale powers, this chapter will highlight three aspects: Firstly, it will present an outline of British and French Balkan diplomacy from 1912 to 1913. Secondly, based on these diplomatic activities it will examine the influence of the Balkan Wars on the foreign policy of Britain and France more generally. Thirdly, it will offer some considerations as to how we can integrate these results into explanations for the origins of the First World War. Above all else we need to understand how the situation on the Balkan Peninsula and debates over the exact borders between countries like Montenegro and Albania were able to influence European alliance systems and eventually endanger the peace of Europe. Significantly, the lessons diplomats and politicians in Britain and France

<sup>1</sup> Florian Keisinger, *Unzivilisierte Kriege im zivilisierten Europa? Die Balkankriege und die öffentliche Meinung in Deutschland, England und Irland, 1876–1913* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Jörg Baberowski and Gabriele Metzler (eds.), *Gewaltträume: Soziale Ordnungen im Ausnahmezustand* (Frankfurt and New York: Campus, 2012); Mark Biondich, *The Balkans: Revolution, War, and Political Violence since 1878* (Oxford University Press, 2011); Olivier Cosson, 'Violence et guerre moderne dans les Balkans à l'aube du XXe siècle', *Revue d'histoire de la Shoah*, 189 (2008), pp. 57–74; Robert Gerwarth and John Horne (eds.), *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War, 1917–1923* (Oxford University Press, 2012); Alexander V. Prusin, *The Lands Between: Conflict in the East European Borderlands, 1870–1992* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

learned were somewhat contradictory: while officials in London were under the impression that Balkan troubles could be controlled, observers in Paris after the wars thought that Balkan policy and the question of peace or war in Europe were even more integrated.

### **British and French Balkan diplomacy 1912–13**

The diplomatic efforts to manage the Balkan Wars began months before war started in October 1912.<sup>3</sup> Confronted with the Italian-Turkish War, the formation of the Balkan League and uprisings, especially in Albania, European Powers began to consult each other about the question of a possible Balkan War. As early as January 1912, for example, French and British foreign policy had to deal with a Russian proposal to keep in touch with regard to Balkan matters. 'The danger is in the Balkans', the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs told the French Ambassador in St Petersburg, 'It is only time to act, if we wish to prevent conflagrations, which could rapidly expand and raise the most serious questions.'<sup>4</sup> In reaction to the rapidly deteriorating situation from spring and summer 1912, Count Berchtold, the Austrian Secretary for Foreign Affairs, began a new series of diplomatic initiatives on Balkan matters in August 1912.<sup>5</sup> Other governments quickly followed. In mid-September Russia proposed that the governments of the Great Powers should demand immediate reforms in the Balkans from Constantinople in order to improve the situation on the Peninsula.<sup>6</sup> A few weeks later Sergey Sazonov again raised the question. This time, however, he proposed that there should be action in the Balkan capitals as well as in Constantinople. Both sides

<sup>3</sup> Ernst Christian Helmreich, *The Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars 1912–1913* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1938); Karl Adam, *Großbritanniens Balkandilemma: Die britische Balkanpolitik von der bosnischen Krise bis zu den Balkankriegen 1908–1913* (Hamburg: Kovač, 2009); Richard R. Crampton, 'The Balkans, 1909–1914', in Francis H. Hinsley (ed.), *British Foreign Policy under Sir Edward Grey* (Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 256–70; J. Heller, *British Policy towards the Ottoman Empire 1908–1914* (London: Cass, 1983); Peter W. Reuter, *Die Balkanpolitik des französischen Imperialismus 1911–1914* (Frankfurt/M. and New York: Campus, 1979).

<sup>4</sup> *Documents diplomatiques français (1871–1914)* (hereafter *DDF*), Ministère des Affaires étrangères. Commission de publications des documents diplomatiques français (ed.), 41 vols. (Paris, 1929–59), 3rd ser., vol. I, no. 576.

<sup>5</sup> *Österreich-Ungarns Außenpolitik von der Bosnischen Krise 1908 bis zum Kriegsausbruch 1914. Diplomatische Aktenstücke des österreich-ungarischen Ministeriums des Äußern* (hereafter *ÖUA*), 9 vols. (Vienna and Leipzig: Österreichischer Bundesverlag für Unterricht, Wissenschaft und Kunst, 1930), vol. IV, nos. 3687 and 3744.

<sup>6</sup> *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898–1914* (hereafter *BD*), ed. George P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, 11 vols. (London: HMSO, 1926–36), vol. IX/I, nos. 721 and 726.

should be pressed, he argued, to reduce their military activities on the common borderline.<sup>7</sup> After the war started, talks continued while at least one Entente Cordiale power took an active part: although on 8 October the Austrian and Russian representatives expressed the 'will of Europe' to the governments of the Balkan States, this was already the outcome of French-German conversations which the French Prime Minister Raymond Poincaré had initiated in late September.<sup>8</sup> Two days later the Quai d'Orsay for the first time proposed a conference in order to settle the Balkan question and two weeks later France again suggested a common mediation of the Powers.<sup>9</sup> This time it proposed 'un esprit d'absolu désintéressement' (a spirit of absolute disinterest) as the basis for mediation, a formula totally unacceptable for Austria-Hungary (and Russia).<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless diplomatic activities continued and so between August and late November 1912 French and British diplomacy were almost weekly confronted with new Balkan proposals or – in the French case – drafted a new proposal of their own.

While from the end of August French policy followed an active diplomacy (by suggesting for example a conference), the British Government was more reluctant to do so. London answered quite cautiously and in a rather dilatory way to Count Berchtold's initiative as well as to similar Russian or French suggestions. Summarizing this very complex correspondence we can say, firstly, that in principle the Foreign Office was ready to participate in common diplomatic action. Secondly – although not rejecting primary talks within the Triple Entente – London tried to integrate all Powers in conversations and thirdly more than once London expressed its conviction that the best way to deal with the Balkan troubles would be to leave them to the most directly interested powers to act.<sup>11</sup>

But with the overwhelming military success of the Balkan States this attitude changed. Now even Sir Edward Grey argued that 'we could not expect the greatest change which had ever taken place suddenly in the map of Europe to be made without the Great Powers'.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, not only the Quai d'Orsay but also the Foreign Office played an important role in launching the famous ambassadorial conference that from December 1912 tried to localize the war. Eventually (and after much

<sup>7</sup> *BD*, vol. IX/I, no. 754. <sup>8</sup> Helmreich, *Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars*, pp. 127–9.

<sup>9</sup> *DDF*, 3rd ser., vol. IV, no. 112. Later the expression 'conference internationale' was also used: *ÖUA*, vol. IV, no. 4073.

<sup>10</sup> *ÖUA*, vol. IV, no. 4216. For the French formula see: *DDF*, 3rd ser., vol. IV, no. 284.

<sup>11</sup> Friedrich Kießling, *Gegen den 'großen Krieg': Entspannung in den internationalen Beziehungen 1911–1914* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2002), p. 176. See also the chapter in this volume by T. G. Otte ([Chapter 15](#), pp. 264–82).

<sup>12</sup> *BD*, vol. IX/II, no. 276.

preliminary consultation among the cabinets) the decisive proposal for the ambassadorial conference took the form of a British aide-mémoire Grey addressed to Berlin on 29 November.<sup>13</sup> This more active role of British diplomacy became visible for the first time in the last days of October. As Austrian-Russian relations deteriorated quickly after the war had started, Grey was forced to look for new means of mediation and to abandon the more reluctant policy British diplomacy had so far followed. As a result, when the German secretary of state suggested close cooperation with Britain and France in Balkan affairs on 25 October, Grey agreed at once: 'I entirely approve', he answered: 'Germany, France and ourselves should keep in close touch'.<sup>14</sup> A few days later he recommended that while Britain and France should mediate in St Petersburg, Germany should do so in Vienna.<sup>15</sup>

If at first Britain was considered a spectator of events (or at least attempting to follow a spectator-position), it began to alter its position from late October. In the end as chairman of the London ambassadorial conference, Grey even had to accept the main mediation role. British diplomacy continued to play this role until the ambassadorial meetings were adjourned in August 1913.<sup>16</sup>

Regarding French diplomacy things are even more complicated. When in spring 1912 Paris learned about Russian influence in forming a Serbo-Bulgarian Alliance, the reply was anything but enthusiastic.<sup>17</sup> Because of their own alliance with Russia, the Quai d'Orsay feared the entanglement that such a treaty could imply for France too.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, the French reaction to Sazonov's Balkan initiative of January 1912, mentioned above, was also rather lukewarm, though the two governments remained in touch on this matter.<sup>19</sup> From August and September 1912 French diplomacy showed a slightly different picture. Above all in the

<sup>13</sup> *Die Große Politik der Europäischen Kabinette 1871–1914. Sammlung der Diplomatischen Aktenstücke des Auswärtigen Amtes* (hereafter *GP*), ed. Johannes Lepsius *et al.*, 40 vols. (Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte, 1922–7), vol. 34/I, no. 12504. There has been some discussion on the question of which government initiated the conference. For example: Zara S. Steiner, *Britain and the Origins of the First World War* (London: Macmillan, 1977), p. 112; Hans Christian Lühr, 'Die Albanische Frage: Konferenzdiplomatie und Nationalstaatsbildung im Vorfeld des Ersten Weltkriegs unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der deutschen Außenpolitik', PhD Thesis (Bonn, 1992), p. 65. However, in this context the active part of the British diplomacy is important.

<sup>14</sup> Goschen to Grey, 25 October 1912, draft Grey, National Archives, FO 371/1502.

<sup>15</sup> See for example *BD*, vol. IX/II, no. 69 and Granville to Grey, National Archives, FO 371/1513.

<sup>16</sup> To be sure, this did not mean a reversion to the 'honest broker' à la Bismarck. As we shall see, it was rather mediation from within one particular bloc.

<sup>17</sup> Reuter, *Balkanpolitik des französischen Imperialismus*, pp. 274–5. <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *DDF*, 3rd ser., vol. I, no. 579; vol. II, no. 48, vol. III, no. 5.

light of Count Berchtold's proposal the Quai d'Orsay seemed to be more eager to back Russian initiatives. For example, on 22 September Francis Bertie, the British Ambassador in Paris, was confronted with a French-Russian draft proposing a common Balkan agreement of the Triple Entente.<sup>20</sup> Generally focused on the status quo, it mentioned military or naval demonstrations: 'if the consequences of events necessitated the employment of more energetic means'.<sup>21</sup> The interpretation by Thomas Reuter that this policy mainly aimed at keeping the peace in south-east Europe is plausible.<sup>22</sup> But in contrast to the Foreign Office the Quai d'Orsay did so by actively promoting a common Triple Entente policy. Therefore, when the conference idea came up, Poincaré insisted that Paris would be the best place to meet since French diplomacy had been the first to mention a conference. However, as late as 10 December Poincaré gave in and Paul Cambon, the French Ambassador in London, was told that France now would accept London instead of Paris as meeting place of the ambassadorial conference.<sup>23</sup>

With the establishment of ambassadorial meetings French attitudes changed again. Studying French documents relating the reunion quickly reveals that the Quai d'Orsay was happy to leave mediation to other powers, mainly to Great Britain and Germany. From now on their main concern lay in the stabilization of the Franco-Russian alliance and – secondly – in economic-political interests.<sup>24</sup> Henceforth within European crisis management, French diplomacy played a minor role.

To sum up: what we can see is that Great Power diplomacy regarding the Balkan Wars started even before the war. British and French diplomacy was involved right from the start. While almost from the beginning French diplomacy played an active part, the Foreign Office proved more reluctant. However, with the organization of the ambassadorial conference things changed. Now Sir Edward Grey occupied the position as the main mediator. In contrast, French diplomacy, which had been more active until the conference, now played a more passive role. Of course the question is, why? What were the reasons for British and French involvement and the particular course of British and French diplomacy during the wars? To answer these questions we must look at British and French foreign policy more generally.

<sup>20</sup> *BD*, vol. IX/I, no. 734. See also: *DDF*, 3rd ser., vol. III, no. 451.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Reuter, *Balkanpolitik des französischen Imperialismus*, pp. 276–7.

<sup>23</sup> *DDF*, 3rd. ser., vol. V, no. 30.

<sup>24</sup> For the increasing commitment of French foreign policy towards the Balkan situation see e.g.: M. B. Hayne, *The French Foreign Policy Office and the Origins of the First World War 1898–1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 245–68.

### **The Balkan Wars and British and French grand strategy**

Certainly, Britain as well as France had some material interests in the Balkans. For France, for example, it was a matter of economic interests.<sup>25</sup> In the case of Britain, the possible consequences of a Balkan War for the Asian parts of Turkey were important. The war raised the question of the Ottoman Empire's stability as a whole. Public opinion in France and Great Britain played a role too. Very much in favour of the new Balkan states, the press in Paris and London constantly asked what course their own government would follow. '[P]ublic opinion here', on 19 November Under-Secretary Sir Arthur Nicolson stressed in a private letter to Gerard Lowther, 'is strongly in favour of the Balkan States, and no Government possibly could take up an attitude which was in any way contrary to the general feeling in this country'.<sup>26</sup> But all in all these were merely minor questions. The reasons for Anglo-French diplomatic activities concerning the Balkan Wars must clearly be studied in a more general context of European politics.

Right from the beginning, for London and Paris the Balkan Wars were an issue of the European state system and thus an issue of European peace or war. Furthermore, diplomatic talks on Balkan questions throughout 1912 and 1913 raised the question of entente- and alliance-policy: When Count Berchtold suggested Balkan conversations in August 1912, the first reaction in Paris was that Berchtold tried to give the dual alliance the lead in Balkan matters and Austria wanted to benefit from Balkan turmoil. Therefore the first Russian-French proposal to avoid a Balkan war that reached London on 28 August was clearly meant as a counter-action by the Triple Entente powers. '[I]t was not necessary that Austria should take the whole matter into her hands', Sazonov replied when asked whether it wouldn't be a good idea to inform Austria too.<sup>27</sup> Although the Foreign Office did not agree with the French-Russian interpretation of Count Berchtold's proposal, for London too Entente policy complicated matters. 'Our position is an exceedingly difficult and embarrassing one', Under-secretary Nicolson summarized in November 1912 after months of nearly daily crisis management; 'We are anxious naturally to maintain the concert of Europe... At the same time it is of paramount importance to us to preserve unimpaired our understandings with Russia and France.'<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> For instance, *DDF*, 3rd ser., vol. V, no. 70.

<sup>26</sup> Nicolson to Lowther, 19 November 1912, National Archives, Nicolson Mss., FO 800/359.

<sup>27</sup> *BD*, vol. IX/I, no. 665.

<sup>28</sup> Nicolson to Lowther, 19 November 1912, National Archives, Nicolson Mss., FO 800/359.

Therefore, European diplomacy during the Balkan Wars was part of the 'alliance debate' in prewar Europe. This debate was not exclusively limited to the Triple Entente powers. It can also be seen in German-Austrian relations as throughout the crisis Berlin was confronted with Austrian complaints about the lack of German support in the Balkans. On 7 October a memorandum written by 'Sektionschef' Count Szápáry, one of the senior officials of the Austrian Foreign Office, heavily criticized German policy. The Dual Alliance, Szápáry stated, 'has failed in regard to its main purpose'.<sup>29</sup> One day later in the light of German diplomacy within the preceding months, Count Berchtold openly demanded a reinforcement of the Dual Alliance from his German colleague.<sup>30</sup>

As far as France and Britain were concerned, Balkan diplomacy in 1912 and 1913 was accompanied by talks about how far Paris and London would support St Petersburg in the event of a Russian military involvement in the Balkans. For example, on 11 November Russian diplomacy inquired from its partners how they would act in the event of an Austrian attack on Serbia. For Franco-Russian relations Stefan Schmidt has shown that such inquiries were part of an entire series of similar questions from spring 1912 onwards. All of them linked the situation on the Balkan Peninsula to the question of under what conditions France would be ready to support Russia in a general European war.<sup>31</sup> British diplomats, of course, were well aware of these potential problematic outcomes of Balkan turmoil. Grey mentioned it in February 1912<sup>32</sup> as did Robert G. Vansittart eight months later. On a report from St Petersburg of 15 October about new Russian aspirations on the Balkans, he remarked that this would point to the 'difficulty of which we are already aware . . . in other words with the value of the Anglo-Russian understanding'.<sup>33</sup> And in March 1913 once again Grey pointed out that Great Britain couldn't be expected to start a European war on questions like the limitation of Albania notwithstanding how important such problems might appear from a Russian point of view.<sup>34</sup> These instances show that during the Balkan crisis even British diplomacy was heavily affected by the alliance debate. But differences between French and British policy should also have become clear: Paris was far more concerned to back its ally whereas Grey was more willing to take on a mediation role or to include all Powers

<sup>29</sup> ÖUA, vol. IV, no. 3991; see also the contributions by Hannig and Bormann in this volume (Chapters 13 and 14, pp. 236–7 and 246–8 and 255–60).

<sup>30</sup> ÖUA, vol. IV, no. 3996.

<sup>31</sup> Stefan Schmidt, *Frankreichs Außenpolitik in der Julikrise 1914: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Ausbruchs des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2009), pp. 252–6.

<sup>32</sup> BD, vol. IX/I, no. 366. <sup>33</sup> Cited in Adam, *Großbritanniens Balkandilemma*, p. 145.

<sup>34</sup> BD, vol. IX/II, no. 723.



from the beginning.<sup>35</sup> As early as January 1912, in reaction to Sazonov's initiative, Grey urged his partners not to limit talks to the Triple Entente powers only. Otherwise there would not be any chance of success.<sup>36</sup>

But the question of how far bloc-policy could or should go or how far London and Paris were willing to back their Russian partners were not the only aspects of the broader topic of interconnections between Balkan diplomacy and the European alliance system. Balkan diplomacy in 1912/13 also affected Anglo-French relations themselves. Unlike French policy during the Balkan Wars, British diplomacy had an important German dimension. Especially during the ambassadorial meetings, crisis management seemed a result of British-German cooperation if not détente.<sup>37</sup> At the end of October 1912 in conversation with the British Ambassador to Berlin, the German Secretary for Foreign Affairs promoted mediation of the powers that were not directly involved in order to restrain the ambitions of their partners. Grey agreed at once and instructed his ambassador accordingly.<sup>38</sup> The very same night in Paris, a summit of strong entente supporters gathered in somewhat of a panic – the British and the Russian ambassadors among them. As a result, the French Prime Minister Poincaré again launched a diplomatic counteroffensive. Britain and France were to reply jointly to Berlin that no power could be excluded from conversation.<sup>39</sup> At this time Grey did not seem much impressed by the pressure of his partners. In the following weeks he continued to play the German card but from time to time he also felt obliged to react to French (and Russian) uneasiness.<sup>40</sup>

The episode of October 1912 shows how much Balkan diplomacy 1912/13 was interconnected to Anglo-French relations in general: like Germany, Britain too was confronted with constant complaints from her diplomatic partners. Frequently, British diplomats reported French distrust in view of Anglo-German cooperation.<sup>41</sup> British-French relations during the Balkan Wars also belonged to a longer alliance debate between the two governments. Ever since the forming of the Entente Cordiale in 1904, time and again the question arose whether an entente on colonial issues could develop into a formal alliance between the two countries in

<sup>35</sup> See also John F. V. Keiger, *France and the Origins of the First World War* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1983), p. 98.

<sup>36</sup> DDF, 3rd ser., vol. I, no. 590.

<sup>37</sup> Richard J. Crampton, *The Hollow Detente: Anglo-German Relations in the Balkans, 1911–1914* (London: Prior, 1980); Gregor Schöllgen, *Imperialismus und Gleichgewicht: Deutschland, England und die orientalische Frage 1871–1914* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2000); Kießling, *Gegen den 'großen Krieg'*.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Bertie to Grey, 27 October 1912, National Archives, FO 371/1503.

<sup>40</sup> BD, vol. IX/II, no. 228. <sup>41</sup> Kießling, *Gegen den 'großen Krieg'*, pp. 227–8.



Europe. Certain signals pointed in that direction – the Grey-Cambon exchange of letters of November 1912, military talks between the two countries – but the problem persisted and the question of the extent of British support remained a point of irritation within the Entente Cordiale. The Balkan Wars and British-German cooperation further deepened these irritations.

For London's point of view concerning the entente with Russia, it was quite clear that the Balkan crisis would not be the starting point of a war in which Britain would be involved. The situation was slightly different in the French case. Here it seems that in the course of the crisis the Balkan situation grew in importance. Peter W. Reuter and Stefan Schmidt have argued that during the crisis the French attitude towards Balkan affairs changed considerably. While Reuter observed above all an increasing economic-political French interest,<sup>42</sup> Schmidt concentrated on military and political considerations. In his interpretation French military as well as political leadership after the wars linked the balance of power in south-east Europe to the balance of power in Western Europe. A consequence of the defeat of the Ottoman Empire and the strengthening of the Balkan states, the argument went, was the European balance of power being looked at in a different way.<sup>43</sup> For the purposes of this chapter, above all the new political importance of south-east Europe is most crucial.<sup>44</sup> A problem that had started as a minor question somewhere in the European periphery, from the French point of view, became a major factor within the European state system. Early French status-quo policy aimed at control over a region whose turmoil could not be allowed to add to the security problems already existing in Europe. The success of the Balkan states, namely of Serbia and Montenegro, potentially weakened Austria-Hungary and the Dual Alliance. As a consequence, the Franco-Russian alliance might have benefited from the outcome of the Balkan Wars. A region whose separation from French security problems until then had seemed to be a good idea suddenly developed into an integral part of French security policy. In other words, as a result of the Balkan Wars, from a French point of view, Balkan and European policy were bound together in a new and direct way.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Reuter, *Die Balkanpolitik des französischen Imperialismus*, pp. 312–13.

<sup>43</sup> Schmidt, *Frankreichs Außenpolitik*, p. 199.

<sup>44</sup> Christopher Clark speaks of the 'Balkanization' of the Franco-Russian Alliance. Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, pp. 558–9.

<sup>45</sup> There was some criticism of Schmidt's interpretation (see the review by Gerd Krumeich, in *H-Soz-u-Kult*, 31 March 2011, <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/rezensionen/2011-1-242>). In this context it is important to note that the change in the French Balkan policy did not mean that France followed an aggressive policy or even prepared

### **Balkan Wars and the outbreak of the First World War: the British and the French case**

In a famous article Joachim Remak referred to the First World War as the 'Third Balkan War'.<sup>46</sup> This nomenclature is both accurate and misleading at the same time. It is true in the sense that the final crisis started on the Balkan Peninsula and the decision for war by Austria against Serbia became the nucleus of the Great War and the pretext for the involvement of all European Great Powers. It is wrong because, following the assassination of the Austrian heir and his wife, one of the Great Powers was involved right from the beginning. Localizing a conflict of secondary states is one thing; localizing a military conflict in which one of the main powers is already involved is another matter entirely. Therefore, of course, the situation in July 1914 was similar to that of 1912/1913 but not exactly the same. In searching for the causes of First World War, we must not forget the possibility of 'contingent' reasons among which the context of the July crisis is probably the most important one.<sup>47</sup> In explaining the origins of the First World War, it is important to draw attention to long- and medium-term factors as well as to the specific decision-making in the crucial weeks and days of July 1914.<sup>48</sup> So, how can we integrate European diplomacy during the Balkan Wars into our picture of prewar Europe and the origins of the war? This is of course – as mentioned – the key question and while it is beyond the scope of this chapter to answer it thoroughly, the rest of the chapter will offer some perspectives from the point of view of the Entente Cordiale.

First of all, in order to answer this question, it is not enough to look at diplomatic events on their own. We also need to draw our attention to diplomatic means and instruments on the one hand and to perceptions and expectations on the other. As far as means and diplomatic

for war. As Keiger pointed out, it above all indicated a policy of 'strong alliances', *France*, p. 166.

<sup>46</sup> Joachim Remak, '1914 – The Third Balkan War: Origins Reconsidered', *Journal of Modern History*, 43 (1971), pp. 353–66; Katrin Boeckh, *Von den Balkankriegen zum Ersten Weltkrieg: Kleinstaatenpolitik und ethnische Selbstbestimmung auf dem Balkan* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1996); Richard C. Hall, *The Balkan Wars 1912–1913: Prelude to the First World War* (London: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>47</sup> See Holger Afflerbach and David Stevenson, 'Introduction', in Afflerbach and Stevenson (eds.), *An Improbable War? The Outbreak of World War I and European Political Culture Before 1914* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2012), p. 2.

<sup>48</sup> For a more detailed outline of this argument, see Friedrich Kießling, 'Wege aus der Stringenzfalle: Die Vorgeschichte des Ersten Weltkriegs als "Ära der Entspannung"', *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 55 (2004), pp. 284–304; William Mulligan, *The Origins of the First World War* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 209–10 and 225–6.

instruments are concerned, governments could choose from a wide range of well-known diplomatic methods and tools. They could choose from different kinds of conference as well as from many sorts of diplomatic *démarche*. They could act in concert with all Powers or exclusively with their own bloc partners. If in concert, Powers could act commonly and identically or with one or two Powers in the name of the others and so on.<sup>49</sup> During the Balkan Wars all these instruments came up. British diplomacy especially was drawn directly from what one might call a contemporary 'handbook of crisis management'. As we have seen, Grey at first supported Austrian-Russian cooperation. When this strategy did not work, he tried to activate the concert mainly through Britain and Germany (and sometimes France). Later on, through ambassadorial meetings, he very carefully chose the most informal and flexible form of international conferences.

This range of methods is important since nearly all of them reappeared in July 1914.<sup>50</sup> In addition, contemporary meanings of these methods were crucial too. For diplomats and politicians the carefully chosen forms were of decisive significance. For us, these meanings and interpretations by the governments give an important insight into the mechanisms and inherent logic of international relations before and during the July crisis. Above all they show us the nervousness of cabinets in prewar Europe. For diplomatic observers, literally every *démarche* in Cetinje or every rumour of a new Anglo-German initiative could develop into a question of war and peace or could endanger the existing system of alliances and ententes. All these signs of nervousness are one important link between the Balkan Wars and our understanding of the origins of the First World War. Or as Imanuel Geiss put it: after such series of severe crises, the 'Ripeness for War' ('Kriegsreife') of the European system before 1914 was obvious.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> For historians of diplomatic history it is very important to know the set of forms from which diplomats are able to choose. A good introduction to some of these aspects is Gordon A. Craig and Alexander L. George, *Force and Statecraft: Diplomatic Problems of Our Time* (Oxford University Press, 1983). For implications from a cultural approach to the history of international relations see Friedrich Kießling, 'Self-perceptions, the Official Attitude towards Pacifism, and Great Power *Détente*: Reflections on Diplomatic Culture before World War I', in Jessica Gienow-Hecht (ed.), *Decentering America: New Directions in Culture and International History* (Oxford and New York: Berghahn, 2007), pp. 345–80.

<sup>50</sup> Kießling, *Gegen den 'großen Krieg'*, pp. 281–7.

<sup>51</sup> Imanuel Geiss, 'Deutschland und Österreich-Ungarn beim Kriegausbruch 1914: Eine machtpolitische Analyse', in Michael Gehler *et al.* (eds.), *Ungleiche Partner: Österreich und Deutschland in ihrer gegenseitigen Wahrnehmung: Historische Analysen und Vergleiche aus dem 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1996), p. 390.

But to understand the impact of the Balkan Wars, we also need to study perceptions. Here two aspects are crucial: for many observers crisis management seemed to work. War was localized, general war was avoided. As a result, most political decision-makers after the wars believed that their colleagues throughout Europe were interested in keeping the peace. This is true for example for the German government. 'How much Russia fears war', a German diplomat reported in September 1913 from St Petersburg, 'has been illustrated by Russian behaviour during the Balkan Wars'.<sup>52</sup> The crisis indicated, as Kaiser Wilhelm II also summarized in August 1913, 'that the will for peace of all powers is more important than people thought before. Other gestures can be identified as a bluff.'<sup>53</sup> Many British observers had similar thoughts. Especially within the Foreign Office, the picture of German foreign policy brightened considerably. '[R]elations with Germany are excellent just now', Foreign Secretary Grey stated in December 1912, 'because we have both been working for peace in Europe.'<sup>54</sup> Even the fiercest critics of the Kaiserreich within the British diplomatic service, Under-Secretary Arthur Nicolson and Assistant Under-Secretary Sir Eyre Crowe, now talked about Germany in a surprisingly friendly tone. There is 'no doubt that Berlin is most pacifically disposed', Nicolson told the British Ambassador in Vienna at the beginning of 1913.<sup>55</sup> And in February 1914 after reading a German newspaper article which demanded war in order to secure German position in Europe, even Sir Eyre Crowe remarked: 'Not worth reading.'<sup>56</sup> The reason for these new perceptions was that unlike the years around 1900, when Anglo-German *détente* was also on the agenda, German diplomatic action now seemed to match the friendly phrases German diplomats used towards their British counterparts. As a result, as far as the Foreign Office was concerned, there was trust in German foreign policy after the Balkan Wars. In addition the European concert seemed to work. To be sure, after months of weekly meetings, Grey got tired of the ambassadorial conferences, but after the reunion was adjourned in August 1913 he more than once indicated that he could imagine its re-opening in case of a serious European crisis.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, Russland 91, vol. 44.

<sup>53</sup> *GP*, vol. 36/I, no. 13781.

<sup>54</sup> Grey to Baker, 21 December 1912, National Archives, Grey Mss., FO 800/105.

<sup>55</sup> Nicolson to Cartwright, 7 January 1913, National Archives, Nicolson Mss., FO 800/362.

<sup>56</sup> Goschen to Grey, 27 February 1914, minute by Crowe, National Archives, FO 371/1887.

<sup>57</sup> Grey to Goschen, 20 October 1913, National Archives, FO 371/1653.

It is interesting to note that within French diplomatic documents there are fewer instances of these optimistic outlooks. German and French diplomats did assure each other of their will to cooperate and in February 1913 the German Ambassador in Paris was able to report that President Poincaré had just told him that the 'harmonic cooperation of the powers and the resulting atmosphere of trust were the most significant achievements' of the crisis.<sup>58</sup> Overall, however, French perceptions of the dual alliance-powers remained mostly unchanged. Most French diplomats and politicians felt that while German leaders were peaceful-minded, they feared the influence of a nationalistic public opinion and right-wing pressure groups.<sup>59</sup> Above all Raymond Poincaré more than once expressed his point of view that German foreign policy must be considered mainly as a policy of bluff – without a real war-option.<sup>60</sup>

There is another important aspect regarding perception: diplomatic outlooks arising in the course of the Balkan Wars were also crucial for Anglo-French relations. When investigating prewar Europe it must be borne in mind that the international state system before 1914 was not a system of solid diplomatic camps based on clear ideological distinctions or – regarding the Triple Entente – on long-lasting alliances. It was still a system in transition that could best be described as an 'unstable system of blocs'.<sup>61</sup> From a political point of view, the Entente Cordiale was still based solely on a colonial agreement. Thus, in each new crisis the inter-connections between colonial and European policy had to be reaffirmed. Under these circumstances French perceptions of British-German cooperation during the Balkan Wars became meaningful. Each Anglo-German understanding, no matter how unimportant, potentially threatened the Entente and accordingly Paris, as mentioned above, constantly voiced its unease about Anglo-German talks or cooperation in Balkan matters. Studying the history of the Entente Cordiale during the Balkan Wars (and above all French nervousness concerning Anglo-German relations) can illustrate this aspect of international politics before 1914 quite clearly. 'The slightest civility shown by us to Germany', the Foreign Office summarized, 'always produces this effect both at Paris and St Petersburg'.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Tel. from Paris, 21 February 1913, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, Frankreich 105, no. 1a, vol. 24. My translation.

<sup>59</sup> DDF, 3rd ser. vol. IX, no. 111 and *ibid.*, vol. X, no. 424.

<sup>60</sup> See Schmidt, *Frankreichs Außenpolitik*, pp. 228–9.

<sup>61</sup> Kießling, *Gegen den 'großen Krieg'*, p. 322.

<sup>62</sup> O'Beirne to Grey, 28 May 1913, Minute by Gerald Villiers, National Archives, FO 371/1651; T. G. Otte, *The Foreign Office Mind: The Making of British Foreign Policy, 1865–1914* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 375–8.

So what lessons did British and French politicians and diplomats draw from the Balkan Wars and how did their outcomes form their expectations about the future? It is certainly not easy to answer this question for Britain and France at the same time, as undoubtedly perceptions and experiences were not exactly the same. For France the peaceful settlement of course was important. During the Balkan Wars Poincaré and others believed in the peaceful mood of the German government. But this perception was not unchallenged. On the other hand, the uneasiness about the British-German *détente* remained or even grew. And French diplomacy expressed this uneasiness constantly in the months after the Balkan Wars. Concerning the European Balance of Power for French observers, developments on the Balkan Peninsula were rather reassuring. The military success and resulting territorial gains of the Russia-orientated Balkan states were seen as a further weakening of Austria-Hungary which – as a result – was undermining Germany's strength. As a consequence after the wars, French diplomacy pursued an even stronger alliance policy that now included Balkan policy as well.

For London, the peaceful settlement of the difficulties was the most significant result. The concert still worked and so did British-German cooperation. Looking back on the Balkan Wars, above all British diplomats had the impression that the crisis management of 1912/13 could work as a test case for future troubles. As far as Anglo-German relations were concerned, Sir Francis Bertie, for example, while visiting London in September 1913, got the impression that as a result of the Balkan Wars the 'Russian camp' within the diplomatic service had lost influence.<sup>63</sup> On the other hand, however, bloc-policy was still important and Grey also learned from the Balkan troubles that the uneasiness of the Entente partners must be taken seriously. Therefore, maintaining close contact with Germany and at the same time caring for his Triple Entente partners was the key lesson Grey learned. Both lessons formed his diplomatic outlook after summer 1913.<sup>64</sup> In June 1914, Sir Francis Bertie visited London again. His report demonstrates the policy of bloc-politics *and* flexibility Grey followed since the Balkan Wars quite clearly. There was no doubt, Bertie remarked on 27 June, one day before Sarajevo, that Grey 'would continue the intimate conversations and consultations with France'. But at the same time the British Foreign Secretary thought that 'the German Government are in a peaceful mood and they are very anxious to be

<sup>63</sup> Note by Bertie, 28 September 1913, National Archives, Bertie Mss., FO 800/188.

<sup>64</sup> For a similar interpretation see the chapter by T. G. Otte ([Chapter 15](#), pp. 264–82).

on good terms with England, a mood which he [Grey, F. K.] wishes to encourage'.<sup>65</sup>

Thus, from an Entente Cordiale point of view, the lessons of the Balkan Wars were ambivalent. On the one hand, British and French observers were certainly well aware of the fact that the situation both in Europe and on the Balkan Peninsula was still explosive and irritations between the entente powers remained unsolved. But on the other hand, general war had been avoided and Anglo-German relations might work as a 'connecting link' between the two blocs in Europe. The instruments of the 'Concert of Europe' still seemed to be useful. Therefore, despite of all the difficulties, in London above all, there was an impression that governments had regained some free space of action, and some room to manoeuvre. While the Foreign Office thought that crisis management during the Balkan Wars was a success and could be repeated if necessary, observers in Paris were more sceptical. They looked at the Balkan Peninsula as a somehow new and important area of conflict between the two diplomatic camps in Europe. To summarize in a more systematic way, what British diplomats believed they learned was that European security could be separated from the situation on the Balkan Peninsula. In contrast, from a French point of view, as a consequence of 'the wars before the war' Balkan matters and European security were even more interconnected.

In July 1914, both lessons turned out to be rather disastrous. In Britain they contributed to London underestimating the new crisis for so long. As far as Paris was concerned, the danger existed that French security seemed to depend on the situation on the Balkan Peninsula in an existential way. For most French diplomats there was no room for manoeuvre in July 1914. It did not help that these two contrasting lessons could also be found within the Austro-German bloc.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Memorandum Bertie, 27 June 1914, National Archives, Bertie Mss., FO 800/187. This 'double policy' was also reflected in the existence of two political camps within the Foreign Office. See Otte, *Foreign Office Mind*, pp. 384–8.

<sup>66</sup> See Kießling, *Gegen den 'großen Krieg'*, pp. 238–9 and 312–13.





*Part IV*

The wars in the European public sphere



## 17 The Habsburg Empire's German-speaking public sphere and the First Balkan War

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*Tamara Scheer*

Historiography often draws attention to the Balkan Wars by explaining them together with other conflicts of the period, notably the Russian-Japanese War, Italian-Turkish War and the First World War.<sup>1</sup> Other historians interpret them as marking the final outcome of the political system of the Berlin Treaty in the Balkans and the end of a system in which the Great Powers shaped, without reference to the Balkan states or the Ottoman Empire, the political fate of the region.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to these broad geopolitical and diplomatic frameworks, it is important to take into account the public perceptions of the wars, how they were portrayed in the press and the meaning attached to the changes in the Balkans in 1912 and 1913. This chapter examines the shifting images of the Balkan Wars in Austria-Hungary, where the wars had particular repercussions, shaped by the Habsburg Empire's geopolitical interests in the region and its politics of nationality. In particular the relationship between the Serbian state, Serbs within the Habsburg Empire and irredentist claims amounted to a significant challenge for Austria-Hungary. Internal and external politics were deeply entangled in the foreign-policy thinking in Vienna.<sup>3</sup> Austria-Hungary was a self-proclaimed saturated Balkan power, without designs on territorial expansion.<sup>4</sup> These political and social circumstances meant that although newspapers in all languages in Austria-Hungary initially emphasized the conflict in the Balkans as a foreign war, they soon paid more attention to the internal challenges brought to the fore by this war.

<sup>1</sup> Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (London: Allen Lane, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> H. Yavuz and I. Blumi, *War and Nationalism: The Balkan Wars 1912–13, and their Sociopolitical Implications* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> P. Samassa, *Der Völkerstreit im Habsburgerstaat* (Leipzig: Dieterich, 1910), p. 126. There were around 2,500,000 Serbs in the kingdom, and in the Habsburg Empire around 1,800,000.

<sup>4</sup> Leopold Mandl, *Österreich-Ungarn und Serbien nach dem Balkankriege: Materialien zum Verständnis der Beziehungen Serbiens zu Österreich-Ungarn* (Vienna: Perles, 1912). The author was a Viennese journalist and well-known political writer. See also Hannig's contribution to this volume ([Chapter 13](#), pp. 241–8).

One would expect that the diverging Balkan interests of the two halves (Austria and Hungary) of the Monarchy would worsen the internal relationship, but in fact the opposite happened.

The German press – using the lingua franca of the Austro-Hungarian elite – looked for and found enemies and friends within. It seems that the experience and reported threats of the conflict had an impact on the empire's war- and crisis-planning which ultimately influenced the treatment of other subjects, such as the Serbs or the Czechs, during the First World War.<sup>5</sup> This chapter will show that the German public who considered themselves as the most (and sometimes only) reliable part of the Habsburg Empire did not react as a stabilizing factor. They did exactly the opposite, by stoking fears about particular ethnic groups. This took place while well-known political writers claimed that Serbs in the Monarchy were being influenced by propaganda directed at them from the kingdom of Serbia.<sup>6</sup> Animosity remained until the First World War, according to Mark Cornwall.<sup>7</sup> The First Balkan War was not the only Balkan experience which fostered friend/foe images based on ethnic background before 1914, but it was certainly an important and influential one.<sup>8</sup>

For centuries the Balkans were characterized by a diversity of religious faiths. During the nineteenth century this characteristic was enriched, but not fully replaced, by the idea of ethnicity and efforts to create political communities, including states, on national and ethnic lines. The declining importance of religion in representations of the Balkans is evident in the absence in the European press of references to the Balkan Wars as a conflict of cross against crescent.<sup>9</sup> The old 'oriental question' had become the Balkan question.<sup>10</sup> The Balkan Wars marked the end of the geopolitical post-Berlin-Treaty system, a part of European and

<sup>5</sup> T. Scheer, *Die Ringstraßenfront – Österreich-Ungarn, das Kriegsüberwachungsamt und der Ausnahmezustand während des Ersten Weltkriegs* (Vienna: Heeresgeschichtliches Museum, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Mandl, *Österreich-Ungarn und Serbien nach dem Balkankriege*, p. 79.

<sup>7</sup> M. Cornwall, 'The Habsburg Elite and the South Slav Question, 1914–18', in Lothar Höbelt and Thomas Otte (eds.), *Living Anachronism? European Diplomacy and the Habsburg Monarchy: Festschrift für Francis Roy Bridge zum 70. Geburtstag* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2010), pp. 239–70.

<sup>8</sup> For the Sanjak experience, see T. Scheer, *'Minimale Kosten, absolut kein Blut!': Österreich-Ungarns Präsenz im Sandžak von Novipazar (1879–1908)* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2013). The European reform mission to Macedonia was certainly such an experience: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv/Kriegsarchiv/Nachlasssammlung, B/58, Nr. 4, August von Urbanski, 'Das Tornisterkind' (unpublished manuscript).

<sup>9</sup> Anon., 'Wien, 17. Oktober', *Neue Freie Presse* (18 October 1912), p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Anon., 'Feuilleton: Kriegsbericht aus Wien', *Neue Freie Presse* (20 October 1912), p. 1.

Austro-Hungarian foreign policy for more than thirty years.<sup>11</sup> Austria-Hungary which for a long time had stuck to the geopolitical status quo in the region was forced to change political strategies quickly. The Ottoman Empire's European realm vanished after the Second Balkan War and the struggle for national independence which started in the nineteenth century came to its temporary end. Nevertheless, the would-be nation-states, Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgaria, were far from being homogeneous – and the wars also created minorities.<sup>12</sup>

In the course of the First Balkan War Austria-Hungary as an empire which incorporated several regions in the Balkans and which was as culturally and nationally mixed as the Ottoman Empire was confronted with the necessity of thinking about its own ethnic mixture, and its future. It numbered among its citizens Romanians, Serbs, Croats, Bosnian Muslims and a small number of Albanians. Therefore, although not a belligerent country, it was much more than a mere observer of the Balkan Wars. In 1911 Leon Trotsky asserted during a discussion with Bulgarian politicians: 'However, the problem of the Austrian Slavs would remain. A foreign war against the Slavs also means an internal war for Austria-Hungary.'<sup>13</sup> Austria-Hungary was volatile and prior to the assassination of Franz Ferdinand there were attacks against state officials, and a state of emergency had to be declared on several occasions. The background to these incidents was national challenges mostly from inside or outside the Habsburg Empire.<sup>14</sup>

It is worth examining the press reaction to these events.<sup>15</sup> As Pieter Judson notes, 'printed media sources tell the historian far more about their producers than about their subjects'.<sup>16</sup> By picking up his statement and following my thesis that German newspapers allowed a much closer

<sup>11</sup> On the Berlin Treaty, see H. Yavuz and P. Sluglett (eds.), *War and Diplomacy: The Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878 and the Treaty of Berlin* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2011), pp. 125–43.

<sup>12</sup> For an overview, see P. Ther, *Die dunkle Seite der Nationalstaaten: 'Ethnische Säuberungen' im modernen Europa* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> L. Trotzki, *Die Balkankriege 1912–13* (Essen: Arbeiterpresse Verlag, 1995), p. 186.

<sup>14</sup> Scheer, *Die Ringstraßenfront*, pp. 13–14. On emergency laws in effect in Bosnia-Herzegovina, see M. Ekmečić, 'Impact of the Balkan Wars on Society in Bosnia and Herzegovina', in Béla Király and Dimitrije Djordjevic (eds.), *East Central European Society and the Balkan Wars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), pp. 270–2; P. Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2006).

<sup>15</sup> F. Keisinger, *Unzivilisierte Kriege im zivilisierten Europa? Die Balkankriege und die öffentliche Meinung in Deutschland, England und Irland 1876–1913* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2008), p. 54; H. Potempa, 'German Armed Forces and the Balkans – Lessons from Southeast Europe', in Srdjan Rudić and Miljan Milkić (eds.), *Balkanski ratovi 1912/1913: nova viđenja i tumačenja* (Belgrade: Istorijski institut, 2013).

<sup>16</sup> Judson, *Guardians of the Nation*, p. 182.

look at internal challenges than at external crisis, various questions can be posed. What groupings appeared? Which discussions took place on the different sides of the Habsburg Monarchy? Which images of friend and foe can be traced and why? How had the belligerents been described in relation to Habsburg domestic politics? Which threat scenarios had been discussed and underlined by which arguments? What conclusions had been drawn in the media on the internal situation of the multi-ethnic Dual Monarchy? To answer this question I especially refer to one genre: New Year's stories for the years 1912 in retrospect and the prospects for 1913. These articles were self-consciously reflective, an attempt to make sense of recent events and to frame future directions. Moreover by New Year 1913 some of the major outcomes of the First Balkan War were clear, notably the collapse of Ottoman power, the emphasis on nationality in the debate on the territorial settlement and the establishment of the ambassadors' conference in London. While important issues, such as the creation of the Albanian state and the access of Serbia to the Adriatic remained unresolved, the challenges to Austria-Hungary were clear.

### Newspapers

During the nineteenth century the press in the Habsburg Monarchy, because of the rising literacy of its inhabitants, flourished in spite of restrictions. Newspapers mushroomed throughout the Monarchy, especially in larger cities. As Holly Case has shown, many of them worked under the auspices of spreading national language and culture.<sup>17</sup> For this chapter the focus is on the German-language press, not only because German was the lingua franca, but also because of the self-understanding of authors and many readers that they had been predominant and decisive in public institutions as well as the guarantors of a common imperial future. There were German-speaking elites in most of the larger cities of the Habsburg Empire, among them businessmen, politicians, scientists, military and civil authorities, and journalists. However, consumers were not exclusively German – some German-language newspapers dominated the media stage because of their economic and political influential readers. This study therefore does not stop at the borders of present-day Austria.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> H. Case, 'The Media and State Power in South-East Europe up to 1945: A Comparative Study of Yugoslav, Romanian, and Bulgarian Media', in Alina Mungiu-Pippidi and Wim van Meurs (eds.), *Ottomans into Europeans: State and Institution Building in South-East Europe* (London: Hurst, 2010), p. 279.

<sup>18</sup> G. Stourzh, *Der Umgang der österreichischen Geschichte: Ausgewählte Studien 1990–2010* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2011).

This analysis is based mainly on urban daily newspapers. To bring in the public debate of the two capital cities, Budapest and Vienna, I have focused on the most important papers: the *Neue Freie Presse*, the *Reichspost* and the *Pester Lloyd*. Some of these were directly connected with the highest civil authorities and printed their opinions and stand-points. In addition I analysed the newspapers of provincial towns. They can be split into two groups: those whose seat was characterized by a strong German minority or – to use Pieter Judson's words – was located in Austria-Hungary's 'language frontiers'.<sup>19</sup> This group consists of the *Prager Tagblatt*, the newspaper of a town which was inhabited by Germans and Czechs mostly, the *Marburger Zeitung* (German/Slovene), *Bozner Nachrichten* (German/Italian), *Czernowitzer Allgemeine Zeitung* (Germans, Ruthenes, Poles and Romanians), as well as the *Agramer Tagblatt* (Germans and Croats). On the other hand, I have also analysed newspapers from purely German cities located in modern Austria: the *Innsbrucker Nachrichten* and *Linzer Volksblatt*. I have decided not to take into account the newspapers of political parties although they were – as for example was the *Arbeiterzeitung* (Workers' Journal) – sometimes widespread and politically influential. Finally the chapter will show that the province *versus* capital, language frontier *versus* homogeneous region were more important in shaping perspective than the papers' presence in the Austrian and Hungarian halves of the Empire or their political background.

In addition to the written word, the symbolic language of caricatures and rhymes in the satirical magazines was influential. Many studies point to the negative influence of caricatures, especially the effects on those lampooned. In Serbia it was well known how Austro-Hungarian and especially German-speaking magazines portrayed them.<sup>20</sup> Widespread and well-known satirical magazines from the Habsburg Empire were *Kikeriki*, *Die Muskete* and *Die Bombe*, and although *Simplicissimus* was published in the German Reich it was often consumed in the Habsburg Empire. *Kikeriki*, for example, was not only anti-Semitic but directly offended other national groups. Even the advertisements discriminated: 'In *Kikeriki* only the advertisements of real Christian companies are allowed.' While daily newspapers often lacked images, the satirical newspapers offered – albeit distorted – images of people and ethnic groups.

<sup>19</sup> Judson, *Guardians of the Nation*.

<sup>20</sup> For a collection of examples of anti-Serbian caricatures, see M. Ristović, *Crni Petar i balkanski razbojnici: Balkan i Srbija u nemačkim satiričnim časopisima (1903–1918)* (Belgrade: Udruženje za Društvenu Istoriju, 2011).

### The shift of friends and foes

The German-language press offered a variety of arguments for their support of the Ottoman Empire – the centuries-old arch enemy – and the refusal to support Christian Balkan nations. Although this friend/foe image was intensively addressed during the Balkan Wars, a shift started many years previously following the Berlin Congress in 1878 and the Habsburg occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Sanjak of Novi Pazar.<sup>21</sup> The Sanjak experience enabled diplomats and officers involved to see the Ottoman and the Habsburg Empires on comparable terms. Both faced national movements and similar future threats, notably Serbia and the Serb national movement. Large Serbian minorities lived in both countries. In Sanjak Ottoman and Habsburg officials had worked together in response to this threat for almost thirty years (1879–1908).<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, after 1883 the image of the Turk and the Ottoman Empire changed in Austria-Hungary.<sup>23</sup> In comparison with public opinion in other European countries and newspapers it becomes obvious that Austria-Hungary stood almost alone in its support for the Ottoman Empire. Some countries before the wars had financially supported one quarrelling state. The public mostly stood behind the nation-states – supporters ranged from Swedish socialists to Irish nationalists. Outsiders found the structure of the Habsburg Empire complex and difficult to understand, let alone sympathize with. International observers, for example, viewed the Magyarization process in Hungary as the suppression of other ethnic groups.<sup>24</sup> Even its German alliance partner did not fully understand the system, as many Austro-Hungarian officials noted.<sup>25</sup>

The reasons for the German-language newspapers' support for the Ottoman Empire and dismissal of the nation-states were complex. The *Czernowitzer Allgemeine Zeitung* went some way to an explanation shortly after outbreak of the First Balkan War: 'An Ottoman success will be a

<sup>21</sup> Scheer, 'Minimale Kosten, absolut kein Blut!'.  
<sup>22</sup> T. Scheer, 'A Micro-Historical Experience in the Late Ottoman Balkans: The Case of Austria-Hungary in Sanjak Novi Pazar (1879–1908)', in Hakan Yavuz and Isa Blumi (eds.), *War and Nationalism: The Balkan Wars (1912–13) and Socio-Political Implications* (Salt Lake City: Utah University Press, 2013), pp. 197–229.

<sup>23</sup> M. Healy, 'In aller "Freundschaft"? Österreichische "Türkenbilder" zwischen Gegnerschaft und "Freundschaft" vor und während des Ersten Weltkriegs', in Laurence Cole, Christa Hämmerle and Martin Scheutz (eds.), *Glanz-Gewalt-Gehorsam: Militär und Gesellschaft in der Habsburgermonarchie (1800–1918)* (Essen: Klartext, 2011), pp. 269–91.

<sup>24</sup> T. G. Otte, '"Knavery" or "Folly"?, The British "Official Mind" and the Habsburg Monarchy, 1856–1914', in *A Living Anachronism*, pp. 119–56.

<sup>25</sup> Österreichisches Staatsarchiv/Kriegsarchiv/Nachlasssammlung, B/58, Nr. 4, August von Urbanski, 'Das Tornisterkind' (unpublished manuscript).



quick return of peace, a victory for Bulgaria will mean that the South Slavs lose their discernment completely.<sup>26</sup> The Viennese *Reichspost* summed up: 'On the Southeastern border a large state entity disappears that was not a nation state, and which had not any claims on the Austrian South-east because of a similarity of national interests. In place of the Turkish neighbour there are now enlarged national structures from which a desire is evident for further expansion.'<sup>27</sup> The Ottoman Empire was now openly declared a friendly state because of a similarity of national interests.<sup>28</sup> Although many of Europe's public debates did not share the fervour for the Ottoman side, all agreed that the current conflict would ultimately threaten Austro-Hungarian borders.<sup>29</sup>

Some commentators, notably in the *Pester Lloyd* in Budapest and *Neue Freie Presse* in Vienna, claimed that the war had broader consequences for Europe, not just Austria-Hungary. The *Neue Freie Presse* claimed in its cover story on 18 October 1912: 'Turkey is fighting not only for herself but for Europe.'<sup>30</sup> The fear of the possible outbreak of a 'general war' which would result in a 'suicide for Europe' was expressed.<sup>31</sup> Opinions like this had been expressed all over Europe.<sup>32</sup> Commentators demanded European intervention along the lines of the Berlin Congress of 1878 to avoid the prospective changes of power and borders by force. Nevertheless, from the monarchy's standpoint, a policy of neutrality was demanded, not only expressed in anonymous articles, but also through the Herrenhaus member Paul Ritter von Schoeller in the *Neue Freie Presse*.

The age-old topos of the faith war, the 'Cross against Crescent', which had been raised by many of the leading figures in the Balkan states, was dismissed as irrelevant in the face of nationalism. The cover story in the *Neue Freie Presse* added: 'experience has shown that wherever the urge to form a nation state is too powerful to resist, any attempts to face this development have proven fruitless'.<sup>33</sup> In retrospect, it can be read between the lines that it was expected that this process would threaten Austria-Hungary's status as multinational empire in the near

<sup>26</sup> Anon., 'Der Balkankrieg', *Czernowitzer Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2654 (20 October 1912), p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> Anon., 'Zeitenwende', *Bozner Nachrichten*, 20, 2 (3 January 1913), pp. 1–2.

<sup>28</sup> Anon., 'Oesterreichs Chancen in einem Krieg', in *Bozner Nachrichten*, 19, 239 (18 October 1912), p. 1.

<sup>29</sup> See Bormann's contribution to this volume (Chapter 14, pp. 249–63).

<sup>30</sup> Anon., 'Kreuz gegen Halbmond', *Neue Freie Presse* (18 October 1912), p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Anon., 'Feuilleton: Kriegsbericht aus Wien', *Neue Freie Presse* (20 October 1912), p. 1. This was also one conclusion of the Sanjak experience: Scheer, 'Minimale Kosten – absolut kein Blut'.

<sup>32</sup> Keisinger, *Unzivilisierte Kriege im zivilisierten Europa*.

<sup>33</sup> Anon., 'Wien, 17. Oktober', *Neue Freie Presse* (18 October 1912), p. 1.

future. Another well-known political term also changed. The 'alte Orientfrage' (Old Eastern Question) referred to in the editorial of the *Neue Freie Presse* only a few days after the outbreak of the war had changed in Viennese street gossip as well as in political discussions to an exclusive 'Balkan question'.<sup>34</sup> The wars for national independence had been uncoupled in the public mind from the Ottoman Empire (the orient) and so moved discursively and geographically closer to the Habsburg Empire.

The sympathies of the German-speaking newspapers lay solely with the Ottoman Empire. In the *Pester Lloyd* the traditional political attitude of Hungary was explained again and again: 'Our exposed position, our interests lay in areas where we do not want to lose our freedom of action. We have no reason to disappoint Turkey.' A policy of maintaining the status quo was demanded 'in this small geographically limited war'. A loss of political power in the region had to be avoided in any case, stipulated the *Pester Lloyd*.<sup>35</sup> In the days following the outbreak of the war, the threat of Pan-Slavism, in particular in connection with Russian aspirations, was repeatedly raised. 'Serbia and Russia are against the Habsburg Monarchy, who would immediately take advantage of every possibility of chaos in order to enrich themselves in the [Habsburg] Balkans.' Another story, titled 'The Hope for the Pan-Serb', emphasized the Serbian hope for Russian help, rather than support from Slavic brothers living in the Habsburg Monarchy.<sup>36</sup> Yet the German press viewed this Pan-Slavic propaganda of the Balkan states as directed at the Slav subjects of the Habsburg Empire. For example, a message of Slavic support from the Montenegrin King Nikola was published: 'We have always drawn attention to the liberation of our brothers.' The *Neue Freie Presse* commented: 'We hope that this strongly worded declaration will also have the power to keep the war within its narrow limits, and to prevent its spread beyond the Balkans.'<sup>37</sup> I shall show later that this active propaganda to win over the Austro-Hungarian Slavs to the side of the Balkan states would not have been necessary following the arguments of provincial newspapers.

### **From a foreign struggle to an internal challenge**

All newspapers recognized that the war would influence the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, more than the other European Powers – because

<sup>34</sup> Anon., 'Feuilleton: Kriegsbericht aus Wien', *Neue Freie Presse* (20 October 1912), p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> Anon., 'Budapest. 17. Oktober', *Pester Lloyd* (18 October 1912), p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> Anon., 'Hoffnung der Serben auf den Panslawismus', *Neue Freie Presse* (18 October 1912).

<sup>37</sup> Anon., 'Feuilleton: Kriegsbericht aus Wien', *Neue Freie Presse* (20 October 1912), p. 1.

of its 'ethnic correlations with the Balkan states'.<sup>38</sup> The incidents on the Balkans were 'touching the lifeblood of Austria-Hungary'.<sup>39</sup> The *Czernowitzer Allgemeine Zeitung*, using a medical metaphor, termed the empire a 'sensitive organism, and each external shock makes all parts vibrate'. The possibilities were stark: 'If we are not viable, we have to decay honourably.'<sup>40</sup>

When the language-frontier newspapers wrote about limiting the war, as for example the *Bozner Nachrichten*, it always included an observation on the behaviour of certain ethnic groups living in the Habsburg Empire.<sup>41</sup> While the *Bozner Nachrichten*, the leading German-language paper of Bolzano, saw a danger coming from the Habsburg Italians and Italy, those located in the east of the empire found it in the Ruthenes and Russia and those in the south-east in Habsburg Serbs and Croats and Serbia. But all agreed that there was a latent and growing threat by the Habsburg Slavs.

The *Reichspost* compared the challenges to the Ottoman Empire with Austria-Hungary's own internal national struggle.<sup>42</sup> It repeatedly clamoured for political changes in the Dual Monarchy. The *Neue Freie Presse* saw a danger in the fact that the Balkan War had forced the 'recognition of the principle that the Balkans belong to the Balkan peoples. We can enjoy the fruits only if the politicians understand internal politics, that after the turn in the Balkans, the Austrian peoples cannot be ruled like the last 40 years'.<sup>43</sup> This stirred criticisms of Dualism and an emphasis on Slavic interests. Austro-Hungarian inflexibility because of their handling of the ethnically mixed population (by allowing Hungarian suppression of their Slav citizens) was not exclusively stated in Austro-Hungarian newspapers – and did not start with the Balkan Wars – but was part of a wider European discussion.<sup>44</sup>

Important political events in the Dual Monarchy took place which reflected divisions. One was the meeting of the delegations, which occurred in the days after the outbreak of the First Balkan War. The

<sup>38</sup> Anon., 'Die Rückwirkung des Balkankrieges auf unsere innere Politik: Eine parlamentarische Rundfrage', *Reichspost*, 20, 1 (1 January 1913), pp. 2–3.

<sup>39</sup> Anon., 'Das neue Jahr', *Linzer Volksblatt*, 45, 1 (1 January 1913), p. 1.

<sup>40</sup> Anon., 'Neujahr 1913', *Czernowitzer Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2772 (1 January 1913), pp. 1–2.

<sup>41</sup> Anon., 'Oesterreichs Chancen in einem Krieg', *Bozner Nachrichten*, 19, 239 (18 October 1912), p. 1.

<sup>42</sup> Anon., 'Zeitenwende', *Bozner Nachrichten*, 20, 2 (3 January 1913), pp. 1–2 (from the *Reichspost*).

<sup>43</sup> Anon., 'Das Weib zu Endor: Einige Gedanken über die Möglichkeiten des Neuen Jahres' (1 January 1913), pp. 1–2.

<sup>44</sup> See Bormann's discussion of the Polish question in German politics in this volume (Chapter 14, pp. 259–60).

delegations dealt with the common problems of the Dual Monarchy. During a meeting of the Austrian chamber of commerce, Herrenhaus member Schoeller stated that for the first time in decades 'the old Austrianism' had become visible in the delegations, which struggled during quiet times but 'at critical times they gather under the protection of the throne'.<sup>45</sup> This statement was certainly an exaggeration. There may have been more unity visible amongst the ministerial cabinet than during peacetime, or between the two halves of the monarchy, but the often-reported internal fronts within the Habsburg Empire, visible in discussions during the meetings of the Reichsrat or Austrian parliament, show a very different scenario.

Over the next few weeks and months domestic political demands, which had been discussed for years, were debated more vehemently, for example the (long-planned) compromise with Bohemia, and the constitutional status of Croatia within Hungary. The Prague correspondent of the *Neue Freie Presse* summarized the request of the German Bohemian parties: 'The major political events outside the monarchy, led to a strengthening of the demands of the Bohemians, particularly the Germans, to achieve a solution, which had always been delayed by the Czechs.'<sup>46</sup> It had been the Germans who historically combated the compromise most vigorously. The following examples from parliamentary debates will show that the Balkan War did not create new divisions but exacerbated and consolidated already existing ones.

During these days the Reichsrat, or Austrian parliament, met for the first time after the summer break. Even before the first meeting it had become clear who supported which side of the Balkan War. The *Neue Freie Presse* reported on the main point of discussion in the Reichsrat: 'As someone who is standing with one foot in the Balkans which position should the Monarchy adopt to save its vital interests?' The newspapers then informed their readers of a special meeting of the Czech separatists, who considered how the events in the Balkans could be brought into parliament for discussion. In the subsequent parliamentary meeting the members of the German national association (Deutsche Nationalverband) were the only ones who emphasized the economic over the political consequences. Every party, every club was interested in the political results of the war.<sup>47</sup> The question of the official position of the Habsburg Empire towards its Balkan opponents dominated parliamentary discussions, in addition to economic issues.

<sup>45</sup> Anon., 'Die Delegationen', *Neue Freie Presse* (17 October 1912), pp. 6–8.

<sup>46</sup> Anon., 'Das Abgeordnetenhaus und der Krieg auf dem Balkan', *Neue Freie Presse* (23 October 1912), p. 6.

<sup>47</sup> Anon., 'Das Abgeordnetenhaus und der Krieg auf dem Balkan', *Neue Freie Presse* (23 October 1912), p. 6.

The South Slav deputies, around thirty-seven representatives, were absent from the first day, which was referred to by the *Neue Freie Presse* as the ‘abstinence of the South Slav’. The official reason was a planned state of emergency (the introduction of military supervision) in Croatia.<sup>48</sup> The newspaper reported that all South Slav delegates ‘make no bones about the fact that they sympathize with the Balkan States’.<sup>49</sup> The newspapers were also full of reports about individual deputies’ behaviour, and about who favoured whom. Recurring messages were published that in Laibach (Ljubljana), the Party for Croatian Rights (Kroatische Rechtspartei) and the Slovenian People’s Party (Slowenische Volkspartei) united in a common Croat-Slovene National Association (Kroatisch-Slowenischer Nationalverband). It was reported that delegates from Bosnia-Herzegovina were warmly welcomed by Slovenian inhabitants of the town, which was interpreted as an expression of South Slav togetherness. A Serbo-Croatian association had existed at Diet level since 1905, but favoured a unity of South Slavs inside the Habsburg Monarchy. By many observers in the Habsburg Empire, especially within the army, the Serbo-Croatian association were considered as Belgrade’s fifth column – a fear that had already turned into paranoia during the annexation crisis in 1909.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, during the critical months of 1912/13 this mistrust further deepened and spread over the whole empire through the German-speaking newspapers.

### **Support for the Ottoman Empire within Austria-Hungary**

The Habsburg German newspapers themselves supported the Ottoman Empire. With this narrative they followed official policy which was repeatedly addressed by pro-imperial politicians in the press (mainly with German and Hungarian backgrounds). This internal separation in the empire was always apparent – either from the cover stories or from the short reports on incidents at the frontlines.

The Ottoman Empire was described as an entity that was fighting for its survival. Declarations of victories from Montenegro and Serbia were shown as exaggerated while the Ottoman Empire’s troops’ behaviour was

<sup>48</sup> Scheer, *Die Ringstraßenfront*, p. 170; A. Suppan, ‘Ausnahmzustand in Erwägung: Die Verhandlungen über im Kriegsfall zu erlassende Ausnahmsverfügungen für Kroatien-Slawonien im Frühsommer 1909’, *Österreichische Osthefte*, 16, 3 (1974), pp. 254–63.

<sup>49</sup> Anon., ‘Das Abgeordnetenhaus und der Krieg auf dem Balkan’, *Neue Freie Presse* (23 October 1912), p. 6.

<sup>50</sup> Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, p. 88.

described as brave and courageous.<sup>51</sup> When news arrived about cruelties inflicted by Serbian and Montenegrin troops against civilians the newspapers eagerly took them up. The *Marburger Zeitung* claimed that 'Every decent person in Europe sympathized with the Turks.'<sup>52</sup> This practically excluded those in the Habsburg Monarchy who supported the Balkan states, especially the Czechs and South Slavs, from being thought of as decent.

The kingdom of Croatia enjoyed relative sovereignty inside the kingdom of Hungary after the Hungarian-Croatian Ausgleich. The trigger for discussions of the constitutional position arrived in the form – first as a rumour – of the planned appointment of a military rather than a civilian state commissioner. The government feared that the Hungarian South Slavs would show solidarity with the warring Balkan states. Fears were stoked in Hungarian newspapers that the Slavic population hoped to move away from Hungarian supremacy through militarization. For the *Pester Lloyd*, it was not a question of military necessity, but of the Hungarian constitutional position in the Dual Monarchy: 'If a General [as a state commissioner] could not be subordinated to Hungary, this would be a flagrant violation of the Hungarian Constitution.'<sup>53</sup> This discussion helped to deepen the distrust of Hungarians towards 'their' South Slavs. Hungarian politicians supported the Ottoman Empire, and following the newspapers the *Magyars* behaved accordingly. Apart from this incident for some months Austrian/imperial and Hungarian interests went hand in hand. This small *Burgfriede* between the two halves of the empire lasted only until the outbreak of the First World War whereas the constitutional future had been much more open for discussion in 1912.<sup>54</sup>

The German-speaking newspapers almost daily pushed new aspects of diverging alliances into public discussion. They continually printed messages on the reactions of ethnic groups of the Habsburg Empire. Under the title 'Voluntary Czech doctors' column for the Serbian Army' the *Prager Tagblatt* reported on Czech physicians who had offered their support to the Serbian government. They were even named, as for example 'Dr. Johann Levit, from the Czech Surgical Hospital went to Belgrade yesterday, and entered the Serbian army.'<sup>55</sup> On the same page, a call for

<sup>51</sup> Anon., 'Der Balkankrieg im Zeichen des Kreuzes', *Linzer Volksblatt*, 44, 242 (22 October 1912), p. 2.

<sup>52</sup> Anon., 'Macht geht vor Recht', *Marburger Zeitung* (19 October 1912), p. 1.

<sup>53</sup> Anon., 'Inland', *Neue Freie Presse* (18 October 1912), p. 8.

<sup>54</sup> See also on this discussion: Cornwall, 'The Habsburg Elite and the South Slav Question'.

<sup>55</sup> Anon., 'Tschechische Ärzte gehen auf den Kriegsschauplatz', *Prager Tagblatt* (20 October 1912), p. 2.

doctors to volunteer in the Red Cross was published. In the concluding line, the paper reported, Dr. Levit refused to join the Red Cross as he had decided to support a warring nation which in the near future would threaten the Habsburg Empire. That Serbia refused or even sent home many volunteers from Austria-Hungary – for various reasons – was conveniently not mentioned in the newspaper's articles.<sup>56</sup> In the end, however, many medical volunteers supported the Serbian war effort. Indeed, volunteers came from all over the monarchy. Interestingly, apart from Czech physicians a number of female physicians from Bosnia-Herzegovina went to Serbia, and we can only speculate on their motivations. Dr. Staka Čubrilović from Bosanska Gradiška, who had studied in Prague in 1911, went 'With the permission of the Austrian authorities in Sarajevo' to Serbia and worked in the Reserve Military Hospital in Kragujevac.<sup>57</sup> The newspapers did not report that volunteers went for purely humanitarian reasons or with the permission of the Austro-Hungarian government. The newspapers instead preferred to report cases such as Levit's.

In addition the press condemned individual leaders of national minority groups. The *Pester Lloyd* from Budapest reported on the Czech parliamentarian: 'Prof. Tomaš Garrigue Masaryk blindly trusts every dog on the street he meets in Serbia, while rejecting every argument of his own consul.'<sup>58</sup> The *Prager Tagblatt* commented: 'Dr. Adam Pribičević the Croatian politician, who was well known for his treason trial, had arrived in Belgrade and was greeted by the Serbian press as very likable.'<sup>59</sup> Messages like that in times of crisis helped to strengthen existing mistrust further in two ways: between ethnic groups, but also against elected political leaders. It was not only the Slavs of the Habsburg Empire who were accused of being separatists. Other ethnicities like Italians, Romanians or Ruthenes and their politicians were also reported as acting against the official state line (not favouring the Ottoman Empire). There was almost no mention of a single Croat or Czech who acted loyally and followed the official line. On the other side no German, Bosnian Muslim or Hungarian was depicted as being disloyal. The German-speaking newspapers did nothing to achieve a balance.

<sup>56</sup> Austro-Hungarian intelligence was convinced they were a fifth column waiting to strike back at the empire: Ekmečić, 'Impact of the Balkan Wars on Society in Bosnia and Herzegovina', p. 276.

<sup>57</sup> I. Lazović and R. Sujić, 'Women Doctors in the Serbian Sanitary Service During the Balkan Wars', *Acta medico-historica adriatica*, 5, 1 (2007), p. 77.

<sup>58</sup> Anon., 'Neue Enthüllungen Masaryks', *Pester Lloyd* (1 January 1913), p. 4.

<sup>59</sup> Anon., 'Dr. Pribicevic in Belgrad', *Prager Tagblatt* (19 October 1912), p. 2.



All over the monarchy German-language newspapers were full of statements that raised mistrust among Habsburg multi-ethnic citizens. The already-mentioned Herrenhaus member Schoeller underlined the mission of the Germans on 17 October. In his eyes the Habsburg Empire had been successfully shaped only through German cultural work ('Kulturmission') into a prosperous and Western state. Such views were also prominent in the press of the language borders. For example the *Marburger Zeitung* (from Maribor in Slovenia) reported: 'However from the proposition that power always goes before the law, we Germans have to educate, in particular those who are living at the borders and in the enclaves and outposts of Germanism in the South.'<sup>60</sup>

The reactions of single Habsburg citizens were mostly not discussed in the main articles about the Balkan Wars. They found their place further into the paper, normally after page three, usually under the category of miscellaneous news. In these, often very short, reports it became evident how much the events in the Balkans had a negative impact on the cohesion and stability of the Danube Monarchy. When dealing with internal political events, most newspapers shed light on the reactions of each ethnic group in the monarchy. It soon became clear that when dealing with the Croats and Slovenes, instead of referring to ethnic groups directly, journalists more often used terms like the 'South Slav problem',<sup>61</sup> as they did when writing about other ethnic groups of the Habsburg Monarchy. Sometimes they underlined these images through examples – for instance quoting a Croat Reichsrat deputy as saying: 'the hatred against the Turks also rests deep in us since childhood'.<sup>62</sup> This was intended to hammer home that the South Slavs would never support the Ottoman Empire which was supported by the German-language newspapers.

Newspapers did not only report on disloyal citizens; they also made room for articles about actions that supported the Ottoman Empire. According to Milorad Ekmečić the First Balkan War became a turning point for Bosnian Muslims. In a typical binary attitude every opponent to the Ottoman Empire was declared as a foe and any supporter as a friend. With officials in Austria-Hungary and in Bosnia-Herzegovina supporting the Ottoman Empire, Muslims were able to declare their loyalty to both the emperor and the sultan loudly on the streets.<sup>63</sup> The German Consul

<sup>60</sup> Anon., 'Macht geht vor Recht', *Marburger Zeitung* (19 October 1912), p. 1.

<sup>61</sup> Anon., 'Zum Reichsratsbeginn', *Tagesbote aus Mähren und Schlesien: Morgenblatt*, 62, 492 (20 October 1912), p. 2.

<sup>62</sup> Anon., 'Das Abgeordnetenhaus und der Krieg auf dem Balkan', *Neue Freie Presse* (23 October 1912), p. 6.

<sup>63</sup> Ekmečić, 'Impact of the Balkan Wars on Society in Bosnia and Herzegovina', pp. 262, 268.



in Sarajevo saw the positive public attitude of the Muslims as a reaction to the Serbian movement in favour for Serbia and Montenegro but noted that initially all ethnic groups behaved cautiously.<sup>64</sup> On 18 October the *Neue Freie Presse*, among others, mentioned the reaction of Muslims living in the monarchy. The Muslim community officially welcomed the outbreak of the war – as they expected a victory of the Ottoman Empire, ‘and they are all ready to rise to its defence’. A few days later, on 22 October, the *Neue Freie Presse* again looked to Bosnia-Herzegovina, where Albanians left from Sarajevo after they had signed up for the Ottoman army. The newspaper wrote: ‘The Albanians were accompanied by a crowd of Muslims, around 2,000 people, to the train station where the masses let out enthusiastic cheers for the Emperor and the Sultan.’<sup>65</sup> Not only the Muslims from Sarajevo did so: it was reported that ‘Hungarian boys’ were daily knocking on the Ottoman consul’s door in Budapest hoping to be enlisted as volunteers into the Ottoman army.<sup>66</sup> Unfortunately, most of these short contributions were not further commented on and were often reprints of messages and comments from foreign correspondents.

Interestingly, almost no similar declarations were reported from Germans – apart from nurses. The German-language newspapers drew a clear picture not only of friend and foe in the Balkan Wars, but of internal friends and foes: in the eyes of the German newspapers and surprisingly the Hungarians, Bosnian Muslims were deemed friends. Before 1912 many severe internal crises had their origin in the Austro-Hungarian Compromise, with Hungarian demands and imperial rejections. In the so-called ‘Fall U’ or case U (denoting *Ungarn* or Hungary) even military action against the Hungarian Kingdom was planned during the Hungarian crisis in 1905.<sup>67</sup> During the First Balkan War imperial and Hungarian politicians closed ranks and almost no single Hungarian was described as disloyal. On the other hand, the Czechs and South Slavs including Croats were classified by contemporaries and in Habsburg literature as the ‘most devoted subjects’<sup>68</sup> since the revolutionary years of 1848/49. In this time Croatian imperial regiments under Ban Jelačić had rescued

<sup>64</sup> Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, R 9161, Kaiserlich Deutsches Konsulat in Sarajevo an den Reichskanzler, 22 October 1912.

<sup>65</sup> Anon., ‘Die Moslims in Bosnien’, *Czernowitzer Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2657 (22 October 1912), Mittagsausgabe, p. 1.

<sup>66</sup> Anon., ‘Ungarische Freiwillige melden sich für die Türkei’, *Czernowitzer Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2654 (20 October 1912), p. 2.

<sup>67</sup> K. Peball and G. Rothenberg, ‘Der Fall “U”’, in Heeresgeschichtliches Museum (ed.), *Aus drei Jahrhunderten: Beiträge zur österreichischen Heeres- und Kriegsgeschichte von 1645 bis 1938* (Vienna and Munich: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1969), pp. 85–126.

<sup>68</sup> F. Wallisch, *Servus, Herr Oberst. Altösterreichische Militärgeschichte von Prinz Eugen bis Conrad von Hötzendorf* (Graz: Stiasny-Verlag, 1965), p. 33.

the Habsburg Monarchy from Hungarian insurgents. Reported separatist behaviour included all parts of society – not exclusively politicians but also nurses and simple people on the streets were known for their separatist behaviour. When including the slightly diverging regional national challenges in the German-language newspapers it became a war of a few loyal citizens against the bulk of external and internal enemies.

### **Retrospect and prospect on New Year's Day**

A particular journalistic genre, the summaries and outlooks for the year 1913 in the New Year newspapers should be referred to as they had been largely devoted to the events in the Balkans. Again the provincial newspapers wrote much more insistently by always adapting the war to their own regional national struggle. While future outcomes had been much more discussed and well balanced throughout the year 1912, in the New Year articles guest comments showed drastically changed opinions. Those consulted were a cross-section of influential public figures, including novelists, university professors of various disciplines, and politicians and all had a German (and some Jewish) background living in all parts of the Habsburg Empire especially on the language frontiers. Some Germans from the German Reich had also been asked, maybe to underline a shared nationality, togetherness and therefore common threats.

In the *Prager Tagblatt* the variety of public figures who were asked for their opinion and New Year wishes showed for whom the formation of public opinion was targeted. Prof. Max Dessoir, a Reichs-German psychologist, insisted: 'They are not outer points that dominate the discussion of the day, but the discussion of the Germanic culture dispute with the Slav. The battle between these two worlds must be fought, but the question is whether by war?' Roda Roda, an Austrian journalist and novelist, warned: 'The imagination of the South Slavs is highly flammable and burns brightly. At the borders of the Danube monarchy Serbia stokes the bonfires of easy victories. The Austro-Hungarian house is in danger. Do not take it easy! It's an affair of all Germans.'<sup>69</sup> Roda Roda, a former army officer of Jewish background, summed up in 1918 what many of the German newspapers even in 1912, while not directly addressing, propagated between the lines: 'A nation ["Volk"] which we

<sup>69</sup> Anon., 'Zwischen Krieg und Frieden: Neujahrswünsche für 1913', *Prager Tagblatt* (1 January 1913), pp. 2–3.

did not combat for centuries, which we protected, hated us, the only reason was because we owned what they desired . . . Hundreds of supportive contracts, thousands of concessions did not help to diminish Serbian hatred.<sup>70</sup>

Julius Wolf, Professor of Economy in Breslau (today Wrocław in Poland) sent the following 'wishes': 'The war was not just fought in the Balkans between Slavs and Turks, but between Slavs and Germans. Hungarian Chauvinism, formerly most irritated against German Austrian, is now, beset by Slavs, at a standstill.'<sup>71</sup> The struggle between Slavs and Germans appeared far less in the metropolitan newspapers and in cities which were predominantly inhabited by Germans. Nevertheless, Slavic solidarity, particularly the feared demand of national unification and independence, was only supported by a 'small proportion of educated and semi-educated opinion' as Stevan Pavlowitch said of the Yugoslav idea. However, as he added, among its younger adherents there were 'actual and potential revolutionaries'.<sup>72</sup> Holly Case wrote that 'the press in the Croat and Slovene lands showed a diehard loyalty and devotion to the Habsburg Emperor right up until the First World War'.<sup>73</sup> In the end German newspapers seemingly were not interested in how the majority thought but only portrayed those whose actions were in their eyes disloyal. The same prejudices and stereotypes were continually repeated. In the end this kind of coverage surely helped to draw the boundaries between friend and foe and had a more destabilizing influence on the Empire than the few hundred passionate active supporters of the belligerent nation-states. Although the capital's newspapers wrote more discreetly, many German speakers consumed regional publications.

Not only in the New Year wishes but also throughout the months before and after the turn of the year it became obvious that the German-language newspapers reached a consensus in their explanations of the incidents in the Balkans. Quickly the theme of the Balkan Wars changed from a perspective of an outside war to one with possible consequences for the multi-ethnic Habsburg Empire. Also the images of friend and foe were comparable. In contrast to the newspapers located in purely German cities and those in the capitals, the German-language newspapers on the 'language frontiers' held much more radical views. Provincial

<sup>70</sup> Roda Roda, *Serbisches Tagebuch* (Berlin-Vienna: Ullstein, 1918), p. 9.

<sup>71</sup> Anon., 'Zwischen Krieg und Frieden. Neujahrswünsche für 1913', *Prager Tagblatt* (1 January 1913), pp. 2–3.

<sup>72</sup> Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *A History of The Balkans 1904–1945* (London and New York: Longman, 1999), p. 208.

<sup>73</sup> Case, *The Media and State Power in South-East Europe up to 1945*, p. 284.

newspapers wrote about topics such as the threat to Germandom and on personalities of Slav origin who worked against the common state idea – always by showing their specific regional based interests. Interestingly, those (German speakers) who voiced their support for a common imperial future were those who also stoked fear in these crucial months.

From the first day on, although Austria-Hungary did not take part, the incidents in the Balkans were discussed from the point of view of the consequences for Austria-Hungary's internal disputes on the national question. The public discussion showed that unity was in no sense a word which described Austria-Hungary. It shows that to formulate a future foreign and internal policy – supported by public opinion – was difficult, even impossible to achieve. Many groups favoured one group or another because of their ethnic background and not because of political aspirations (for example Social Democrats against Liberals). Although the German public debate during the First Balkan Wars brought new supporters to the imperial idea – like the Bosnian Muslims – in the end it showed drastically that the inhabitants of the Habsburg Empire had been seen and assessed through their ethnic belonging only. For example, a doctor who went to give medical support to one of the belligerents was always seen in ethnic terms – as a Czech, Croat or Hungarian – rather than as a doctor and humanitarian. The reactions of some of the Austro-Hungarian ethnic groups, especially the South Slavs, had surely been a foundation for the implementation of severe – extremely violent – measures against Czechs and Serbs in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy during the First World War.<sup>74</sup>

At the end of May 1913 the European Powers were involved in the peace treaty. They had not intervened as directly as demanded by the newspapers. The Balkan War had created neither at the diplomatic level, nor within, new fronts for Austria-Hungary. But the War had, however, caused the house to become more unstable. The empire was 'strukturell überfordert' or overextended structurally. Old enemies inside had been strengthened. Religious war belonged to the past: war for national unification was again proven as the future and successful concept. These national aspirations would not stop at the monarchy. All the newspapers more or less directly addressed these points of view. The public debate clearly showed that there was no unity and no common interest in the Habsburg Empire. Loyalties were described not as a result of political ideology but of ethnic belonging. It is interesting that no conflict actually

<sup>74</sup> Scheer, *Die Ringstraßenfront*.

broke out between the two halves of the Empire during the war. The Danube Monarchy withstood this stress test – in spite of articles and discussions full of hatred. The least serious possibilities that had been discussed were ideas and suggestions of how to maintain a common future for the multinational empire.

## 18 From 'illusion' and 'Angellism' to détente – British radicals and the Balkan Wars

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*Andreas Rose*

For many radicals inside and outside parliament the declaration of war in 1914 came unexpectedly. Only two days before, on 2 August, the majority within the Cabinet had rejected any commitment. One of the most prominent radicals, Colonial Secretary Lewis Harcourt, had still been convinced on 31 July, that 'this Cabinet will never join in this war'.<sup>1</sup> In Parliament neither Noel Buxton nor Arthur Ponsonby, the two most outspoken critics of Britain's international relations, showed any particular concern that the tensions following the Archduke Franz Ferdinand's assassination on 28 June would trigger a catastrophic war among the Great Powers. Though Ponsonby's declaration on 10 July of his deep trust in the Foreign Secretary Edward Grey's conduct of foreign affairs might have been understood as a broad hint how to deal with the current international crisis, it is, in retrospect, striking how clearly he relied on Grey's experiences during the Balkan Wars, two years before, as a blueprint for preventing a worsening of the situation.

That was the time when the policy of the balance of power in Europe was being very strongly supported – the policy of dividing Europe into two armed and hostile camps... Then came the trouble in the Balkans and things changed. The policy of the balance of power was exchanged for concerted action among the powers... Let me say that we owe a deep debt of gratitude to the Foreign Secretary for this improvement.<sup>2</sup>

The same trust was reflected by the majority of the press, which by then had not realised a serious danger of war.<sup>3</sup> Two years previously, however,

<sup>1</sup> Lewis Harcourt, Cabinet Notes, 31 July 1914, Harcourt Mss., Bodleian Library Oxford (BOD), unnumbered; J. Morley, 'Memorandum on Resignation', London 1928, Morley Mss., BOD, MS. Eng.d.3584, fols. 41–65. See also: K. Wilson, 'The British Cabinet's Decision for War, 2 August 1914', *British Journal of International Studies*, 1 (1975), pp. 148–59.

<sup>2</sup> Ponsonby, Commons, 10 July 1914, Hansard, Parliamentary Debates, 5th Series, vol. 64, col. 1397.

<sup>3</sup> D. C. Watt, 'British Reactions to the Assassination at Sarajevo', *European History Quarterly*, 1 (1971), pp. 233–47.

the elite public sphere of London had been constantly alarmed about the course of British foreign policy.

On the eve of the Balkan Wars Grey, foreign secretary since 1905, had to face serious criticism especially within the ranks of his own party and the liberal press. For years radicals disagreed with his general course of a rapprochement towards Russia and objected to armaments and the secrecy of diplomacy. For the *Economist* the liberal government did not appreciate the diplomatic means of free trade, whereas the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Daily News*, the *Nation*, the *Fortnightly* as well as the *Contemporary Review* warned against balance of power politics, a pro-Russian bias and the isolation of Germany. The *Westminster Gazette* of Grey's close friend, John Alfred Spender, was the only influential liberal paper that supported the foreign secretary. However, after the liberal estimation of his foreign policy reached its lowest ebb, the First Balkan War re-established radical faith in Grey and their critique suddenly faded away.

Historians have rarely examined contemporary critics and their alternative approaches to and ideas for London's foreign policy. Very early these dissenters have been judged rather pejoratively as a mere minority of 'trouble makers', whose critique broke off simply because they 'had won' and Grey had 'adopted their policy' of reviving concert diplomacy and seeking détente with the Kaiserreich.<sup>4</sup> Although this was soon doubted as too simplistic a model of explanation, radical views have seldom received attention.<sup>5</sup> Another explanation for neglecting the radical views on international relations directly counters Taylor's thesis of radical success. It argues that they have long been judged as a group who together with some quixotic pacifists have been termed 'the least successful political movement before 1914' and had therefore caused only minor excitement.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, as an intellectual and highly heterogeneous minority reflecting more or less theoretically on international relations, dissenters' views are very difficult to grasp: also, they never belonged to the so-called 'official mind' that has long been the focal point of British diplomatic history. Strikingly, contemporary criticism upon British prewar diplomacy questions not only the general assumption of continuity in Britain's foreign

<sup>4</sup> A. J. P. Taylor, *The Trouble Makers: Dissent over Foreign Policy, 1792–1939* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1956), p. 125.

<sup>5</sup> C. A. Cline, 'E. D. Morel and the Crusade against the Foreign Office', *Journal of Modern History*, 39, 2 (1967), pp. 126–37; J. A. Murray, 'Foreign Policy Debated: Sir Edward Grey and his Critics, 1911–1912', in L. Parker Wallace and W. C. Askew (eds.), *Power, Public Opinion and Diplomacy* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1959), pp. 140–71; H. S. Weinroth, 'The British Radicals and the Balance of Power, 1902–1914', *Historical Journal*, 13, 4 (1970), pp. 653–82; A. J. A. Morris, *Radicalism against War, 1906–1914: The Advocacy of Peace and Retrenchment* (London: Longman, 1972).

<sup>6</sup> N. Ferguson, *The Pity of War 1914–1918* (London: Penguin, 1998), p. 20.

policy but also the orthodox interpretation of Grey as the figure who was least responsible among European statesmen for the deterioration of the states system and the only one who had really tried to prevent the 'seminal catastrophe', but who finally was forced to intervene against German aggression.

In recent years, however, historians have begun to question orthodox views as well as to establish alternative approaches to the study of British policy. Hence, they have increasingly set aside 'official mindsets' and looked at the whole process of political decision-making.<sup>7</sup> Taking Britain as the epitome of a complex parliamentary system before 1914, foreign political debates, especially criticism and alternative ideas, can help to understand the working of national and international systems, to decode the complex interrelation of domestic, foreign and imperial spheres and lead to new or at least qualified interpretation.

The following sections, therefore, deal with these alternative considerations. At first this chapter focuses on the general foreign political positions and criticism of Grey's international course. Secondly, it discusses radical opinion on the Balkan Wars, their sudden chorus of praise on Grey's crisis management, and finally it turns to his actual diplomacy at the London conferences.

### **The keys to radical foreign policy**

Edwardian radicals saw themselves as heirs of William Gladstone, especially in their approach to matters of foreign affairs. He had championed not only the idea of a European Concert but also the idea of self-determination for the Balkan peoples and had injected a moral tone into foreign policy. Furthermore, he had elevated 'peace, retrenchment, and reform' to become the key principles Edwardian Liberals cherished.<sup>8</sup> The belief that reduction of armaments, that free trade and finance and a democratic and open way of diplomacy and political cooperation could bring about an end to war and safeguard international stability had a long tradition. It at least goes back to Thomas Paine who had argued that man *per se* wasn't his own enemy, but a false government was. Imbued with Gladstone's vision of a Concert of self-constituted nations, always intent upon finding cooperative solutions to the problems of international

<sup>7</sup> D. Geppert, *Pressekriege: Öffentlichkeit und Diplomatie in den deutsch-britischen Beziehungen (1896–1912)* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2008); A. Rose, *Zwischen Empire und Kontinent: Britische Außenpolitik vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> Gladstone 1879 cited in W. E. Gladstone, *Midlothian Speeches 1879*, ed. M. R. D. Foot (Leicester University Press, 1971), p. 90.



anarchy, radicals also generally rejected the Palmerstonian way of thinking of Britain as a *tertius gaudens* of continental tensions.<sup>9</sup>

Rather, they assigned a leading role to England in the quest for peace. Sensitive not only to international stability but also to dangers which beset the security of their own country and the effect that external affairs had upon internal social and political development, they took pains not to detach themselves from the sympathies and duties to government and to the rest of the world. Traditionally opposed to entangling alliances, they had one uniting principle: an axiom of nineteenth-century British diplomacy so to speak, namely that any arrangement into which Britain entered should not deprive her of liberty of action on charting future policy. The prerequisite was to retain a degree of detachment from foreign affairs which would enable London to avoid involvement in wars where no immediate British interests were at stake or giving unconditional support to aggressive acts of other states, while permitting the role of an international arbiter or pacificator mediating between the powers. These key principles frequently led to contradictions, especially in the age of imperial expansion, power politics and national movements.<sup>10</sup>

By the turn of the century dissent had changed its platform. Whereas during most of the nineteenth century parliament was the dominating forum of public political discourse, debate and argument, by the 1880s and 1890s this transferred more and more to the extra-parliamentary sphere where the dominant organ was the press.<sup>11</sup> The shift had first become obvious over the Bulgarian Horrors in the mid 1870s. Where previously the House of Commons had coerced ministers to a certain course, now 'the people', agitated by Gladstone's Midlothian Campaign, coerced the House of Commons.<sup>12</sup>

Towards the turn of the century the press became better informed and increased its influence. Someone with an intelligent interest in foreign affairs would no longer only plod through the columns of Hansard and he would certainly not rely on the blue books edited by the Foreign Office. Instead, he would read George H. Perris on armaments and international

<sup>9</sup> H. Brailsford, 'Germany and the Balance of Power', *Contemporary Review*, 102 (1912), pp. 18–26.

<sup>10</sup> G. L. Bernstein, 'Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and the Liberal Imperialists', *Journal of British Studies*, 23, 1 (1983), pp. 105–24; G. L. Bernstein, *Liberalism and Liberal Politics in Edwardian England* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1986), pp. 166–96.

<sup>11</sup> M. Hampton, 'Liberalism, the Press, and the Construction of the Public Sphere: Theories of the Press in Britain, 1830–1914', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 37, 1 (2004), pp. 72–92.

<sup>12</sup> J. Morley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone*, vol. II (London: Macmillan, 1907), pp. 552, 560.

affairs,<sup>13</sup> Henry Brailsford on Macedonia,<sup>14</sup> Edward Granville Brown on Persia,<sup>15</sup> Edmund D. Morel on Morocco and the Congo,<sup>16</sup> Robert Seton-Watson on Austria-Hungary,<sup>17</sup> Mary E. Durham on Albania<sup>18</sup> and Emile J. Dillon on Russia and the Balkans<sup>19</sup> or well-known publicists like Leopold J. Maxse, James L. Garvin, John A. Spender, Thomas W. Stead and many others.<sup>20</sup> And he would be better informed and have more diverse arguments at hand than if he had stuck to official channels.<sup>21</sup> The nineteenth century had nothing to show like the galaxy of the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Speaker*, the *Nation* or the *Economist* – to say nothing of the Socialist papers like *New Age* or periodicals like the *Fortnightly Review* or the *Contemporary Review*. These were the platform of dissenting writers of literary distinction: John A. Hobson, Norman Angell, Lowes Dickinson, Emile J. Dillon or Henry W. Massingham, to name but a few. Apart from certainly being more prolific and far more read than Richard Cobden and John Bright ever had been, many of these authors had personal contact with politicians and diplomats. At the same time, however, radicals in parliament carried less weight, especially as far as foreign politics were concerned. Only experts within the field remember Wilfred Lawson, Philip Stanhope, Josiah Wedgwood, Noel Buxton or Arthur Ponsonby. Parliament, therefore, was ceasing to be the direct sounding-board of the nation.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, after the Liberal Party split over home rule in the mid-1880s a further schism over foreign affairs seemed more than unlikely. Radical MPs not only lost their influence, they mostly swallowed a distasteful foreign policy for the sake of party unity, old-age pensions or the taxation of land values. Especially after the South African War, when large numbers of radicals were attacked as pro-Boers and the Liberal Party lost the Khaki elections, the two party wings of radicals and liberal imperialists reached something like an unspoken agreement. While the liberal imperialists around Edward Grey, Richard Haldane and Herbert Henry Asquith took over foreign

<sup>13</sup> G. H. Perris, *Our Foreign Policy and Sir Edward Grey's Failure* (London: Andrew Melrose, 1912), esp. pp. 192–225.

<sup>14</sup> H. N. Brailsford, *Macedonia: Its Races and Their Future* (London: Methuen, 1903); M. Leventhal, *The Last Dissenter: H. N. Brailsford and His World* (Oxford University Press, 1985).

<sup>15</sup> E. G. Browne, *The Persian Revolution of 1905–1909* (Cambridge University Press, 1910).

<sup>16</sup> E. D. Morel, *Morocco in Diplomacy* (London: Smith Elder, 1912).

<sup>17</sup> R. W. Seton-Watson played an active role in encouraging the breakup of Austria-Hungary. He frequently wrote for the *Spectator*.

<sup>18</sup> M. E. Durham wrote seven books on Balkan affairs.

<sup>19</sup> E. J. Dillon wrote on Foreign Affairs for the *Contemporary Review*.

<sup>20</sup> On the wide network of journalists, see Rose, *Empire*, pp. 41–106.

<sup>21</sup> Taylor, *Trouble Makers*, p. 95. <sup>22</sup> Taylor, *Trouble Makers*, p. 95.

and defence matters, the majority of radicals led by Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Lord Loreburn, Sydney Buxton and Lloyd George rather focused on domestic reform and retrenchment. Nevertheless, resulting debates among radicals, truly pacifist sections, imperialists and other groups remained intense.

**Statesman by 'character and tradition rather than ability'**

A closer look at the public voices and debates on foreign policy reveals that though radical MPs and commentators had no explicit say in the actual decision-making, their arguments were still constantly present in the foreign policy process in Edwardian Britain. Especially until the outbreak of the First Balkan War in October 1912, radicals were anything but impressed by the conduct of their own foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey. As a matter of fact, Grey rather seemed a liability than an asset to many dissenters, lacking any liberal principles, failing to control events and what was even more alarming appearing as a deluded victim to 'fixed ideas'.<sup>23</sup>

According to the *Nation*, a leading mouthpiece of foreign political dissent, Grey had been anything but a suitable foreign secretary. Henry Massingham's periodical even attacked him personally, by observing that England was 'the one country on earth which still chooses its statesmen by character and tradition rather than by achievement and ability'.<sup>24</sup> This harsh attack had its origin in Grey's neglect of the foreign policy views of the majority of the party. Writing to David Lloyd George, Arthur Ponsonby complained about there being 'so much concealment and mystery' around British foreign policy, especially as concerned the talks between Grey and Sazonov at Balmoral in September 1912, about which even *The Times* got more information than the MPs. But 'the outlook in Foreign affairs' seemed too 'serious' than to leave to the Foreign Office circles alone. He even recognised 'blunder after blunder' in Grey's diplomacy towards Russia.<sup>25</sup> For years Grey had left no opportunity to show that only his diplomatic advisors counted. However, it was not only because

<sup>23</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 26 August 1912, cited in Morris, *Radicalism*, p. 348; *Daily News*, 23 September 1912; Perris, *Foreign Policy*, pp. 211–25. This view on Grey was echoed by H. G. Wells who sat with Grey in the Coefficients. H. G. Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography* (London: Gollancz, 1934), pp. 657–8. On the political impact of the informal dining club, the Coefficients, see Rose, *Empire*, pp. 121–7.

<sup>24</sup> 'The personality of Sir Edward Grey', *Nation*, 20 January 1912, pp. 648–50, 648.

<sup>25</sup> Ponsonby to Lloyd George, September 1912, Arthur Ponsonby Mss., BOD, MSS Eng. hist. c. 659/80–82.

of the detested secrecy of diplomacy that Grey found himself under fire, it was also the international armament race and his foreign political course in general, that had brought radicals to the barricades. Leonard T. Hobhouse and Arthur Ponsonby even thought the 'last remnant of Liberals at the Foreign Office died with Lord Salisbury'.<sup>26</sup> As a liberal foreign secretary, it was claimed, Grey 'cares nothing for liberal ideas, divided Europe for imperial interests and is obsessed with Germany. That was why he put England together with autocratic Russia at the head of an anti-German power bloc.'<sup>27</sup>

The Anglo-Russian convention certainly marked a turning point in the dissenters' interest in foreign affairs.<sup>28</sup> Until then radicals more or less stuck to the unspoken distribution of tasks between the radical and the imperialist faction of the party. Cooperation with Russian autocracy, however, was anathema not only to rising labour and socialist groups but also to the majority of liberals and pacifist groups like the National Peace Council. The Tsarist habit of oppressing large parts of its peoples, repeated attacks on Jews and minorities, the dissolution of the Duma, the traditional Great Game of Anglo-Russian rivalry reflected by a never-ending story of tensions at the Straits, Russian pressure on the north-western frontier of India and anti-British intrigues in Persia provided ballast for liberal opposition to the entente.<sup>29</sup> For generations they had learned that St Petersburg was not to be trusted.<sup>30</sup> Whereas Prussia, notwithstanding that it was associated by many liberals with its doctrine of militarism, was still regarded positively as being capable of development because of the Reichstag and the Socialist Party, Russia and the 'humiliating bondage' with it remained abomination to many peace activists.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, unlike official justifications, it instantly appeared clear to contemporary critics that the Anglo-Russian Convention meant a sea-change in British diplomacy, not only as imperial relations in the Middle East were concerned. The détente with Russia unquestionably added also a new dimension to the alignment of European powers into hostile

<sup>26</sup> Hobhouse and Ponsonby at the Liberal Reform Club, 14 November 1911, *Manchester Guardian*, 15 November 1911; 'Wanted – An Ambassador of Peace', *Nation*, 25 November 1911, pp. 330–1.

<sup>27</sup> 'The Personality of Sir Edward Grey', *Nation*, 20 January 1912, pp. 648–50, 648.

<sup>28</sup> Rose, *Empire*, pp. 557–66.

<sup>29</sup> K. Neilson, *Britain and the Last Tsar: British Policy and Russia, 1894–1917* (Oxford University Press, 1995); J. Siegel, *Endgame: Britain, Russia and the Final Struggle for Central Asia* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2002).

<sup>30</sup> Taylor, *Trouble Makers*, p. 113.

<sup>31</sup> 'The Mirage of European Diplomacy', *Nation*, 30 December 1911, pp. 539–41; G. H. Perris, *Germany and the German Emperor* (London: Andrew Melrose, 1912), pp. 506–9.

blocs.<sup>32</sup> Just a year later the Bosnian annexation crisis revealed the degree to which Europe was in fact divided between the Triple Entente and the Triple Alliance. At first Edward Grey appeared as a pacificator defending international law. But before the crisis ended, the dubious role of the Russian Foreign Minister, Alexander Isvolsky, had become obvious. Nevertheless, Grey had raised Serbian hopes and had implicitly offered British support concerning the Straits at an opportune moment.<sup>33</sup> Emile Dillon confessed to Cecil Arthur Spring-Rice that the Foreign Office behaved 'more Russian than the Russians', for it spurred Serbian and Pan-Slavic dreams to the detriment of Austria-Hungary, Turkey and the whole Balkan region.<sup>34</sup> Henry Brailsford was even more convinced that Grey would sell south-eastern Europe altogether to Russia and Leonard Courtney lamented about Grey's pro-Russian crisis management which left the south-eastern periphery in disarray. 'The real malady', he wrote, was that because of British foreign policy 'the two alliance camps were becoming more defined. The Concert of Europe seemed no longer possible because there were no powers free from these groups . . . Our mediatory position is lost.'<sup>35</sup> Particularly striking about the systemic criticism of some of the most prolific liberal authors on foreign affairs was that they made a clear distinction between Balance of Power and Concert diplomacy and that they blamed Grey for risking the whole states system because of his thinking in fixed groups of the entente and the Triple Alliance powers.<sup>36</sup>

Against this trend, the Liberal Foreign Affairs Committee, eighty radical MPs and the liberal press demanded that 'Germany should be invited as a guarantee to peace, but instead Germany would be kept aloof while others strike their compacts'.<sup>37</sup> Especially the *Nation* but also the *Contemporary Review* and the *Fortnightly Review* became increasingly alarmed. By 1912 these periodicals had discovered 'a mobilisation of powers with

<sup>32</sup> Noel Buxton, Commons, 21 February 1912, Hansard, vol. 34, col. 691; Perris, *Foreign Policy*, p. 197.

<sup>33</sup> Rose, *Empire*, pp. 522–56.

<sup>34</sup> Dillon to Spring-Rice, 28 August 1909, Spring-Rice Mss., Churchill College Archive, Cambridge, CASR 1/33.

<sup>35</sup> *Daily News*, 20 November 1908.

<sup>36</sup> Commons Debate on Foreign Affairs, 27 November 1911, Hansard, vol. 32, e.g.: Macdonald, cols. 77–81; Buxton, cols. 118–21; Ponsonby, cols. 2615–20; 'The Trend of Foreign Policy', *Nation*, 11 May 1912, pp. 204–6; 18 May 1912, pp. 240–1; 25 May 1912, pp. 276–7; 1 June 1912, pp. 313–15; Perris, *Foreign Policy*, pp. 211–25.

<sup>37</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 27 May 1907, cited in Weinroth, 'British Radicals', p. 665; T. P. Conwell-Evans, *Foreign Policy from a Back Bench, 1904–1918: A Study Based on the Papers of Lord Noel-Buxton* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), pp. 58, 81–3; 'The Trend of Foreign Policy', *Nation*, 11 May 1912, pp. 204–6; Brailsford, 'Balance of Power', pp. 18–26.

England, France and Russia at its centre and Germany outside it . . . If this is a league of peace it has alarmed one nation capable of disturbing the peace.<sup>38</sup> It was not that the Radicals were *per se* pro-German,<sup>39</sup> though some undoubtedly were, for they saw Germany as being the core of Europe's cultural heritage, a cousin and a fellow trading partner.<sup>40</sup> The majority, however, praised Germany in contrast to Russia. Noel Buxton, one of the foreign secretary's most influential critics, summarised the radical impression that Germany was being 'penned in' and that he and his fellows preferred dealing with Germany than with the paragon of oppressive, autocratic government, tsarist Russia.<sup>41</sup> Buxton and Ponsonby left no doubt that they thought as the socialist Keir Hardy did when he stated just on the eve of the Balkan Wars in 1912 that if he was called upon to 'choose between the autocracy of Russia and the present German Government he would most unhesitatingly cast his lot on the German side'.<sup>42</sup> For liberal and socialist papers it seemed evident that balance of power politics and a risky game of isolating Germany were at the bottom of the rapprochement with Russia, much more than any question of Asiatic frontiers. Grey, according to the generally shared impression, was wantonly abandoning, if not betraying, liberal principles for the sake of a more than dubious and unpredictable friendship.<sup>43</sup>

Grey, however, stopped any open discussion by playing the unity card, both concerning the Liberal Party and the entente. As though the Anglo-Russian entente itself had not been a sufficient provocation to liberals, the Persian parliamentary regime collapsed under Russian pressure, with Britain looking on indifferently, if not with tacit approval;<sup>44</sup> the Agadir crisis in 1911 promoted constant further concern, especially as it was France not Germany that had violated the convention of Madrid, endangering the open-door principle in northern Africa.<sup>45</sup> There was a widely held impression that the Entente Cordiale had somehow been perverted to become a military alliance with wide-ranging, but as yet unpublished, obligations.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, some papers regarded the great financial advantages of the Anglo-French combination in contrast to the

<sup>38</sup> 'The Anglo-German Rapprochement', *Nation*, 10 February 1912, pp. 766–7; 'The Hope of an Accommodation with Germany', *Nation*, 23 March 1912, p. 1007; 'The Clouds in the Near East', *Nation*, 23 March 1912, pp. 1010–11.

<sup>39</sup> Watt, 'British Reactions', p. 237.

<sup>40</sup> Edmund D. Morel, Henry Brailsford and Noel Buxton are examples of such figures.

<sup>41</sup> Taylor, *Trouble Makers*, p. 115. <sup>42</sup> Hardy, cited in *ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Brailsford, 'Balance of Power', pp. 18–26; 'France, Russia, and Ourselves', *Nation*, 13 June 1914, pp. 405–6.

<sup>44</sup> Weinroth, 'British Radicals', p. 676. <sup>45</sup> Morel, *Morocco*, p. 151.

<sup>46</sup> Brailsford, 'Balance of Power', pp. 22–5.

'borrowing' Kaiserreich as a danger to the European stability.<sup>47</sup> However, the critique left its mark on the foreign secretary. After some radical papers even went so far as to demand his resignation in early 1912, he tried to approach the radical party wing.<sup>48</sup> The Haldane Mission therefore was meant to console the dissenters and indeed the Mission caused something of a truce over the summer.<sup>49</sup> Much to the dismay of Permanent Under-Secretary Arthur Nicolson, the permanent debates seem to have had some influence on Foreign Office views. Although an alliance with France and Russia would make Britain's position 'more secure', he feared that 'we are precluded from entering into any such understanding owing to our unfortunate parliamentary exigencies'.<sup>50</sup>

By end of September, the *Nation* even considered liberalism to be at stake and John Brunner addressed a personal letter of protest against Grey's foreign policy to the chairmen of liberal associations throughout the country<sup>51</sup> – Grey appeared disturbed because of this general uproar against his course. In a private letter to C. P. Scott, one of his major critics, he confessed: 'I am seriously concerned at the trend of a certain section in the Liberal opinion which seems to set no store by the peace we have enjoyed on our Indian frontier and seems to me to be quite reckless in attempting to make us take all Persia under our protection'.<sup>52</sup> At around the same time the party tried to silence Arthur Ponsonby as one of the major critics through offering him the position of a party whip<sup>53</sup> and by making the liberal press refrain from 'rocking the boat' with his last pamphlet, 'Democracy and the Control of Foreign Affairs'.<sup>54</sup> The growing tension between the Liberal Party wings even impressed

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25. The *Economist* saw a concentration of the financially strong powers around France against the financially weak central states. 'An Anglo-German Understanding', *Economist*, 15 February 1913, pp. 326–7; 'Germany – Signs of Depression', *Economist*, 31 May 1913, pp. 1346–7; for similar reasoning see N. Ferguson, 'Public Finance and National Security: The Domestic Origins of the First World War Revisited', *Past and Present*, 142 (1994), pp. 141–68.

<sup>48</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 10 January 1912; *Daily News*, 12 January 1912 and 15 January 1912; 'The Morals of the Jungle', *Nation*, 13 January 1912, pp. 610–11.

<sup>49</sup> Weinroth, 'British Radicals', p. 679.

<sup>50</sup> Nicolson to Grey, 4 August 1912, in *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898–1914*, ed. G. P. Gooch and H. Temperley, 11 vols. (London: HMSO, 1926–38), vol. X/2, no. 407; P. Morrell, 'The Control of Foreign Affairs: The Need for a Parliamentary Committee', *Contemporary Review*, 102 (1912), pp. 659–67.

<sup>51</sup> 'The Liberal Party and Foreign Policy', *Nation*, 28 September 1912, pp. 924–5; 'Towards a Liberal Foreign Policy', *Nation*, 19 October 1912, p. 125.

<sup>52</sup> Grey to Scott, 21 September 1912, cited in G. M. Trevelyan, *Grey of Fallodon: Being the Life of Sir Edward Grey afterwards Viscount Grey of Fallodon* (London: Longman, 1937), pp. 200–1.

<sup>53</sup> Ponsonby, Autumn 1912, BOD, Mss. Eng. hist. c. 659/92–3.

<sup>54</sup> Fifield to Ponsonby, 4 March 1912, BOD, Mss. Eng. hist. c. 659/58.



the conservatives who already saw chances to gain some political profits from their backing of Grey's foreign policy, especially when Italy took the advantage by suddenly pouncing upon Tripoli.<sup>55</sup> Again the radicals launched a campaign against Whitehall. They now suspected that some in the Foreign Office had given their consent in the hope of detaching Rome from the Triple Alliance. Indeed, against the warning of the Admiralty and doubts from France,<sup>56</sup> Grey seemed at first sight to sympathise with Rome.<sup>57</sup> Therefore the *Nation* had been perhaps closer to the truth than generations of historians afterwards when it stated: 'Italy must be allowed a free hand in Tripoli, because by our complacency we hope to keep her a semi-detached if not openly a disloyal member of the Triple Alliance.'<sup>58</sup> The Italian invasion of Tripoli not only endangered the stability of the Turkish Empire, but also destabilised the whole Near Eastern periphery originally meant to be a safety valve for Great Power rivalries, since the Balkan nations were impatiently waiting only for an opportunity to move against their old ruler. Hence, the *Fortnightly Review* and the *Contemporary Review* appeared certain: a war in south-eastern Europe would be only a matter of time.<sup>59</sup> However, the time for action arrived sooner than expected. Just six months later the Balkan League – comprising Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro and Greece – attacked the Ottoman Empire and triggered an international crisis. Within a few weeks the allies had driven the Turks back to Constantinople, and by December the Porte was forced to sue for an armistice.

### **A 'war of liberation' that threatened to spread**

Regardless of the recent criticism, by late 1912 the foreign secretary's name was on everyone's lips and his former critics were singing his praises with a fervour that would have been unthinkable a few months earlier. Suddenly Grey received a personal tribute from some liberal papers and the *Daily News* congratulated the government for its action as a mediator

<sup>55</sup> Bonar Law, 27 November 1911, Commons, Hansard, vol. 32, col. 69; Lord Balcarras to Bonar Law, 20 May 1912, Bonar Law Mss., Parliamentary Archives (PA), BL/38/D5; Maxse to Bonar Law, 20 May 1912, BL/26/3/32.

<sup>56</sup> Admiralty to Foreign Office, 31 May 1912, National Archives (NA), FO 371/1535; Admiralty Memorandum, 20 June 1912, NA, CAB 37/111/27; Bertie to Grey, 11 September 1912, NA, FO 371/1536.

<sup>57</sup> Grey to Nicolson, 29 September 1911, NA, FO 800/350; Rodd to Grey, 10 October 1911, NA, FO 800/64; Nicolson to Grey, 9 November 1911, NA, FO 800/93.

<sup>58</sup> 'The Mirage of European Diplomacy', *Nation*, 30 December 1911, pp. 539–41; C. Gade, *Gleichgewichtspolitik oder Bündnispflege? Maximen britischer Außenpolitik (1909–1914)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1997), pp. 138–45.

<sup>59</sup> E. J. Dillon, 'War and Peace', *Contemporary Review*, 102 (1912), pp. 715–20; 'The Future of the Balkans', *Nation*, 22 June 1912, pp. 427–8.



and moderator during the crisis, celebrating 'a most welcome change over the spirit of British policy'. The *Nation* soon saw a perfect chance for Grey not only to gain respect as an arbiter between the states but also to unite the Liberal Party on foreign matters.<sup>60</sup>

The dissenters' change of heart was rather surprising, because as everyone knew or could have easily suspected, it was detested Russia that stood behind the Balkan League and its war against the Ottoman Empire.<sup>61</sup> The change of opinion is explicable only in terms of the general condition of radical dissent both as concerns key principles like the renunciation of violence on the one hand, and the right of self-determination on the other, as well as within the structure of a party in government; their general understanding of international affairs and the dissenters' somewhat special relationship to the Balkan states under Turkish rule.

The Young Turk Revolution in 1908 had been welcomed by the radicals. It had been their hope that order would at last be restored in the Turkish dominions and that tolerance would be shown towards Christian subjects. Though the Balkan Committee in 1911 was still urging the British public to be patient, experiences with the Young Turks shattered any hopes. In January 1912 the Committee had sent a sharply critical note to the Porte. Conditions of life in the Ottoman provinces had not improved; the concomitant injustices and cruelties of a ruthless policy of Turkification were still the rule. The radicals, even the extreme pacifist president of the National Peace Council, Gordon Harvey, traditionally heralding a policy of non-intervention, were prepared to support international intervention.<sup>62</sup> At the height of Norman Angellism, who had proclaimed that war wouldn't pay any more, radical pacifists suddenly felt obliged to explain why they favoured the Russian-inspired Balkan League and their war against the Ottoman. Norman Angell, therefore, put in his book *Peace Theories and the Balkan War*, a work partly written to exonerate radical peace activists from the charge of inconsistency, a defensive slant on the war as one waged against a nation whose very *raison d'être* was one of aggression and conquest. 'The present war in the Balkans is an attempt – and happily a successful one – to bring this reign of force and conquest to an end, and that is why those of us who do not

<sup>60</sup> 'The New Power in Europe', *Nation*, 2 November 1912, pp. 204–5; *Daily News*, 23 November 1912 and 21 December 1912; Taylor, *Trouble Makers*, pp. 125–6; Morris, *Radicalism*, pp. 351–3.

<sup>61</sup> 'Clouds in the Near East', *Nation*, 23 March 1912, pp. 1010–11; 'The Action of Montenegro', *Economist*, 12 October 1912, pp. 660–1; T. Cvijic, 'The Genesis of a Great War', *Review of Reviews*, 46 (1912), pp. 512–21, p. 520; Politicus, 'The Eastern Question and European War', *Fortnightly Review*, 92 (1912), pp. 989–1000.

<sup>62</sup> P. Laity, *The British Peace Movement 1870–1914* (Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 208.

believe in military force rejoice.<sup>63</sup> Lady Courtney also confirmed this: 'War in the Balkans', she explained in her diary, 'has come after centuries of slaughter and unrest and come in the best way, if war can ever be a good way, by the rising of the subject races and not from the outside.'<sup>64</sup> In placing national self-determination above the credo of peace and stability in the Balkans, Angell, Courtney, Brailsford and others were following a well-established idealist tradition.<sup>65</sup>

At the start of the First Balkan War the liberal public had seen the greatest danger in a clash between Russia and Austria and the chance of the war spreading.<sup>66</sup> Hence, it was argued that the only suitable partner for London would be Berlin. Both should offer their mutual neutrality, because without Germany Austria would not dare to move and likewise London had to restrain Russia.<sup>67</sup> However, this put radical reasoning in a dilemma, since it would have meant that although the small Balkan states all had good causes to fight for their independence, their interests had to back down before the general interest of the Concert.<sup>68</sup> On the one hand, they refused any aggression, pleaded for international arbitration and cooperation against balance of power and in order to safeguard international stability and the Concert. On the other hand, they thought in terms of a 'justified warfare' and national self-determination of the Balkan peoples, not as pacifists but as pacifiers causing further heated debates among themselves. This obviously led to a fragmentation among radical ranks and to an inconsistent public outlook. The scope of different ideas concerning the Balkans absorbed radical thinking, and they could not ignore the fact that from the beginning they had hopelessly underestimated the Balkan imbroglio. Since the 1880s they had championed the Bulgarians and now their protégés rewarded their favour with unmitigated savagery, murder and rape. Radical uncertainty concerning the wars also challenged the demand for a European Concert, since Pan-Slavism and Slav nationalism threatened not only Turkey but Austria also, a traditional pillar of the European states system. Just as liberal radicalism thought to have new answers to international tensions, they had second thoughts. Some of the extreme pacifist wing strictly refused any

<sup>63</sup> N. Angell, *Peace Theories and the Balkan War* (London: Marshall & Son, 1912), p. 58.

<sup>64</sup> Cited in H. Weinroth, 'Radicalism and Nationalism: An Increasingly Unstable Equation', in A. J. A. Morris (ed.), *Edwardian Radicalism 1900-1914* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), pp. 226-7; 'War Scare in the Balkans', *Economist*, 5 October 1912, pp. 606-7.

<sup>65</sup> H. Brailsford, *The War of Steel and Gold* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1914), p. 190.

<sup>66</sup> 'Will the War Spread?', *Economist*, 19 October 1912, pp. 732-3.

<sup>67</sup> 'The Conferences and the Concert', *Nation*, 21 December 1912, pp. 481-2; 'Anglo-German Entente', *Economist*, 2 November 1912, p. 906.

<sup>68</sup> Morris, *Radicalism*, p. 351.

interference in Balkan affairs for reasons of principle.<sup>69</sup> Others demanded a British intervention on behalf of the Balkan states.<sup>70</sup> Those who were more hesitant thought of its wider international implications and called for arbitration to prevent a general conflagration. And it is especially the latter group that is important to consider in order to judge whether Grey had adopted their course or not.

To prevent the war spreading and inflaming Great Power relations, it was seen as essential that London should cooperate with Germany so as to control the situation. Without support from London or Berlin, it was argued, neither Austria nor Russia would risk a Great Power confrontation. From this breakup of the existing thinking in alliance camps, it was hoped finally to reach a new league of peace consisting of France, Germany and England.<sup>71</sup>

### **'From Saul to Paul' – Edward Grey's conversion to a radical?**

From 17 December 1912 to 11 August 1913 Grey presided over the Ambassador's Conference at London to prevent an escalation of the war and to reorder the Balkan region. The radicals' demand for a restoration of the Concert now seemed at hand. As the host, the British foreign secretary has been seen by contemporaries and historians alike as the arbiter of Europe.<sup>72</sup>

Commenting on the Balkan Conferences, the *Nation* admitted that 'The credit belongs in equal parts to the statesmen of Germany and Sir Edward Grey. They have found at least a consciousness of their common duties . . . There might evolve from this temporary association some permanent machineries of legislation.'<sup>73</sup> Even Arthur Ponsonby confessed that the foreign policy of dividing Europe into two camps 'has been abandoned' and thus brought a 'completely unclouded sky'.<sup>74</sup> For the first time Henry Brailsford found himself applauding Grey's mediating role. He credited England and Germany with having kept the peace and even saw in their cooperation the germ of the 'United States of Europe'.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Laity, *Peace Movement*, p. 209. <sup>70</sup> Brailsford, *Steel and Gold*, p. 190.

<sup>71</sup> *Nation*, 21 December 1912; *Manchester Guardian*, 26 November 1912.

<sup>72</sup> See Thomas Otte and Friedrich Kießling in this volume ([Chapters 15](#) and [16](#), pp. 269–74 and 286–97).

<sup>73</sup> 'The Triumph of the Concert', *Nation*, 10 May 1913, pp. 216–17.

<sup>74</sup> Ponsonby, Commons, 29 May 1913, Hansard, vol. 53, cols. 345–59.

<sup>75</sup> Brailsford, *Steel and Gold*, pp. 290–3.

However, did Grey really throw away his old bias for the entente powers and adopt radical ideas on reviving the European Concert? There is no doubt that there was a change in Grey's foreign policy approach. Just after the Agadir crisis and the massive critique upon his course he had for the first time 'considered that an amicable agreement' could be reached with Berlin, at least where minor interests were at stake.<sup>76</sup> From then on his policy turned to the dictum that though there might be separate groups of powers, they did not need to be in opposing camps.<sup>77</sup> Whether this signalled a slight distancing from anti-German and pro-Russian Foreign Office advisers like Nicolson or Hardinge cannot be dealt with here. At least it took the wind out of the sails of his critics. Radicalism, therefore, seemed successful: but how persistent and deep-rooted was this change in attitude? In radical eyes the London conferences suddenly seemed to turn international relations upside down. The Triple Entente was dissolving; the long advocated partnership of Germany, France and England just around the corner. A traditional course would have demanded support of the Ottoman Empire. If that for known reasons seemed impossible, a classical concert diplomacy would at least demand support for Austria-Hungary as a proven pillar of the states system.<sup>78</sup> However, Whitehall was anything but prepared to face Russia and the Balkan League by supporting the Dual Monarchy, not only because British public opinion was in favour of the Balkan states.<sup>79</sup> Taking sides openly with the mischief-makers as for example Nicolson or Buchanan wanted<sup>80</sup> seemed also impossible with regard to the Muslim population within the Empire and the radical opponents of an Anglo-Russian cooperation. British foreign policy therefore was trapped by domestic, imperial and continental interests.

To square this circle, Grey's aims were twofold: firstly, to prevent the spread of war and Great Power involvement.<sup>81</sup> In order to reach this goal he admitted parts of radical reasoning and therefore sought, at least temporarily, German cooperation to discipline Vienna.<sup>82</sup> For him it had

<sup>76</sup> Grey to Lloyd George, 5 September 1911, Lloyd George Mss., PA, LG/C/4/14/5.

<sup>77</sup> Grey to Goschen, 26 June 1912, *BD*, vol. IX/1, no. 428; Edward Grey, *Twenty-Five Years 1892–1916* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1925), vol. I, pp. 255–67. F. Kießling, *Gegen den 'großen Krieg'? Entspannung in den internationalen Beziehungen 1911–1914* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2002), pp. 95–108, 276–80.

<sup>78</sup> Politicus, 'Eastern Question', p. 990.

<sup>79</sup> Churchill to Lloyd George, 2 April 1913, PA, LG/C/3/15/21A; Gade, *Gleichgewichtspolitik*, p. 175; F. R. Bridge, *Great Britain and Austria-Hungary, 1906–1914: A Diplomatic History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972), p. 196.

<sup>80</sup> Nicolson, Minute, Buchanan to Grey, 9 October 1912, *BD*, vol. IX/1, no. 811; Nicolson to Lowther, 13 November 1912, Nicolson Mss., NA, FO 800/193A.

<sup>81</sup> Grey, Commons, 25 March 1913, Hansard, 5th Ser., vol. 50, cols. 1496–8.

<sup>82</sup> Goschen to Grey, 25 October 1912, NA, FO 371/1502.

been perfectly clear from the start of the Conferences that the Dual Monarchy 'would not hold against the pressure of all five powers' and had consequently to back down.<sup>83</sup> Secondly, and this is most crucial as regards the alleged policy change, the Anglo-German cooperation needed to be effected without alienating any of his entente partners. While expecting Vienna to back down he promised the Russian Ambassador, Benckendorff, his political support and that his primary object was to act in accordance with France and Russia (though in making it clear that Britain was unlikely to fight or to offer military support to Russia if it got into a war against Austria-Hungary and then Germany, this acted as an important qualification to his support for Russia).<sup>84</sup> Thus the decision how far Germany and England would cooperate depended on Paris and St Petersburg. That was the reason why the détente between Berlin and London was only a temporary one. For a time the balancing act was made possible because all concessions Grey made to Russia were at the expense not of Austria-Hungary but to the detriment of the Ottomans.

When by the end of February, however, the conferences were on the brink of failure on the question of Albanian frontier and of Djakova,<sup>85</sup> the Anglo-German détente was already past its best. By March 1913 Russia openly tried to take advantage of the situation and torpedoed the working of the Concert by supporting Montenegrin and Serbian intransigence.<sup>86</sup> Although Austria had finally assented to ceding Djakova to Serbia, Russia had not refrained from supplying Montenegro with armaments and thus undermining not only the Balkan situation but the whole effort of concerted action at the London conference.<sup>87</sup> Instead of containing Russian habits of mischief, however, Grey believed he had no choice but to appease the Russians.<sup>88</sup> Grey's brokerage at this phase was undermined from three sides – by his entente partners, by his own staff in the Foreign Office and by his colleagues in the Cabinet. While his proposal for a joint naval demonstration in the eastern

<sup>83</sup> Grey to Lloyd George, 21 December 1912, PA, LG/C/4/14/8.

<sup>84</sup> Benckendorff to Sazonov, 21 October 1912, *Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Ententepolitik der Vorkriegsjahre*, ed. Benno von Siebert, 2 vols. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1925), vol. II, no. 269, p. 553.

<sup>85</sup> Aide-mémoire Goschens, Appendix to Jagow to Tschirschky, 17 February 1913, *Die Große Politik der Europäischen Kabinette 1871–1914: Sammlung der Diplomatischen Aktenstücke des Auswärtigen Amtes*, ed. J. Lepsius et al. (hereafter GP), 40 vols. (Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte, 1922–7), vol. 34/I, no. 12862.

<sup>86</sup> Grey and Buchanan 21 March 1913, BD, vol. IX/2,1, no. 742; Paget to Grey, 28 March 1913, *ibid.*, no. 759.

<sup>87</sup> E. C. Helmreich, *The Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars 1912–1913* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1938), p. 300.

<sup>88</sup> Grey to Nicolson, 24 April 1913, Nicolson Mss., NA, FO 800/366.

Mediterranean<sup>89</sup> met with procrastination from St Petersburg and Paris,<sup>90</sup> Permanent Under-Secretary Arthur Nicolson in particular was constantly alarmed at offending the Russians.<sup>91</sup> The Cabinet at the same time declined any measures that did not have the approval of the Quay d'Orsay. Especially Winston Churchill warned against drawing Britain 'into any position distinct from that of France and Russia, and still less into giving any kind of support to Austria'. The unity of the Triple Entente, therefore, claimed priority over arbitration and the Concert.<sup>92</sup> Writing to Goschen on 23 April 1913, the foreign secretary complained about the entente partners, especially about Russia's active encouragement of Serbia.<sup>93</sup> Nevertheless, by this time the short phase of Grey's conversion to a radical, if that had ever taken place at all, definitely came to an end. The Foreign Office staff thought little of his mediating course between the powers of the Entente and the Triple Alliance. Arthur Nicolson put it in a nutshell: though the Ballhausplatz had acted with 'very great patience and forbearance', his concerns for Russian encroachments in the Middle East and his obsessive fear of isolation forced him to urge Grey to be more lenient to Russian misbehaviour and interests in the Balkans. That the Russians 'could be exceedingly awkward in the mid and far east . . . is such a nightmare to me that I would at almost any cost, keep Russia's friendship'.<sup>94</sup> It is striking that from now on Grey took great pains to coordinate closely the diplomacy of the Entente before the next ambassadorial meeting on 28 April 1913.<sup>95</sup> Behind the facade of arbitration and Concert diplomacy, entente and alliance interests had remained the order of the day. The crisis over Scutari finally meant the termination of the Anglo-German détente.<sup>96</sup> The Russian and Austrian

<sup>89</sup> Grey to Churchill, 12 March 1913, Mountbatten Mss., University of Southampton Library, MB1/T24/200.

<sup>90</sup> Pourtalès to Auswärtiges Amt, 26 March 1913, *GP*, vol. 34/2, no. 13024; Jagow to Lichnowsky, 1 April 1913, *ibid.*, no. 13061.

<sup>91</sup> Nicolson to Goschen, 14 January 1913, NA, FO 800/362; to Cartwright, 30 April 1913, Cartwright Mss., Public Record Office Northampton, Box 42.

<sup>92</sup> Churchill to Lloyd George, 2 April 1913, PA, LG/C/3/15/21A; *BD*, vol. IX/2, nos. 772, 779, 789, 790.

<sup>93</sup> Grey to Goschen, 23 April 1913, *BD*, vol. IX/2, no. 790; Cabinet, 24 April 1913, NA, CAB 41/34/15. See also M. Soroka, *Britain, Russia and the Road to the First World War: The Fateful Embassy of Count Aleksandr Benckendorff (1903–16)* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 233–4.

<sup>94</sup> Nicolson to de Bunsen, 27 April 1914, cited in M. B. Hayne, 'Great Britain, the Albanian Question and the Concert of Europe, 1911–1914', *Balkan Studies*, 28, 2 (1987), pp. 327–54, p. 341.

<sup>95</sup> Gade, *Gleichgewichtspolitik*, p. 182.

<sup>96</sup> R. J. Crampton, 'Decline of the European Concert in the Balkans 1913–1914', *South Eastern European Review*, 128 (1974), pp. 395–6.

willingness to compromise diminished. Both demanded more support from their allies.<sup>97</sup> The existence of the two alliance groups remained fundamental in Grey's thinking, despite the fact that his friend from the *Westminster Gazette*, John Spender, repeatedly argued for a general détente between the alliance blocs.<sup>98</sup>

On 29 June 1913 the Balkans were aflame again and the regional balance had completely altered, to the detriment not only of Italy but especially of Austria-Hungary. Even Russia was unable to manage the Balkan nations. Their desire to expand their national territories made a second war all but inevitable. Now Serbs and Greeks fought against Bulgaria and it was not a war of liberation. While the British public was disgusted by the atrocities,<sup>99</sup> the growing disillusion about the Balkan scenario should have led to greater alarm in July 1914, but it seems as if the consolation about these being localised wars ruled the moment. Most of the publications were still dominated by the unexpected Anglo-German cooperation, so that the lessons concerning Serbia's ambitions were generally ignored. The only Power that did not ignore the results was Austria-Hungary. Grey merely hoped that the Balkan states would burn themselves out with the second war.<sup>100</sup> But of course this was no policy of an arbiter. It was rather a capitulation. The *Economist* even suspected that as soon as the main task to localise the conflict was reached, Grey had lost his interest.<sup>101</sup> Without consulting the Central Powers, Grey proposed to Paris and St Petersburg that Albania be settled by a commission<sup>102</sup> and the Ambassadors' Conference broke up with mutual expressions of goodwill but no solution. At least on 13 August 1913 the Treaty of Bucharest ended the wars.<sup>103</sup>

Although the dissenters still could hardly believe their eyes by the end of 1913 to find that 'Nothing more than a memory is left of the old Anglo-German Antagonism',<sup>104</sup> some of their commentators arrived at a qualified analysis. Alfred Gardiner from the *Daily News* for example

<sup>97</sup> R. J. Crampton, *Hollow Détente: Anglo-German Relations in the Balkans 1911–1914* (London: Prior, 1980), p. 93; John Charmley, *Splendid Isolation? Britain, the Balance of Power and the Origins of the First World War* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1999), p. 388.

<sup>98</sup> *Westminster Gazette*, 10 February 1913; 31 May 1913; 24 June 1913.

<sup>99</sup> Morris, *Radicalism*, p. 354.

<sup>100</sup> Grey to Lloyd George, 11 July 1913, PA, LG/C/4/14/10.

<sup>101</sup> *Economist*, 20 September 1913, pp. 530–1.

<sup>102</sup> Grey to Bertie, 30 July 1913, NA, FO 371/1764.

<sup>103</sup> Grey to Rodd, 14 August 1913, NA, FO 800/64.

<sup>104</sup> *Nation*, 15 December 1913, cited in Taylor, *Trouble Makers*, p. 126.



had again gained the impression that Grey 'does not argue', 'he delivers judgments'.<sup>105</sup> Emile Dillon was anything but optimistic and showed himself particularly afraid of Serbian ambitions.<sup>106</sup> Sidney Brooks also demanded that Grey now had to decide about his future role, either as a loyal member of the entente or as a European arbiter. To take both sides, as it sometimes appeared during the conferences, would ultimately lead to disaster.<sup>107</sup> The most interesting contribution was written in the September issue of the *Fortnightly Review* entitled 'The Balkan Question after the Storm'.<sup>108</sup> Its author feared that notwithstanding his mediation, the foreign secretary would probably not draw the right conclusions from the results of the wars. As it was especially Russia that was strengthened by the crisis and Austria's position had been weakened because of the growth of Serbia, for reasons of balance Austria should now be given a veto right in the region.<sup>109</sup> However, the British foreign minister's work had instead been 'to create an Albania in the absence of an Albanian nation'. In the short run of course it was in the Austrian interest to forestall a Serbian access to the Adriatic Sea. But as the Second Balkan War showed, in the medium run this would probably be nothing more than an appetiser for further ambitions of Belgrade. Therefore, it was for reasons of international stability a 'supreme act of folly', for it had 'kindled a new Balkan war because Sofia and Belgrade had merely copied his methods'.<sup>110</sup> As a consequence of this shortsighted diplomacy no Power existed any longer to check both Austrian and Russian ambitions or to keep them apart. Without British assistance, Germany alone would be overstrained by this task. Hence, it appeared as if London had completely forgotten the function of Austria-Hungary within the European Concert. 'A British foreign secretary of imagination would not have failed to appreciate it . . . British support of Balkan unity would cause friction with Austria and Russia. Sooner or later', the author predicted, 'a Balkan Federation would be at war with Austria . . . British Liberalism of to-day has chosen to throw overboard its own most cherished tradition in the sphere of foreign policy, and has entered

<sup>105</sup> A. G. Gardiner, *Prophets, Priests and Kings* (London: Alston Rivers, 1908), p. 88; see also: G. P. Gooch, *Life of Lord Courtney* (London: Macmillan, 1920), pp. 572–3; Conwell-Evans, *Foreign Policy*, pp. 81–3.

<sup>106</sup> E. J. Dillon, 'The Peace Negotiations', *Contemporary Review*, 103 (1913), pp. 261–8.

<sup>107</sup> S. Brooks, 'British Policy in the Near East', *Fortnightly Review*, 93 (1913), pp. 112–24.

<sup>108</sup> H. Steinhart, 'The Balkan Question after the Storm', *Fortnightly Review*, 94 (1913), pp. 646–54.

<sup>109</sup> The same had already been suggested a year earlier in 'The Future of the Balkans', *Nation*, 22 June 1912, pp. 427–8.

<sup>110</sup> 'The Conferences and the Concert', *Nation*, 14 December 1912, pp. 481–2.



into the European system at a time when it might well have remained outside it.<sup>111</sup>

The task of an 'honest broker' proved too rich for Grey's blood. Although he had been perfectly informed about Russia's intrigues and expansive aims in the Balkans,<sup>112</sup> he neither really thought of questioning Anglo-Russian relations, nor even about the balance within this relation.<sup>113</sup> While his radical critics hoped for a general realignment, the following months proved the contrary.

### Concluding remarks: towards a 'third Balkan War'?<sup>114</sup>

In a brilliant essay, Paul W. Schroeder has described prewar alliance and balance of power politics as primarily concerned with creating new 'weapons of power politics', rather than creating 'tools of managing' the international system.<sup>115</sup> This was exactly the charge radical troublemakers had levelled against Edward Grey until the Balkan Wars. It cannot be overstated that there was a clear distinction between 'Balance of Power'-politics, a policy primarily serving the unity of the entente, and the traditional 'Concert'-diplomacy. Though Edward Grey, Arthur Nicolson, Eyre Crowe and others had repeatedly spoken of the Concert,<sup>116</sup> they were truly driven by thinking in entente measures. This was especially the case with Nicolson, but Grey too seemed to have forgotten the original meaning. With their focus on a renewed Concert between England, France and Germany, radicals aimed at containing German and French pride, impatience and aggressiveness as well as the new Russian strength.<sup>117</sup> Unlike Foreign Office diplomats and Liberal imperialists, they rather feared Russian ambitions than German mischief-making. 'The Prussian military caste', the *Nation* concluded in March 1914, 'would have been less than human if they did not dream of anticipating

<sup>111</sup> Steinhart, 'Balkan Question'.

<sup>112</sup> O'Beirne to Grey, 20 October 1910, *BD*, vol. IX/1, no 194; Benckendorff to Sazonov, 6.11/24 November 1912, *Die internationalen Beziehungen im Zeitalter des Imperialismus: Dokumente aus den Archiven der zarischen und provisorischen Regierung*, ed. Otto Hoetzsch (Berlin 1931–42), Ser. III, vol. 4/1, no. 124.

<sup>113</sup> Grey to Bertie, 30 October 1912, Bertie Mss., British Library, Add 63029.

<sup>114</sup> 'The Third Balkan War', *Nation*, 4 October 1913, pp. 5–6.

<sup>115</sup> P. W. Schroeder, 'Alliances 1815–1945: Weapons of Power and Tools of Management', in Paul W. Schroeder, *Systems, Stability, and Statecraft: Essays on the International History of Modern Europe*, ed. D. Wetzel et al. (New York: Palgrave, 2004), pp. 195–222, esp. 211–14.

<sup>116</sup> See Friedrich Kießling's chapter in this volume (Chapter 16, pp. 283–97).

<sup>117</sup> Brailsford, 'Balance of Power', pp. 18–26; 'France as a Russian Satrapy', *Nation*, 31 May 1913, pp. 335–6.

Russia's crushing accumulation of force'.<sup>118</sup> Through many thoughtful and provocative contributions, radicalism abstained from mere quixotic ideas and truly brought some expertise to the debates of foreign policy. They no longer focused on Richard Cobden's dated 'no foreign politics' slogan or mere moral, pacifist and humanitarian indignation. The most agile of them had clearly seen through the web of international risks and offered an alternative approach to the Triple Entente and Triple Alliance system, namely pleading for cross-connections between the power groups as a basis for a new Concert of nations. Moreover, to counter secret diplomacy, they had begun to organise themselves in Committees like the Balkan Committee, the Anglo-German Friendship Society, the Foreign Affairs Group or the Foreign Policy Committee to introduce a stronger parliamentary control over Whitehall's decisions. Nonetheless, at the crucial moment when new troubles in the Balkans arose, their dissent suddenly faded away. They had staged a grandiose series of press attacks on Grey after his handling of the Bosnian Crisis, against armaments and conscription, against an all too one-sided foreign policy approach during the Agadir crisis and concerning Russian intrigues in Persia and China. In 1912 they even demanded Grey resign, and yet when Grey's public fortunes among liberals seemed to be at their lowest ebb the Balkan Wars suddenly reestablished his credit. This was even more surprising as it had been perfectly clear that it was Russia that had instigated the Balkan League and its challenge to the south-eastern periphery.

However, it is too simple to belittle them as just a minority of troublemakers or quixotic idealists and to explain their change of heart by pointing towards a supposed change in Grey's diplomacy. Instead one has to take into account that the dissenters were a very heterogeneous group of intellectuals and politicians of pacifist, socialist or liberal belief. Concerning the Balkans it soon turned out that they were divided between those who favoured Balkan self-determination and those who feared for international stability. Additionally, the liberal dissenters had to cope with the dilemma of serving a party in government that depended on the support of the Irish Nationalists and that feared for its own unity. It was especially this dilemma that led directly to the decision-making process within the Cabinet and the Commons in the final stages of the July crisis.

As concerns Edward Grey's diplomacy it is on the one hand true that he had slightly changed his course after the Agadir crisis towards détente and a rather cooperative way of dealing with Germany, especially during the

<sup>118</sup> *Nation*, 19 March 1914, cited in Weinroth, 'British Radicals', p. 680.

Balkan crisis. On the other hand, however, this alteration was only half-hearted. During the Balkan Wars he tried to localise the conflict through his slogan of 'separate but not hostile' European camps which could cooperate for the bettering of international relations. Because of the main focus on Anglo-German cooperation and maintaining the entente with France and Russia, Edward Grey and his diplomats however overlooked that, next to the Ottoman Empire, it was the Dual Monarchy that stood at the front line of Balkan ambitions and Pan-Slavic nationalism.

Soon after the ambassadorial conferences the détente between Berlin and London turned out to be limited to peripheral questions like the destiny of Portuguese colonies or the Baghdad Railway. In ordinary times this of course could have led to a new rapprochement over the years, but as it turned out the system was running low on time. Though a successful arbiter during the London conferences, in the end Grey repeatedly confirmed: 'We cannot turn our backs upon Russia!'<sup>119</sup> Therefore he was filled with anger when David Lloyd George publicly stated in January 1914 what many liberal commentators and observers had consented by then, that because of the Franco-Russian strength Britain had no longer been necessary to uphold the balance in Great Power politics.<sup>120</sup> He finally shared Nicolson's and Buchanan's opinion, both of whom were 'haunted by the fear, that Russia might become tired of us and strike a bargain with Germany'.<sup>121</sup> His approval of Anglo-Russian naval talks in early 1914, though he already knew that Russia had fully recovered and would need no further backing,<sup>122</sup> destroyed his credit as an arbiter completely. It caused a really devastating shock in Berlin, directly leading to the fatal German decisions during the July crisis to have nothing to lose any more, to trust their sole partner Austria-Hungary blindly and finally to go for broke.<sup>123</sup>

The radical hopes in Grey finally proved to be illusory. Looking backwards, as Leonard Courtney or C. P. Scott did when they got access to the official publication respecting the European crisis only four days after the British declaration of war in 1914, they and many other radicals like Morley, Trevelyan, Burns, Ponsonby, Morel and Buxton came to believe that Grey had cheated them: 'he had talked peace while preparing

<sup>119</sup> Cited in Morris, *Radicalism*, p. 365.

<sup>120</sup> Grey to Lloyd George, 23 January 1914, PA, LG/C/4/14/12.

<sup>121</sup> Cited in Morris, *Radicalism*, p. 364.

<sup>122</sup> K. Neilson, 'Watching the "Steamroller": British Observers and the Russian Army before 1914', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 8, 2 (1985), pp. 199–217, p. 212.

<sup>123</sup> S. Schröder, *Die englisch-russische Marinekonvention: Das Deutsche Reich und die Flottenverhandlungen der Tripleentente am Vorabend des Ersten Weltkriegs* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 2006).

war'.<sup>124</sup> In the final days of peace Morley had asked his fellow Cabinet colleagues, 'What [ . . . ] if Russia wins?'<sup>125</sup> Perhaps it was the absence of a reply that was the most striking.

<sup>124</sup> Courtney to Scott, 8 August 1914, cited in Gooch, *Courtney*, pp. 581–2; Correspondence respecting the European Crisis, Cd. 7467, 8 August 1914, no. 123, p. 66; Scott to Morley, 9 August 1914, Morley Mss, BOD, Ms Eng.d.3585, fols. 142–3, fol. 143; Taylor, *Trouble Makers*, p. 115.

<sup>125</sup> Morley, 'Memorandum', p. 6.

## 19    Uncivilised wars in civilised Europe? The perception of the Balkan Wars 1912–1913 in English, German and Irish newspapers and journals

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*Florian Keisinger*

‘There has been a state of almost ceaseless warfare’,<sup>1</sup> reported the conservative *Daily Telegraph* in summer 1913, at the end of the Second Balkan War, referring to almost forty years of Balkan history. War and warfare in the Balkans during the course of the nineteenth century, observers of all political convictions agreed, differed widely from that of the western part of the continent. To find appropriate comparisons, as was frequently stated, it seemed necessary to draw upon the savage times of the Thirty Years’ War.<sup>2</sup>

The Balkan Wars 1912–13 were the culmination of this long tradition of warfare in south-eastern Europe.<sup>3</sup> For the first time in history, the Balkan States – united in the Balkan League – undertook a joint effort to shake off centuries of Ottoman dominion. In the course of the wars, which lasted only about ten months, hundreds of thousands of soldiers were killed; the number of civilians who lost their lives can only be speculated upon. On top of that, millions of people were abducted from their homes and systematically displaced to other areas or countries.<sup>4</sup> When in summer 1913, just after the end of the Second Balkan War, a group of international experts from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace travelled around the Balkan region to conduct a survey of the causes and the conduct of the wars, they came to the conclusion that each state involved in the wars – Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and, of course, Turkey – was equally guilty of committing

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 3 July 1913.    <sup>2</sup> For example *The Times*, 27 August 1877.

<sup>3</sup> Virginia H. Aksan, *Ottoman Wars 1700–1870: An Empire Besieged* (London: Longman, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Wolfgang Höpken, ‘Gewalt auf dem Balkan – Erklärungsversuche zwischen “Struktur” und “Kultur”’, in Wolfgang Höpken and Michael Riekenberg (eds.), *Politische und Ethnische Gewalt in Südosteuropa und Lateinamerika* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2000), pp. 54–5.

atrocious war crimes as well as crimes against humanity.<sup>5</sup> This resembled, more or less, the depiction of the wars published by *The Times* just a few months earlier; in December 1912, the conservative London newspaper described warfare in the Balkans as ‘appalling savagery’ for which ‘it would be difficult to find a parallel even in the wars of the Middle Ages’.<sup>6</sup>

It is one of the great – but, until today, often underrated – achievements of the nineteenth century that wars in Europe were no longer ‘people’s wars’ like those of the centuries before, but wars between the armies of the states.<sup>7</sup> Compared to former wars, like the Thirty Years’ War (1618–38) or the Napoleonic Wars, European states of the nineteenth century found a way to civilize their warfare. As the second half of the Franco-German War 1870–1 showed, it did not always work; however, the overall result was an impressive decline in casualties, especially among civilians. This, of course, was only the case for wars being fought on European soil; it did not apply to wars that the European powers conducted in their colonies, like the British war in South Africa (1899–1902) or the genocidal German warfare against the Herero in German South-West Africa (1904–7).<sup>8</sup> While, therefore, the wars in Europe during the nineteenth century were fought more or less as ‘civilized’ wars, which did, in most cases, not interfere with civilian populations, wars in eastern and south-eastern Europe did not follow this trend. This was demonstrated not only by the Balkan Wars of 1912–13, but also the Russo-Turkish Wars of 1828 and 1877–8 respectively and the Crimean War of 1853–6.

One characteristic of the Balkan Wars of 1912–13 was that states themselves became perpetrators of ethnically motivated violence. Fuelled by the aim of the wars – the creation of an allegedly homogeneous nation-state – rules of orderly warfare as written down for instance in The Hague’s Conventions were frequently violated by all combatant nations. Though officially wars between states, the Balkan Wars were led as people’s wars in which the ejection and even destruction of the enemy, including its civilian population, played a crucial role from their start in October

<sup>5</sup> Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Division of Intercourse and Education (Publication No 4), *Report of the International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and the Conduct of the Balkan Wars* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment, 1914), p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> *The Times*, 9 December 1912.

<sup>7</sup> Dieter Langewiesche, ‘Das Jahrhundert Europas: Eine Annäherung in globalhistorischer Perspektive’, *Historische Zeitschrift*, 296 (2013), p. 41.

<sup>8</sup> Steffen Bender, *Der Burenkrieg und die deutschsprachige Presse: Wahrnehmung und Deutung zwischen Bureneuphorie und Anglophobie* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2009); Susanne Kuß, *Deutsches Militär auf kolonialen Kriegsschauplätzen: Eskalation von Gewalt zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2012).

1912.<sup>9</sup> In the course of the wars, the distinction between regular armies and irregular paramilitary troops became increasingly blurred, especially as the irregular bands were supported by their governments and moved more or less in the shadow-zone of the official army. It was this combination of regular and irregular violence – in an atmosphere of lawlessness and ethnic hatred – which led to a complete lack of distinction between combatants and non-combatants as well as between war zone and civilian areas that became characteristic of the Balkan Wars of 1912–13. The Balkan Wars of 1912–13, therefore, anticipated, like no other war of the nineteenth century, the horrors and the destructiveness of the First World War. Of course, contemporaries in Western Europe, who read extensively about these wars in their daily newspapers and weekly journals, did not know that.

### **Newspapers, war correspondents and the coverage of the Balkan Wars**

For the media, wars have always been – and still are – fascinating events, whether their own nations are involved in them or not. Like no other event, wars have the ability to catch the attention of a broad audience. A prominent example was the British debate on the Eastern Question during the 1870s, in which the English press played an outstanding role, and newspapers managed to increase their circulation figures by more than 30 per cent.<sup>10</sup>

The Balkan Wars 1912–13 were no exception. They provided a field of political discourse, which frequently went far beyond the actual wars and dealt with subjects regarding both domestic and international policy. In this discourse, the press, especially in England, but also, though to a lesser extent, in Germany and Ireland, created and pursued their own political agenda, which was linked to political parties but also sometimes stretched beyond the traditional lines of party politics. Thus, at the outbreak of the First Balkan War in October 1912, all the relevant newspapers sent war correspondents out to gather first-hand information and impressions from the actual war-zones in south-eastern Europe. This included not only newspapers from the Great Powers such as Britain and Germany, but also from small countries such as Ireland. The two largest

<sup>9</sup> Wolfgang Höpken, 'Blockierte Zivilisierung? Staatenbildung, Modernisierung und ethnische Gewalt auf dem Balkan (19./20. Jahrhundert)', *Leviathan: Zeitschrift für Sozialwissenschaft*, 4 (1997), pp. 518–38.

<sup>10</sup> Stephen Koss, *The Rise and the Fall of the Political Press in Britain*, vol. I: *The Nineteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), p. 203.

Irish newspapers, the *Irish Times* and its nationalist counterpart the *Freeman's Journal*, both sent reporters to the Balkans to inform their growing readerships about the course of events at the other end of Europe.<sup>11</sup>

Most newspapers did not only send out one correspondent, but several, to report from each one of the belligerent countries. For example, large newspapers like *The Times* or the *Daily Telegraph* made their reporters travel not only to Turkey, but also to Bulgaria, Serbia and even Montenegro, to make sure that they got reports from all sides.

It is, however, important to point out that during the Balkan Wars the correspondents – on whose reports the newspapers relied for their coverage – did not come close to the front line or areas where the actual fighting took place. Because of strict censorship, unknown in previous wars such as the Crimean War or even the Russo-Japanese War 1904–5, they were mostly restricted to the capitals of the various countries they were supposed to write about. The brief excursions outside their hotels or military camps that they were allowed took place under the strict control of military authorities. Practically all the diaries and memoirs of the correspondents published during or immediately after the Balkan Wars addressed the restrictions to their working conditions by each of the Balkan States. In their publications, correspondents admitted that they did not get to see anything of the wars they were supposed to write about. That, of course, did not change the fact that their newspapers were expecting lengthy war reports from their correspondents, whom they had sent abroad at great expense. In some ways, war coverage of the Balkan Wars resembled that of the Seven Years' War, when reporters gathered information from the officials of the belligerent states rather than in the field. The German historian Andreas Gestrich referred to this practice as 'war coverage as propaganda'.<sup>12</sup>

The reporters themselves were well aware of the difficulty of their situation. For instance, Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph*, assumed that all belligerent states had spent considerable effort and expense on training their censors to keep reporters away from all the places where actual warfare took place. Shortly after the

<sup>11</sup> Felix L. Larkin, 'The Dog in the Night-Time: *The Freeman's Journal*, the Irish Parliamentary Party and the Empire, 1875–1919', in Simon Potter (ed.), *Newspapers and Empire in Ireland and Britain: Reporting the Empire, 1857–1921* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), pp. 109–23.

<sup>12</sup> Andreas Gestrich, 'Kriegsberichterstattung als Propaganda: Das Beispiel des "Wienerischen Diarium" im Siebenjährigen Krieg 1756–1763', in Ute Daniel (ed.), *Augenzeugen: Kriegsberichterstattung vom 18. bis zum 21. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2006), pp. 23–39.



Balkan Wars, he described his experiences as follows: 'The only exercise we were allowed during this war was a tour, which took place daily after lunch, when we were expected to ride two and two behind a Turkish officer, like schoolgirls out with their mistress on the parade of some South Coast watering-place.'<sup>13</sup> Philip Gibb (the *Graphic*) and Bernhard Grant (*Daily Mirror*) expressed the opinion of many of their colleagues, when, in their joint memoirs, published in 1913, they compared the situation of the war correspondents during the Balkan Wars with that of 'prisoners of war'.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, German correspondents lamented the death of their profession.<sup>15</sup> On 30 July 1913, the German *Neue Preussische Zeitung* (*Kreuzzeitung*), a leading paper among German conservatives, announced that the 'often romantic and dangerous, but always meaningful profession of the war correspondent, has come to an end'.<sup>16</sup>

Eugen Zwenger, a former German military officer and Balkan War correspondent for the *Kölnische Zeitung* on the Turkish side, also described his experiences in a book published 1913, after the Second Balkan War ended. Though, weeks after the war broke out, he finally received permission to leave his Constantinople hotel and, under the strict surveillance of Turkish officials, got closer to the presumed theatre of war, he never came close to the front lines.<sup>17</sup> Correspondent E. N. Bennett, who was with the Bulgarian side, painted a similar picture: 'The Bulgarians', he wrote in 1913, 'never permitted the correspondents to get within fifty miles of the actual fighting. While a battle was in progress, the war correspondents were cooking food.'<sup>18</sup> Herbert Baldwin, a colleague of Bennett's who was also on the Bulgarian side during the First Balkan War in 1912, later admitted that all his information was based on sources 'which I subsequently received from others'.<sup>19</sup> Cyril Campbell, a reporter for *The Times*, went so far as to apologize to the public for the amount of misinformation concerning the Balkan Wars. In his – anonymously published – memoirs of the Balkan Wars, which appeared in 1913, he wrote: 'The

<sup>13</sup> Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, *With the Turks in Thrace* (New York: G. H. Doran, 1913), p. 100.

<sup>14</sup> Philip Gibbs and Bernard Grant, *Adventures of War with Cross and Crescent* (London: Small, Maynard and Company, 1913), p. 167.

<sup>15</sup> Ludwig Schliep, *Im Julifeldzug auf dem Balkan* (n.p.: Gebrüder Paetel, 1914), p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> *Kreuzzeitung*, 30 July 1913.

<sup>17</sup> Eugen Zwenger, *Meine Erlebnisse mit den Türken im Balkankrieg* (Berlin: Liebel Verlag, 1913), p. 21.

<sup>18</sup> E. N. Bennett, 'Press Censors and War Correspondents: Some Experiences in Turkey', *The Nineteenth Century and After: A Monthly Review*, 73 (1913), p. 36.

<sup>19</sup> Herbert F. A. Baldwin, *War Photographer in Thrace: An Account of Personal Experience During the Turco-Balkan War 1912* (London: Leipsic, 1913), p. 95.

veil of secrecy . . . which has been cast over events by a vigilant General Staff may have led to the insertion of errors which only time can disclose. For such we apologize.'<sup>20</sup>

Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett thought about what the newspaper editors would do 'when they saw the long tale of our fruitless expenditure' during the Balkan Wars.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, newspaper editors found themselves facing a tricky situation in 1912–13. On the one hand, their readership expected detailed coverage of the Balkan Wars; on the other, the information that came in from the war theatre was extremely vague.

In November 1912, one month after the outbreak of the First Balkan War, the nationalist Irish *Freeman's Journal* mentioned that all the correspondents were still stuck in the capitals of the Balkan states and Turkey.<sup>22</sup> Similar notes can be found in the equally nationalist *Irish Independent*, which bemoaned the fact that the correspondents were forced to do nothing, while a few miles away history was being made.<sup>23</sup> During the Second Balkan War, the unionist *Irish Times* pointed out that all reports from the Balkans had to be treated with suspicion, as 'the absence of impartial correspondents from the theatre of war makes it difficult to check the value of the official statements from either side',<sup>24</sup> making it clear that war coverage was based almost entirely on reports that correspondents were unable to verify.

Similar statements can be found in English and German newspapers. The liberal *Manchester Guardian* informed its readers, just a few weeks after the war broke out, that 'on neither side are war correspondents allowed to send messages from the front'.<sup>25</sup> In July 1913 *The Times* pointed out that all reports from the Balkan Peninsula during the wars had to be viewed with caution because of the strict measures of censorship enforced upon the reporters from all belligerent states.<sup>26</sup> And the liberal *Daily Chronicle* even assumed in November 1912 that 'the military authorities of the four [Balkan] kingdoms must have agreed beforehand that war correspondents should neither see anything nor say anything'. If that had been made clear before, the *Daily Chronicle* concluded, it would have refrained from sending reporters to the Balkan region in the first place.<sup>27</sup>

The national-liberal German *Kölnische Zeitung* also admitted, in February 1913, that because of the lack of valid information from the

<sup>20</sup> By 'A Special Correspondent' [Cyril Campbell], *The Balkan War Drama* (London: Andrew Melrose, 1913), p. 7.

<sup>21</sup> Ashmead-Bartlett, *With the Turks in Thrace*, p. 104.

<sup>22</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 9 November 1912. <sup>23</sup> *Irish Independent*, 28 October 1912.

<sup>24</sup> *Irish Times*, 8 July 1913. <sup>25</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 25 October 1912.

<sup>26</sup> *The Times*, 3 July 1913. <sup>27</sup> *Daily Chronicle*, 28 November 1912.

Balkans it was extraordinarily difficult ('außerordentlich schwierig') to gain any idea what was really going on in the south-east of Europe.<sup>28</sup> The Catholic newspaper *Germania* could only confirm this impression. Though their staff were equipped with the most modern communication tools, the newspaper was unable to learn anything of importance from them. With the Balkan Wars of 1912–13, *Germania* therefore concluded, the craft of war correspondence reached a whole new level of difficulties.<sup>29</sup>

These difficulties, however, did not stop the newspapers from writing extensively about the wars in the Balkans. All relevant English, German and Irish newspapers reported more or less daily on the events in south-eastern Europe between October 1912 and August 1913, when the Second Balkan War came to an end. The London *Times* alone, in the period between 1 October 1912 and the end of August 1913, published at least 158 lead comments on the Balkan Wars.<sup>30</sup> In addition, countless articles on the news pages kept steadily growing readerships informed daily about the proceedings of the wars.

### Different perceptions: Europe and the Eastern Question

For an understanding of the perception of the Balkan Wars 1912–13 in the media, the placement of these wars in the wider context of the so-called Eastern Question – the problem of how to deal with the European dominions of the declining Ottoman Empire – is crucial.<sup>31</sup> Nearly all European powers had political and military interests in the outcome of the Eastern Question. Therefore, since the 1870s, contemporaries in all European states were convinced that every threat of war or even minor conflict in the Balkans had the potential to cause the outbreak of a European war, turning the whole continent into a fireball.<sup>32</sup> The socialist *Clarion* suggested in 1897 that 'what we call the Eastern Question might be more properly called the European Question';<sup>33</sup> for *The Times* of London, in 1908, the Eastern Question was simply 'the nightmare of European diplomacy'.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *Kölnische Zeitung*, 12 February 1913.      <sup>29</sup> *Germania*, 1 November 1912.

<sup>30</sup> The results are based on research with *The Times* Digital Archive. For further details, see Florian Keisinger, *Unzivilisierte Kriege im zivilisierten Europa? Die Balkankriege und die öffentliche Meinung in Deutschland, England und Irland, 1876–1913* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2008), p. 44.

<sup>31</sup> M. S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774–1923* (London: Macmillan, 1968).

<sup>32</sup> Misha Glenny, *The Balkans 1804–1999: Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers* (London: Penguin Group, 1999), pp. 135–248.

<sup>33</sup> *Clarion*, 22 May 1897.      <sup>34</sup> *The Times*, 8 October 1908.

This distinguished the Eastern Question from other nationalist movements in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as the efforts of Irish nationalists to set up an independent Irish nation-state against British rule. Unlike the Eastern Question, the Irish Question never involved the possibility of a European war, and was therefore seen as a solely British problem. On the contrary, in the Balkans every minor disturbance and conflict, even local revolts in the region of Macedonia 1903,<sup>35</sup> were enough to make European newspapers express concerns about maintaining the 'peace of Europe', as the following passage from *The Times*, published on 18 August 1903, shows: 'Were it merely a question as between Turkey and the Macedonian committee on the one hand, and Bulgaria and these identical committees on the other hand, we might watch the struggle with some calm . . . But in the Near Eastern question the Powers of Europe are directly interested – less, it is true, from personal motives, if we except Turkey, Russia and Austria, than from a desire to ensure that no new *régime* is introduced in the Balkans whose advent may in the smallest degree disturb the existing balance of power.'<sup>36</sup>

Among all European crises of the nineteenth century, the Eastern Question was the most persistent; it contained the biggest dangers for Europe as a whole, and therefore occupied European governments more than any other problem.<sup>37</sup> Several times between the Crimean War of 1854 and the Balkan Wars of 1912–13, the outbreak of a European war was seen as imminent, for example in 1877–8, when Great Britain just fell short of taking military steps to defend its interests in the Russo-Turkish war.<sup>38</sup> As Barbara Jelavich pointed out, five of the six wars Russia was involved in between 1806 and 1914 can be directly traced back to the interests of the Russian Empire in the Balkans.<sup>39</sup> Richard Crampton stated, with regard to the time between the Berlin Congress 1878 and the Balkan Wars of 1912–13, 'Europe was polarized, and a dispute in the Balkans, as elsewhere, would be dealt with not simply on the basis of the local issues involved but could all too easily develop into a confrontation between the two opposing power groups'.<sup>40</sup> And for Misha Glenny there

<sup>35</sup> Vemund Aarbakke, *Ethnic Rivalry and the Quest for Macedonia, 1870–1913* (Boulder CO: East European Monographs, 2003), p. 97.

<sup>36</sup> *The Times*, 18 August 1903.

<sup>37</sup> Wilfried Baumgart, 'Die "orientalische Frage" – redivivus? Große Mächte und kleine Nationalitäten 1820–1923', *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte*, 28 (1999), p. 47.

<sup>38</sup> Richard Millman, *Britain and the Eastern Question 1875–1878* (Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 102.

<sup>39</sup> Barbara Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements 1806–1914* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. ix.

<sup>40</sup> Richard Crampton, *The Hollow Détente: Anglo-German Relations in the Balkans, 1911–1914* (London: G. Prior, 1978), p. 28.

was no doubt that from the 1870s on 'relatively obscure disputes between countries in south-eastern Europe could degenerate swiftly into a much larger conflict between the great-powers'.<sup>41</sup>

Newspapers across Europe agreed that the Eastern Question – or, as some called it, the 'oriental question' – was the biggest threat to European peace in the four decades before the First World War. That, of course, would have been different, as the renowned liberal German newspaper *Vossische Zeitung* wrote at the beginning of the Balkan Wars in October 1912, if European powers shared an understanding on the issue. If such a joint European position existed, the Balkan states could fight each other as much as they liked and the Balkan peoples could slaughter each other in cold blood; however, the problem was that no such agreement prevailed in Europe on how to deal with the Eastern Question.<sup>42</sup> The interests of Russia were in direct opposition to those of Austria-Hungary, not to mention the rivalries between Russia and Britain, which had already caused the Crimean War of the 1850s and brought Europe to the edge of another war in the 1870s. It was not only the question of who controlled the Straits between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean that was seen as a major conflict, but also the question of who possessed Constantinople. As the *Vossische Zeitung* summed up, the little Balkan states can be seen as only 'pawns in a game' behind whom the real players, the Great Powers, were looming, threatening to turn Europe into a conflagration which would spread 'from Moscow to the Pyrenees', and from the 'Baltic Sea to Palermo'.

The question widely discussed in all newspapers, of course, was how to solve the problem. The answers varied; not just between countries, but also between the various political groups within national societies. The different concepts on how to deal with the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of the new states in the Balkans, and therefore keep 'The powder keg of Europe', as *The Times* once called the Balkan region,<sup>43</sup> from exploding and plunging the continent into a long-feared European war, had a significant influence on how the Balkan Wars 1912–13 were interpreted by western newspapers.

While conservative English newspapers, as well as the vast majority of the German media, pleaded for the preservation of the Ottoman Empire as a vital pillar of stability and peace in the Balkans and therefore the rest of Europe, liberal English newspapers pursued a different political agenda: their commentators demanded that the widely accepted principles of the nation-state should no longer be withheld from the Balkan

<sup>41</sup> Glenny, *The Balkans*, p. 144.

<sup>42</sup> *Vossische Zeitung*, 15 October 1912.

<sup>43</sup> *The Times*, 7 July 1912.

peoples, and that Europe should give up its support of the Turks in south-eastern Europe. Only the arrival of independent nation-states in the Balkans, the liberal press was convinced, could finally solve the Eastern Question. Therefore, for the liberal English press the outbreak of the First Balkan War in 1912 was a welcome occasion to critically review almost forty years of British dealings with the Eastern Question. If the new war showed one thing, the *Daily Chronicle* wrote in October 1912, it was that Gladstone had been right from the beginning: 'The Balkans for the Balkan people was the Gladstonian formula.'<sup>44</sup> The fact that this had not become the British government's position a long time previously was blamed on former Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, who in 1877, 'by evoking the war spirit in England', successfully manipulated public opinion in Britain. The result of this policy was 'so called peace with honour' in Berlin in 1878, which turned the Balkan regions into a war zone for the next thirty-five years. After 1878 turned out to be a catastrophic year for the Balkans, 1912 could finally bring about a solution regarding the Eastern Question, especially as 'a confederation of self-governed States in the Balkans would be the best bulwark against the southward march of Russia and Austria, for there is no barrier to despotism like the breasts of free men'. Not surprisingly, in November 1912, after the overwhelming military victories of the Balkan League, the *Manchester Guardian* declared the Eastern Question to be 'solved'.<sup>45</sup> When in summer 1913 the outbreak of the Second Balkan War showed that this was not the case, these same newspapers claimed that the bloodshed could have been avoided if Europe had asserted the principles of the nation-state – 'those principles the Balkan States are now fighting for' – earlier.<sup>46</sup> The only thing Europe could do now was 'to make no Ireland and no Alsace-Lorraine, and to leave no unredeemed Serbia and Bulgaria or Greece under an alien rule', the *Manchester Guardian* stated after the war was over.<sup>47</sup>

Also, conservative English as well as the majority of German newspapers were – for the first time since the Berlin Conference of 1878 – impressed by the military strength the Balkan states showed in the First Balkan War. 'To these minor states', the *Daily Telegraph* stated in early November 1912, 'the nation in arms has meant something deeper than it does to the great military powers; they were armed with a unanimous national purpose and determination more formidably than with rifle and field-gun'.<sup>48</sup> However, as the war continued, Balkan enthusiasm did not last. The Second Balkan War clearly showed, the *Daily Telegraph*

<sup>44</sup> *Daily Chronicle*, 30 October 1912 (also the subsequent quotes).

<sup>45</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 20 November 1912. <sup>46</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 17 July 1913.

<sup>47</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 1 August 1913. <sup>48</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 28 October 1912.

made clear in July 1913, that the Balkan peoples, 'instead of being, as some admirers fondly hoped, a pattern of civilization', were nothing but 'barbarians'.<sup>49</sup>

Similar patterns can be found in the coverage of the Balkan Wars 1912–13 in German newspapers; while the *Kreuzzeitung* at the outbreak of the First Balkan War stated that 'no one wishes a defeat of the Turks',<sup>50</sup> the same newspaper, only a month later, praised the military 'rise' of the Balkan states, which were expected to become strong partners of the Triple Alliance.<sup>51</sup> However, this depiction quickly changed with the further conduct of the wars. In December 1912, the *Vossische Zeitung* stated that the principle of the nation-state could not be applied to the Balkans, as each Balkan state was trying to acquire as much land as possible for itself, regardless of the nationality of the inhabitants which were seen as equally flexible and exchangeable;<sup>52</sup> other newspapers, like the liberal *Allgemeine Zeitung*, agreed.<sup>53</sup> At the end of the Balkan Wars, there was a widespread understanding in the German press that the Eastern Question would not disappear; and therefore, the post-war settlement of the Balkan region would remain a problem that the European powers had to deal with.<sup>54</sup>

It does not really come as a surprise that nationalist Irish newspapers also followed the Balkan Wars 1912–13 with great interest – especially the fact that the smallest of the Balkan states, Montenegro, 'with a population much less than that of the single county of Cork, and very little larger in area', started the war. The *Freeman's Journal* called the Montenegrin step a 'glorious and inspiring example'.<sup>55</sup> In the further conduct of the war, however, it was the Bulgarians who became a role-model for Irish nationalists. The *Irishman* stated in February 1913 that Bulgaria, like Ireland, was a 'forgotten nation' 100 years ago; however, they rose again and single-handedly shook off foreign occupation. 'The example teaches us that a nation can rise again, even from what seems to be its grave, if only it had faith in itself.'<sup>56</sup> The radical fortnightly journal *Irish Freedom* commented in December 1912: 'Forty years ago Bulgaria was a slave state like this country. Today its population is less than four millions . . . Our population is over four millions'; however, Bulgaria has just shown to the world that 'one man fighting for liberty is worth ten fighting against it'. Therefore, according to the *Irish Freedom*, with the experience of the First

<sup>49</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 4 July 1913. <sup>50</sup> *Kreuzzeitung*, 16 October 1912.

<sup>51</sup> *Kreuzzeitung*, 26 November 1912. <sup>52</sup> *Vossische Zeitung*, 31 December 1912.

<sup>53</sup> *Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1 February 1913.

<sup>54</sup> *Kölnische Zeitung*, 25 July 1913; *Vossische Zeitung*, 15 March 1913; *Kreuzzeitung*, 4 December 1913.

<sup>55</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 9 October 1912. <sup>56</sup> *Irishman*, No. 2. February 1913.



Balkan War, the path for Ireland seemed to be set: 'Many will have fallen, and all will have suffered but ultimately the Irish Nation will only be built upon dead bodies and broken hearts . . . We have always insisted it can be done; and Bulgaria is a heavy reinforcement to that opinion.'<sup>57</sup> With the outbreak of the Second Balkan War, however, the high expectations of Irish nationalists came to a sudden end. Some newspapers, like the *Irish Freedom*, did not even write about the renewed war among the former Balkan allies. Others, like the *Freeman's Journal*, were disappointed and annoyed about the latest developments in the South-East Peninsula: 'The fratricidal war is not only criminal, but also stupid';<sup>58</sup> the *Irish Independent* summed up the Irish perspective well in July 1913 when it stated that 'the fratricidal and barbarous events of the past two weeks rob the Allies of much, if not all, credit which was so willingly and enthusiastically awarded to them at the outset'.<sup>59</sup>

Irish unionists, on the other hand, had a different perspective on what was going on in the Balkans 1912–13. In 1908, the *Irish Times* had already made clear that the order of 1878 should not be touched, especially as the 'Berlin Act was once designated to territorial control of the Near East. The Kingdoms which were carved out of the Turkish possessions were meant to stand as buffer States between the rival Powers.'<sup>60</sup> The unionist newspaper renewed this position during the Balkan Wars 1912–13, when it demanded a European military intervention in the Balkans, as 'otherwise the smaller nations of Europe will develop a perfectly legitimate contempt for *les grandes Impuissances*'.<sup>61</sup> Comparable opinions, of course, were expressed in conservative English as well as in most German newspapers.

### **A matter of political interest: 'Balkan atrocities'**

Atrocities were a regular companion of the wars in the Balkans in the nineteenth century;<sup>62</sup> however, the newspaper reports on who was to blame for the deeds varied. This was not only the case during the Balkan Wars 1912–13 but also before. A telling example is the discussion on Bulgarian atrocities committed by the Turks in 1876. In 1877, the conservative *Daily Telegraph* calculated that 'three thousand five hundred' people were killed during the unrest in Bulgaria 1876, 'including the Turks massacred by Bulgarians';<sup>63</sup> the *Kölnische Zeitung* mentioned

<sup>57</sup> *Irish Freedom*, No. 26, December 1912.      <sup>58</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 30 July 1913.

<sup>59</sup> *Irish Independent*, 12 July 1913.      <sup>60</sup> *Irish Times*, 8 October 1908.

<sup>61</sup> *Irish Times*, 24 April 1913.

<sup>62</sup> Carnegie, *Report of the International Commission*, pp. 71–108, 148–207.

<sup>63</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 16 August 1877.



3,000 victims.<sup>64</sup> On the contrary, liberal English newspapers assumed the overall death toll of the Bulgarian atrocities to be between 15,000 and 30,000; occasionally even figures in the range of 100,000 to 200,000 killed Bulgarians circulated in the liberal milieu.<sup>65</sup>

Almost forty years later, during the Balkan Wars 1912–13, conservative English newspapers still referred to the Bulgarian events of 1876 only as ‘the so-called atrocities’<sup>66</sup> and German newspapers like the *Allgemeine Zeitung* mentioned the atrocities only with inverted commas (‘*Türkische Grausamkeiten*’) in order to make clear that they also had their doubts about what really happened in Bulgaria in summer 1876.<sup>67</sup> Similar patterns of perception can be found for the course of the Balkan Wars 1912–13, when all newspapers agreed that severe atrocities frequently occurred. They were perpetrated not just by irregular troops, which were a steady component of all Balkan wars in the nineteenth century, but also by the regular armies of the belligerent states, especially as those and the irregular bands shared not just a common cause but also common methods of warfare against non-combatants and the civilian population of the enemy.<sup>68</sup>

However, the euphoria of the early stage of the Balkan Wars, caused by the military victories of the Balkan League, resulted in even conservative English, German and some unionist Irish commentators expressing their admiration for the little Balkan nations for the first time. In former Balkan Wars newspapers like the *Daily Telegraph* or the *Irish Times* repeatedly complained that warfare by the Balkan states was not conducted ‘in a civilized sense’, but ‘as an armed incursion *en masse*’.<sup>69</sup> Similar opinions could be found in *The Times*, which described the character of the early First Balkan War as follows: ‘Whole nations are marching forth for battle, leaving behind them only the women and children and the old men.’<sup>70</sup> Just a few days later *The Times* praised the victorious Balkan states that ‘fought like heroes’, though they ‘violated many maxims of war . . . But such is the spirit of a nation in arms.’<sup>71</sup> Comparable depictions appeared in several German newspapers<sup>72</sup> and in the unionist *Irish Times*, which in November 1912 referred to the Balkan states as ‘these gallant little nations’.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>64</sup> *Kölnische Zeitung*, 5 March 1878.

<sup>65</sup> Millman, *Britain and the Eastern Question*, p. 149.      <sup>66</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 8 April 1913.

<sup>67</sup> *Allgemeine Zeitung*, 12 September 1876.

<sup>68</sup> Höpken, ‘Blockierte Zivilisierung’, p. 530.      <sup>69</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 27 July 1876.

<sup>70</sup> *The Times*, 17 October 1912.      <sup>71</sup> *The Times*, 8 November 1912.

<sup>72</sup> The *Kreuzzeitung*, for example, attested to the Balkan states’ ‘greatness’ and wished them well in making their way to Constantinople (24 October 1912).

<sup>73</sup> *Irish Times*, 9 November 1912.

Balkan enthusiasm in western newspapers, however, did not last very long. Especially as, from late 1912, more and more reports on atrocities committed during the war came in from the South-East. The *Vössi-sche Zeitung* reported on terrible war crimes perpetrated by the Serbians against Muslim civilians in Macedonia and Albania, which included the slaughtering of children and women as well as the burning of entire villages.<sup>74</sup> Accounts also appeared in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* with regard to both Serbia and Bulgaria, which were accused of killing civilians with axes and bayonets and raping girls and women in 'wild lust' before burning them alive.<sup>75</sup> Similar reports can be found in the *Kölnische Zeitung*, which in March 1913 reported the case of Bulgarian officers who dug up the body of a recently killed Muslim girl in order to rape her once again. The event took place, the newspaper stated, not far from a village where a few days earlier a fallen Bulgarian soldier had received an honourable burial from the Turks.<sup>76</sup> Just imagine the outrage in Europe, the *Kölnische Zeitung* stated on another occasion, if the Turkish side had committed only 1/1000 of the war crimes of which the Balkan states were guilty.<sup>77</sup> *The Times* was also appalled by the atrocities committed by the Balkan states with the goal of 'systematical extermination' of the enemy.<sup>78</sup> At the beginning of the Second Balkan War *The Times* reported that 'The Balkan States are falling into a barbarism deeper and more shameful than was ever imposed by the Turk!'<sup>79</sup>

Liberal English newspapers did not deny the terrible atrocities committed during the Balkan Wars, but the vast majority was blamed on the Turkish side. In the rare cases in which the crimes might have been perpetrated by the Balkan states, it happened, as the *Daily Chronicle* stated, 'with the memory of 500 years of outrage and cruelty behind them'. Moreover, the atrocities were executed not by the state armies, but by irregular troops who acted independently from the regular armies: 'Nothing could be a more grotesque travesty of the facts than to represent either Bulgaria or its army as waging a war of cruelties', the *Daily Chronicle* declared in spring 1913.<sup>80</sup> On another occasion the liberal newspaper pointed out that it is one thing to be 'cruel and barbarous' in war 'in some cases, though the cases are regularly and absurdly multiplied in order to impress European opinion. But the Turks were cruel and barbarous in peace.'<sup>81</sup>

When in July 1913 the Turks entered the fratricidal Second Balkan War in order to gain back some of the losses they had suffered in the first war,

<sup>74</sup> *Vössi-sche Zeitung*, 4 February 1912.

<sup>75</sup> *Allgemeine Zeitung*, 29 March 1913.

<sup>76</sup> *Kölnische Zeitung*, 22 March 1913.

<sup>77</sup> *Kölnische Zeitung*, 15 January 1913.

<sup>78</sup> *The Times*, 9 December 1913.

<sup>79</sup> *The Times*, 3 July 1913.

<sup>80</sup> *Daily Chronicle*, 4 April 1913.

<sup>81</sup> *Daily Chronicle*, 17 July 1913.

the *Daily Chronicle* saw 'anarchy and savagery' returning to the Balkans: 'Advancing into Southern Bulgaria, the Ottoman soldiery are destroying villages and burning crops; the harassed peasantries . . . are fleeing for their lives.'<sup>82</sup> The *Manchester Guardian* also denied the Balkan peoples were 'possessed with blood lust'; in truth they were 'sacrificed to the tyranny of General Staff over statesmen'. Therefore, the Second Balkan War was not a 'disgusting farce', but 'a real tragedy' for the people.<sup>83</sup>

Finally, nationalist Irish newspapers used the atrocities of the Balkan Wars to draw comparisons to the situation in Ireland. There was no other country in the world, the *Nation* pointed out years before the Balkan Wars, which could understand the horrors of the crimes committed by the Turks against the peoples of the Balkans like the Irish could.<sup>84</sup> However, compared to the 'crimes of England in Ireland', the crimes of Turkey in the last hundred years of Balkan history were described as 'insignificant'.<sup>85</sup> Though the *Freeman's Journal* acknowledged the atrocities committed, it expressed the opinion that 'a few thousand sacrificed on the battlefield' were still better than the 'many thousands yearly, tortured to death by the familiar methods of Turkish misgovernment'.<sup>86</sup> Therefore, the focus of Irish nationalists was not so much on the atrocities, which were seen as an unpleasant, but unavoidable side-effect of the road to freedom; moreover, what caught their attention was the question of whether the Balkan Wars 1912–13 could function as a role-model for Ireland. In summer 1913, *Irish Freedom* expressed hopes that 'with the approaching disappearance of the Near Eastern Question Central Europe may discover that there is a Near Western Question, and that Ireland – a free Ireland resorted to Europe, is the key to . . . open seaways of the world'.<sup>87</sup> However, the *Freeman's Journal* was sceptical when it came to such considerations; the 'Near Eastern Question', no doubt, was seen as a 'European problem'; the 'Near Western Question' on the other hand was a problem 'with which England has to deal'.<sup>88</sup>

### Summary

While the European wars of the nineteenth century were fought as 'civilized' wars, which did not – in most cases – interfere with the civilian population, the Balkan Wars 1912–13 differed from that practice. Because of the way they were fought, they anticipated like no other war of the nineteenth century the horrors and destructiveness of the First World

<sup>82</sup> *Daily Chronicle*, 26 July 1913. <sup>83</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 17 July 1913.

<sup>84</sup> *Nation*, 22 July 1876. <sup>85</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 4 November 1912.

<sup>86</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 9 October 1912. <sup>87</sup> *Irish Freedom*, No. 13, August 1913.

<sup>88</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 7 October 1912.

War. The contemporaries of 1912–13, of course, could not know that. Nevertheless, observers of all political convictions agreed, the Balkan Wars were not comparable to warfare in the west of Europe. To find an appropriate comparison, one had to draw upon the savage times of the 'Thirty Years' War.

The British, German and Irish media coverage of the Balkan Wars, however, varied, based on both domestic and international political issues. In Britain, the division between liberal and conservative papers caused by the Eastern crisis of the 1870s persisted till 1913. Liberal papers, such as the *Manchester Guardian*, argued in favour of the rights of small Balkan nations to statehood, and ascribed atrocities to Ottoman despotism. On the contrary, conservative English and the majority of German newspapers offered a more benign view of Ottoman rule, which was seen as an important element of peace and stability in Europe; accordingly, the atrocities committed in the wars were blamed mainly on the Balkan states. A similar split in perception can be found in the Irish press between unionist and nationalist newspapers, while the latter saw the Balkan Wars in relation to the Irish Question. A variety of media coverage was possible because of strict censorship by all belligerent states, who did not allow correspondents anywhere near the scene of warfare. Therefore, throughout the Balkan Wars, no newspaper had verified information on what was really going on in south-eastern Europe.

## 20 Socialism and the challenge of the Balkan Wars 1912–1913

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*Wolfgang Kruse*

In trying to analyse major developments, decisions and events, historians run the risk of creating necessities and of neglecting alternative possibilities. This is true not only for the outbreak of war in 1914, but also for the breakdown of international socialism and for the ‘truce policy’ of most of the socialist and labour parties at the beginning of the First World War, which has been attributed to a long-term process of national integration.<sup>1</sup> Instead, an examination of the Balkan Wars offers the opportunity to study a conflict with a very different outcome. We can deal with an averted European war and with a very strong anti-war movement of the Socialist International and its member parties, impressively and successfully demonstrating the willingness of European proletarians to hold peace.

In the early twentieth century, to prevent war, especially to prevent a war between the major imperialist powers in Europe, had become the central political project of the Second International. It aimed, in its own words, ‘to summon up everything . . . to prevent the outbreak of war’.<sup>2</sup> Politically this was of great importance, for the socialist and Labour parties had huge memberships and mobilised millions of voters. As we know very well, socialist anti-war policy nevertheless failed in 1914. But what was the relation between this failure and the seemingly successful

<sup>1</sup> Marcel van der Linden, ‘The National Integration of European Working Classes (1871–1914)’, *International Review of Social History*, 33 (1988), pp. 285–311. Many thanks to Hanna Dieckwisch for her help and support with English.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Resolution of the International Socialist Congress 1907 against War’, in *Internationaler Sozialisten-Kongress zu Stuttgart. 18.–24. August 1907* (Berlin: Buchandlung Vorwärts, 1907), p. 66. See generally Georges Haupt, *Socialism and the Great War: The Collapse of the Second International* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972); James Joll, *The Second International, 1889–1914* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974); Douglas J. Newton, *British Labour, European Socialism and the Struggle for Peace, 1889–1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); Friedhelm Boll, *Frieden ohne Revolution? Friedensstrategien der deutschen Sozialdemokratie vom Erfurter Programm 1891 bis zur Revolution 1918* (Bonn: Neue Gesellschaft, 1980); Karl-Heinz Klär, *Der Zusammenbruch der Zweiten Internationale* (Frankf./M.: Campus, 1981); Julius Braunthal, *Geschichte der Internationale*, vol. I (Berlin and Bonn: Dietz, 1978).

anti-war movement of 1912? What kind of quality did this movement really have? And what was its legacy? To deal with the significance of the Balkan Wars for international socialism and its anti-war policy, it will first be necessary to look at the socialist anti-war movement of 1912 in order to work out its forms of agitations, its strengths, its impacts and its problems. In the following sections, the chapter will trace the interpretation of the Balkan Wars in the leading socialist theoretical journals and the anti-war strike debate, before finally discussing the legacy of 1912 and its meaning for 1914 from a socialist perspective.

### **The socialist anti-war movement of 1912**

When war was declared between the Balkan League and the Ottoman Empire in October 1912, international socialism reacted quickly and decisively. On 28/29 October the International Socialist Bureau (ISB), the executive board of the International, gathered in Brussels and decided to 'organise immediate, impassioned, and effective international action against any possible spread of the war, action that will unite the whole thinking proletariat, and rouse it into making a unanimous protest, an unambiguous demonstration'.<sup>3</sup> It decided to organise a protest movement in three phases. First, it called upon the European proletariat to protest in mass demonstrations against the threat of war in each country. Second, large mass demonstrations were planned for 17 November, taking place jointly in the major European capitals with orators from different and potentially enemy countries, thus symbolising international socialist unity in the rejection of an imperialist European war. And third, the ISB decided to bring forward the international socialist Congress, planned to be held in Vienna the following year. Instead, a congress was organised in Basel 24/25 November under the motto of 'war against war'.<sup>4</sup>

The German Social Democrats (SPD) took the lead; before the ISB meeting the SPD transformed a mass demonstration in Treptow Park in Berlin, which originally was dedicated to protest against the Prussian three-classes suffrage, into an enormous anti-war demonstration. At least 200,000 people joined this meeting. During the following weeks, mass meetings and demonstrations against the threat

<sup>3</sup> Jean Jaurès, cited in Haupt, *Socialism and the Great War*, p. 80.

<sup>4</sup> See Bernard Degen, *Krieg dem Kriege! Der Basler Sozialistenkongress der Sozialistischen Internationale von 1912* (Basel: Z-Verlag, 1990); Kevin J. Callahan, 'The International Socialist Peace Movement on the Eve of World War I Revisited: The Campaign of "War against War!" and the Basle International Socialist Congress in 1912', *Peace and Change*, 29 (2004), pp. 147–76.

of war took place all over Europe. Kevin James Callahan, who has studied the demonstration culture of the Second International intensively, has counted more than 140 meetings and demonstrations with at least 363,000 but approximately 500,000 people taking part. On 17 November, socialists gathered in the major capitals of eleven European countries. The centres were in Germany with eleven mass meetings and demonstrations and above all in France, where meetings took place in at least twenty-four cities. Another 300,000 people listened to an international speakership, with the German Ludwig Frank, the Belgian Edouard Anseele, the Frenchman Charles Longuet and the Greek Platon S. Drakoules addressing crowds gathering in London. In Rome and Milan, the Russian George Plechanov, the Belgian Camille Huysmans, the Russian-Italian Angelika Balabanowa and the French Gustav Hervé and Adéotat Compère-Morel gave speeches. In Berlin six meetings were held, with Jean Jaurès from France, James O'Grady from Britain and Karl Renner from Austria-Hungary speaking – in addition to German speakers. But the most impressive meeting of this day took place in Paris, where at least 100,000 people followed the call of the Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière (SFIO) and the syndicalist union Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) and listened to Philipp Scheidemann from Germany, Emil Vandervelde from Belgium, Engelbert Pernerstorfer from Austria, Ramsay MacDonald from Britain and Ilja Roubanovitch from Russia.<sup>5</sup>

The climax of this impressive anti-war movement was the international socialist congress a week later, in the Minster of Basle after a mass demonstration of 20,000–30,000 people in the city. The Swiss Hermann Blocher of the organisation committee and the party leaders Hugo Haase from Germany, Victor Adler from Austria, James Keir Hardie from Britain, Herrmann Greulich from Switzerland, Janko Sarkassow from Bulgaria, Jean Jaurès from France and Ignacy Daszynski from Poland, as well as other international orators addressing the crowds outside the church, cemented the decisiveness of international socialism to fight against war. The dedication of Jean Jaurès deeply impressed the auditorium, but generally the 'totality of the speeches and the solemn atmosphere in the Basle cathedral exuded a sense of optimism and hope about the possibility to contain the Balkan conflict. It was a sacred celebration of the International's highest aspirations, an image of a world in peace and harmony.'<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See Kevin J. Callahan, *Demonstration Culture: European Socialism and the Second International, 1889–1914* (Leicester: Troubadour, 2010), pp. 266–79.

<sup>6</sup> Callahan, *Demonstration Culture*, p. 284.

This was one of the most impressive demonstrations of proletarian internationalism and anti-war agitation ever seen. Nevertheless, it has to be questioned for its real political strength. Looking at the speeches held in the Minster of Basle, we have to acknowledge that very different opinions were expressed concerning the potential of international socialism to prevent war, ranging from optimism to pessimism. On the one hand, Jaurès powerfully threatened European governments, warning 'how easily the people could make the simple calculation that their own revolution could cost them fewer victims than the war of the others'.<sup>7</sup> On the other side of the political spectrum, Victor Adler seemed to be much more pessimistic about the influence of international socialism and the working classes on governmental politics when he stated: 'Unfortunately, it is not up to us if war will take place or not . . . Let us not overestimate our power.' But these different opinions not only reflected optimism and pessimism, but they were also expressions of different opinions on how to combat the danger of a major European war. At the meeting of the leading socialist politicians in Basle, it was once again impossible to find a common answer to this question. To fight war by 'the most effective means', this compromise formulation without any precise decision, passed by the 1907 international congress in Stuttgart, went on to form the minimal consensus, behind which very different opinions and strategies were hidden. It was primarily the question of the anti-war strike, proposed by many western socialists and strongly rejected by the majority of German and Austrian social democrats, which divided the International. We shall return to this problem later.

But what about the impressive mass movement of 1912 with its various and internationally organised meetings and demonstrations? Certainly, it seems to have had little, if any, effect on the decision-making process of European politicians and governments. Its aim was to demonstrate the unwillingness of the European people, especially of the workers, to fight each other, and thus to prevent European politicians from waging an unpopular war. This truly made sense as everywhere governments and politicians were convinced that a modern industrial war between the major European powers could not be waged successfully in the face of working-class resistance. The central question was how seriously the threat of anti-war abstention and resistance could be demonstrated and had to be feared by putatively belligerent politicians. But in the end of 1912 this question did not arise because the governments of all European

<sup>7</sup> This and the following are quoted from *Außerordentlicher Internationaler Sozialistenkongreß am 24. und 25. November 1912* (Berlin: Vorwärts Singer, 1912), pp. 52–3.



powers were not willing to take the risk of war, mainly for other reasons.<sup>8</sup> Generally, the conflicts between the Ottoman Empire and the Balkan League were not interpreted as a serious threat to the European order or as a threat to vital interests of any major power. Furthermore, in no country did the military seem prepared to start a major war. Nevertheless, when the British government warned the German leadership that in case of war it would take the French side, Kaiser Wilhelm II fell into a rage and called up his famous 'Kriegsrat'. But no concrete plan for a military engagement was taken, except for the decision to prepare the public mind for a future war.<sup>9</sup>

This is the only, albeit indirect, hint that the social democratic anti-war demonstrations in Germany could have influenced the decisions of the government. At any rate, popular sentiments towards war seemingly were not without any importance from a governmental perspective. But the question remained how this insight could be used best to prevent war and what the Balkan Wars and their outcome would mean for the danger of a major European war.

### Socialist interpretations of the Balkan Wars

German social democracy with its strong Marxist tradition, especially, was deeply influenced by the idea of scientific socialism, analysing socio-political structures and developments in order to establish a scientifically based socialist policy. Therefore it seems to make sense to study the interpretation of the Balkan Wars in the leading social democratic theoretical organs which had a very strong impact on international socialism as a whole. These organs were the Marxist *Die Neue Zeit*, edited by the main theoretical head of German and international socialism, Karl Kautsky, and its main competitor, the revisionist *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, under the editorship of Josef Bloch, trying to renew Marxist and socialist thinking in the light of modern and reformist developments.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Jost Dülffer, Martin Kröger and Rolf-Harald Wippich, *Vermiedene Kriege: Deeskalation von Konflikten der Großmächte zwischen Krimkrieg und Erstem Weltkrieg 1865–1914* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1997), pp. 641–56; Holger Afflerbach, *Der Dreibund: Europäische Großmacht- und Allianzpolitik vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Vienna, Cologne and Weimar: Bohlau, 2002), pp. 721–49.

<sup>9</sup> See John C. G. Röhl, 'Die Generalprobe: Zur Geschichte und Bedeutung des "Kriegsrates" vom 8. Dezember 1912', in Dirk Stegmann, Bernd-Jürgen Wendt and Peter Christian Witt (eds.), *Industrielle Gesellschaft und politisches System* (Bonn: Verlag Neue Gesellschaft, 1978), pp. 357–73.

<sup>10</sup> See Dieter Fricke, *Handbuch zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung 1869–1917 in zwei Bänden*, vol. II (Berlin/Ost: Dietz, 1987), pp. 561–7, 603–8.

Looking at the articles on the Balkan Wars, it soon becomes clear that socialism was not a true pacifist movement. It rejected the horrors of war and specifically it rejected modern imperialist war for sacrificing the lives of workers and the products of industrial production and human culture for capitalist interests. Nevertheless, it accepted war as a moving factor in history not only for its destructive aspects but also for its progressive social and political meanings. Consequently, in both journals the Balkan Wars were not interpreted as representative wars of the European powers but as genuine wars of the people against foreign Turkish domination, dedicated to establishing sovereign nation-states. 'That a people's movement and democratic conditions can bring about the same exertions going beyond all limits was proven by Prussia in its wars of liberation and is now proven by the Balkan Alliance', stated the Austrian Karl Leuthner in the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, who went on to emphasise 'that a people, once sustained by the idea of an identity between the nation and the state, is able to act for a state-run idea of power, is even able to do this with enthusiasm, with dedication and with a limitless readiness to make sacrifices'.<sup>11</sup> The revisionist social democrat Wilhelm Schröder sharpened this idea even further, comparing the Balkan Wars not only with the German wars of the founding of the Reich but also with the revolutions of the nineteenth century: 'But the horrors of war? They truly are horrible – like the horrors of a revolution. And which socialist has ever dared to condemn 1789, 1830 and 1848? Certainly, there is a difference between the indignation of the people against the despotism of their governments and a cabinet war. But the war on the Balkans was no cabinet war. Instead, it was a war of the people. We have to acknowledge this under all circumstances . . . We have to accept the power of the national idea even for the Bulgarians, the Serbs and the Montenegrins.'<sup>12</sup>

In *Die Neue Zeit* Friedrich Austerlitz, also an Austrian, likewise portrayed the victory of the Balkan states as a 'historical decision' and stated: 'Whatever the non-military Europe, whatever European social democracy for example should have to object against the idea that the Balkans should belong to those who have conquered it for themselves, cannot be seen.'<sup>13</sup> And Hermann Wendel, the Balkan expert of the social democratic group in the Diet, even interpreted the outcome of the First Balkan War as a kind of social revolution, bringing about the end of feudalism and

<sup>11</sup> Karl Leuthner, 'Der Krieg als eine moralische Anstalt betrachtet', *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, 16 January 1913, p. 18.

<sup>12</sup> Wilhelm Schröder, 'Balkankrieg', *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, 12 June 1913, pp. 680–2.

<sup>13</sup> Friedrich Austerlitz, 'Nach dem Kriege', *Die Neue Zeit*, 1 November 1912, 31/1, pp. 153–63.

strengthening not only the development of bourgeois society but also of proletarian revolution. 'When these parasites [the Ottomans, WK] now have been driven out of Europe by the power of arms, this means the relief of feudalism by a new civil order of the law, it means the unfolding of all the economic forces of the Thracian-Illyrian peninsula, it means the development of the Balkan states to industrialism and by this also the awakening of the masses on the Balkans for the idea of socialism. If the war on the Balkans was a bourgeois revolution, the proletarian revolution will be its consequence.'<sup>14</sup> Obviously, in the light of Marxist theoretical tradition with its 'revolutionary opportunism' in relation to war,<sup>15</sup> it was no wonder when even the leader of German social democracy, August Bebel, came to the conclusion that in the Balkans 'war had taken the role of a revolution. Thus, war is not in any case an enemy of culture.'<sup>16</sup>

Consequently, the socialist anti-war movement of 1912 was not really intended to stop the war in the Balkans but to localise it. When the Second Balkan War broke out in June 1913, there was no socialist anti-war movement at all. Nevertheless, European socialists were in fear of a major European war, brought about by imperialist involvements into Balkan affairs. In this field, the analyses of *Die Neue Zeit* and the *Sozialistische Monatshefte* were again very much common and clear: 'The crisis of Europe will only start when the Balkan war will be over . . . The attitude of Austria-Hungary is the question mark of the future', Friedrich Austerlitz argued,<sup>17</sup> and Karl Leuthner added: 'The consequences which accumulate in this war still are standing at the centre of attention. But these dangers have a name: their name is Austria-Hungary. What are the intentions of the monarchy which is now responsible for the question of war and peace on our continent?'<sup>18</sup>

One argument for this interpretation was the new strength of Serbia, whose ascendancy in the Balkans threatened the interests of Austria-Hungary. 'For what is really threatening Austria is *the fear of an even stronger Serbia*, intended to become a great power and thus being a

<sup>14</sup> Hermann Wendel, 'Zwischen Krieg und Krieg', *Die Neue Zeit*, 9 March 1913, 31/1, p. 186.

<sup>15</sup> Hans-Christof Schröder, *Sozialismus und Imperialismus: Die Auseinandersetzung der deutschen Sozialdemokratie mit dem Imperialismus und der 'Weltpolitik' vor 1914* (Hannover: Verlag für Literatur und Zeitgeschichte, 1968), p. 93.

<sup>16</sup> August Bebel to Karl Kautsky, 8 November 1912, cited in Dieter Groh, *Negative Integration und revolutionärer Attentismus: Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie am Vorabend des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Frankfurt: Ullstein Buch, 1974), p. 361.

<sup>17</sup> Austerlitz, 'Nach dem Kriege', p. 153.

<sup>18</sup> Karl Leuthner, 'Das Balkanproblem und Österreich-Ungarn', *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, 14 November 1912, p. 1423.

permanent threat for the integrity of Austria.’<sup>19</sup> But more than this, the breakdown of the Ottoman Empire as a multinational empire in the Balkan Wars seemed to be the ‘writing on the wall’ for the future of the Habsburg Monarchy. ‘But one state does not want to accept the outcome of the historic development of the last weeks, one state cannot come to terms with this overturning of all the conditions within only some days. This state is Austria-Hungary. It would be superficial to say that Austria is only affected so strongly because it has a long common frontier with the Balkan states, because it is a Balkan state itself by the possession of Bosnia and Dalmatia. This is not the only problem and this is not the real depth of the disaster. Indirectly, the Habsburg Monarchy would recognize the breakdown of Turkey like a punch against itself. The principle which has come to victory against Turkey, which has just recently resolved its inner hierarchies: this principle of nationality is also the feared enemy of the internationally organized Habsburg Monarchy, ruling over a diversity of nations.’<sup>20</sup>

But Vienna, as was clear, could not risk a war against Serbia’s protector, Russia, without support of its own ally, Germany. ‘If the Habsburg Monarchy tries to protect the “fall of the folds” of its toga from the developments in the Balkans, what the hell is the intention of the German people, of the German Reich to follow the politics of Vienna with a nearly admirable form of self denial, of denial of its own judgment, of its own interests? Never before was the behaviour of the German public mind as inconceivable, never before was the abstention of any protest within the bourgeois public mind as incomprehensible as it is today . . . Today there is the opportunity to take a new course and to choose a fundamentally new orientation of German foreign policy which was for about twenty years a policy of false worth and false judging’, asserted Karl Leuthner.<sup>21</sup> And Austerlitz added: ‘It would also be a *special failure of the German politicians*, if they cannot make Austria see reason; namely to see the reason that the protection of a supposed and doubtful interest of the Habsburg power is not worth the bones of a single Austrian, let alone German soldier – soldiers from whom the bewitched Black-and-Yellows [Austrian nationalists, WK] hope for the most.’ He concluded his analysis with a very clear prognosis of what was to come in July 1914: ‘Nothing seems to be as logical as the prophecy of a future world war. Serbia . . . is pressing for a greater Serbia . . . Austria cannot accept that and must take the sword to stop it. Russia cannot be quiet while its protégé is defrauded

<sup>19</sup> Austerlitz, ‘Nach dem Kriege’, p. 160.

<sup>20</sup> Leuthner, ‘Das Balkanproblem und Österreich-Ungarn’, p. 1417.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1421–2.

of its right obtained through fighting and destroyed by Austria. Consequently, war between Russia and Austria-Hungary will be inevitable. The treaty of alliance with Germany will be enacted: Germany cannot leave Austria alone and must come to its aid. But if Germany is involved in a war of life or death, France will take the opportunity to settle its account with the state that has defeated it some twenty years ago. Of course, this is also true for England . . . and for Italy against Austria.<sup>22</sup>

Rudolf Hilferding, one of the most eminent contemporary analysts of imperialism, took the most pessimistic view concerning the chances of avoiding a major European war. He did not restrict his analysis to the meaning of the warlike oriental revolution and for its effects on nationalism and territorial state-building. Instead, Hilferding recognised that in the Balkans 'the interests of nearly all major powers [push] aggressively against each other, and on first view it seems to be that Russia, Austria and Italy would be much more directly affected by each change than England and Germany. Nevertheless, the meaning of the Balkan war in world history can only be recognized in the context of and dominated by the German-English conflict, just as the unfolding of the oriental question in this time can only find its adequate explanation in this conflict.'<sup>23</sup> For Hilferding, the Balkan War was the consequence and the climax of German-English competition in the imperialist domination of Turkey in which England was victorious, being able to fulfil its aims by indirect means. By contrast, the German Balkan policy ended 'in total disaster'. And in the context of the European system this would mean, he concluded, that the 'impossibility of the prevention of the war [in the Balkans, WK] also comprises the impossibility to localise it. Thus, only the delay of a war between the major powers is thinkable, hardly a permanent maintenance of peace among them. For this the antagonistic interests between the directly neighbouring powers are too strong.'

Consequently, Hilferding – like the left-wing radicals – proposed socialist anti-war policies only as a means to strengthen the power of the proletariat's revolutionary aspirations, because 'only in fighting against war-mongering developments . . . can we become the heirs of the breakdown of the capitalist world'. On the contrary, Hilferding's mentor Karl Kautsky took a different stand when he discussed Otto Bauer's book *Der Balkankrieg und die deutsche Weltpolitik*. Like Hilferding, Bauer had analysed the defeat of Turkey as a breakdown of the German

<sup>22</sup> Austerlitz, 'Nach dem Kriege', pp. 162–3.

<sup>23</sup> Rudolf Hilferding, 'Der Balkankrieg und die Großmächte', *Die Neue Zeit*, 18 December 1912, 31/1, pp. 73–82, here p. 75; the subsequent citations are taken from pp. 77, 79 and 81–2.

‘Weltpolitik’. But Bauer and, following his analysis, Kautsky developed a more differentiated view on the consequences of this in an area of internationally connected ‘ultra-imperialism’, when they brought about the idea of alternative possibilities for German politics, ‘which could produce a greater convergence with England or an intensification of the conflict with it, thus being able to increase the potential for peace as well as to increase the danger of a world war. In this question the policy of German social democracy can be of decisive meaning for the whole of Europe.’<sup>24</sup>

All of this meant not only that, from a socialist perspective, it was mainly Germany and Austria who would be responsible for peace or war in Europe. It would also mean that the social democratic parties of these countries had to carry huge responsibilities to influence their governments to keep the peace. Which consequences did they draw?

### **Socialist anti-war policies after the Balkan Wars and the anti-war strike debate**

Following Georges Haupt, the literature on socialism on the eve of the First World War argues that after the Balkan Wars most of the socialist leaders were very optimistic about a peaceful development of Europe and did not expect a major European war any more.<sup>25</sup> In my view this is not a convincing argument, especially if it is used to explain the socialist failures of 1914. Of course the European crises of 1911 and 1912–13 did not result in a European war, and international socialism could argue proudly that ‘during these last three years only the socialist International has offered resistance to war in all countries – in the Balkans and in Italy, in Germany and in England. Socialism is and will be the strongest power for peace.’<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, some socialists may have been thinking that these developments had also demonstrated the sense of responsibility of leading politicians and interest groups in Europe. Karl Kautsky tried to interpret this with his idea of ‘ultra imperialism’, but he only demonstrated the possibility, not the necessity of a peaceful development of capitalist imperialism.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, after the Balkan Wars the arms race in Europe not only continued but escalated in speed and quality

<sup>24</sup> Karl Kautsky on Otto Bauer, ‘Der Balkankrieg und die deutsche Weltpolitik’, *Die Neue Zeit*, 13 December 1912, 31/1, pp. 405–6.

<sup>25</sup> See Haupt, *Socialism and the Great War*, pp 123–35.

<sup>26</sup> Camille Hysmans in a speech delivered in Bradford, April 1914, quoted in Haupt, *Socialism and the Great War*, pp. 109–10.

<sup>27</sup> Karl Kautsky, ‘Der Imperialismus’, *Die Neue Zeit*, 11 September 1914, 32/2, pp. 908–22.

amidst huge increases in the size of armies in most European countries. When socialists now pleaded for international arbitration and for a closer amalgamation of Britain, France and Germany, these perspectives were less optimistic but full of despair or of naivety. And why should western socialists – and especially the French – have agitated ever more strongly for the international anti-war strike, if the international situation in their view did not contain any danger?

Within the International the best way to fight the danger of war had been hotly discussed over and over again. While most western socialists proposed the anti-war strike, the German and Austrians strongly opposed this idea. These debates reflected different attitudes towards working-class radicalism and antimilitarism, but they were also affected by different national interests. When French socialists pleaded for the anti-war strike to be adopted in the International, they mainly wanted to fight the danger of a German aggression. 'My anti-militarist agitation should have been a loud cry', Gustav Hervé declared at the International Congress in Stuttgart 1907, 'a warning cry to German social democracy to fulfil its duty for the International and to make war impossible . . . By our brilliant agitation we wanted to set an example to you Germans, to oblige you to follow.'<sup>28</sup> At the same congress, according to the German visitor Gustav Mayer, Jaurès mainly had the intention 'to open the eyes of the German social democrats to the gravity of the international situation' when he criticised them saying: 'The bourgeois world is trembling, and right in this moment you want to declare yourself impotent, you want to declare the bankruptcy of social democracy?'<sup>29</sup> But for the German and Austrian social democrats the situation seemed to be very different. Deeply scarred by the experience of the anti-socialist laws under Bismarck, the Germans were in constant fear of legal persecution when adopting the anti-war strike. And they argued convincingly that in case of war it would be impossible to organise a strike. Consequently, the question of the anti-war strike could not be solved and was postponed from one international congress to the other. Even in November 1912, demonstrating jointly against the Balkan War in Basel, no solution could be found. But the French Édouard Vaillant and the British James Keir Hardie decided to propose the anti-war strike again at the Congress of the International planned for the autumn of 1914 in Vienna.

<sup>28</sup> *Internationaler Sozialisten-Kongreß zu Stuttgart 1907*, p. 84; the subsequent citation is from *ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>29</sup> Gustav Mayer, *Erinnerungen: Vom Journalisten zum Historiker der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* (Zürich and Vienna: Europa, 1949), p. 180.

Especially for the French, the danger of a German aggression seemed to have become even greater after the Balkan Wars. When they pleaded again for the anti-war strike to be accepted as a common instrument to fight the danger of war, this was just an expression of the really strong and radical anti-militarist tendencies in the French working-class movement.<sup>30</sup> Jean Jaurès followed the intention to bring the socialist Party SFIO in closer contact with the syndicalist unions of the CGT, which strongly favoured the general strike as a political instrument in general and the anti-war strike in particular. Furthermore, he and Vaillant, the strongest supporters of the anti-war strike in France, were not really convinced of the necessity to organise a strike against a French war policy. Above all, they intended to stop war-mongering tendencies in Germany by forcing the social democrats to threaten their government by a decision for the anti-war strike. When the SFIO formally accepted the anti-war strike in the spring of 1914, its main aim was 'to force the German and Austrian socialist to take the same road', reported Pierre Renaudel.<sup>31</sup>

While the Germans argued that in a case of war the organisation of an international anti-war strike would not only be impossible but would also weaken the victims of foreign aggression, their French and British counterparts hoped that a formal decision for this weapon in the International could bring about a warning and threatening effect on war-mongering politicians. Furthermore, they took over the German argumentation and proposed to organise anti-war strikes not after but before the beginning of war, in times of serious international crisis, and intended to force the leading politicians to accept international arbitration by a demonstration of proletarian anti-war sentiment and power. 'It was too late to begin to take action when the war fever had maddened the blood of the people', Hardie argued in 1910, 'but if the warmongers in Germany and in this country knew beforehand that the working class of the two countries had come to an understanding, and would stand by it, the influence of this knowledge upon their counsels would be such as to compel them to submit the points, which would otherwise have been submitted to war, to arbitration.'<sup>32</sup> And Jaurès declared in an interview he gave the socialist daily *Humanité* in June 1914, 'that a general strike as a preventive measure against the threat of war shall be "organised simultaneously in all countries" for two reasons: to increase the chances of peace and to save the most generous nations, and the most fearless human beings,

<sup>30</sup> See James E. Miller, *From Revolutionaries to Citizens: Antimilitarism in France, 1870–1914* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

<sup>31</sup> Cited in Haupt, *Socialism and the Great War*, p. 176.

<sup>32</sup> Cited in Newton, *British Labour, European Socialism and the Struggle for Peace*, p. 263.



from unplanned and unilateral action that might undermine their means of defence'.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, the German social democrats did not accept this sharper, but also more dangerous preventive strategy and went on favouring anti-war demonstrations. Even if it is true to interpret the anti-war strike proposal with its probably more threatening than real intentions like James Callahan within the broader scheme of a 'demonstration culture',<sup>34</sup> the differences especially between the French and German socialists should not be minimised. The problem remained how seriously the governments could be threatened by which forms of demonstration.

### 1912 and 1914: differences and similarities

In a superficial comparison of both cases we might come to the conclusion that the socialist anti-war movement had been successful in 1912 and failed in 1914. But this judgement is in fact much truer for the international situation than for socialist politics. While the major European powers and their leading politicians were not ready to go to war for some Balkan problems in 1912–13 and tried to contain the conflict, the situation was very different in 1914, when German and Austrian leaders decided to risk a major European war in order to strengthen their international position through a war of Austria against Serbia.<sup>35</sup> As in 1912, they called for a localisation of the conflict in the Balkans, but this was only a superficial similarity. In fact, localisation meant something very different in 1912 and in 1914. When the German government pleaded for a localisation of the war in July 1914, this did no longer meant letting the Balkan states fight their wars alone. Now it meant the military intervention of one major European power, Austria-Hungary, into Balkan affairs, thus threatening the whole European balance of power. International socialism proved to be unable to stop this development, even if the German social democrats, for example, organised a huge anti-war movement with about 750,000 participants in the last week of July 1914.<sup>36</sup> But

<sup>33</sup> Cited in Haupt, *Socialism and the Great War*, p. 174; see also Agnes Blänsdorf, 'Jean Jaurès und die Zweite Internationale', in Ulrike Brummert (ed.), *Jean Jaurès, Frankreich, Deutschland und die Zweite Internationale am Vorabend des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1989), pp. 23–33.

<sup>34</sup> See Callahan, *Demonstration Culture*, pp. 257–92.

<sup>35</sup> I cannot see how this central aspect for the outbreak of the First World War can be denied, even if new research has convincingly demonstrated that war-mongering tendencies and/or a readiness to go to war existed in all European countries. See most recently Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Britain Went to War in 1914* (London: Allen Lane, 2012).

<sup>36</sup> See Wolfgang Kruse, *Krieg und nationale Integration: Eine Neuinterpretation des sozialdemokratischen Burgfriedensschlusses 1914/15* (Essen: Kartext Verlag, 1993), pp. 29–51.

even this impressive demonstration of proletarian anti-war sentiment was not powerful enough to stop the German policy for war. And we have no reason to think that this would have been different if in 1912 a similar development of international politics had taken place.

Finally, no one can say if a clear decision to threaten European governments by an internationally organised anti-war strike in cases of serious international crisis would have been strong enough to stop European politicians, and especially those in Germany and Austria, from running the risk of war. Nevertheless, supported by the enormous public reception of the anti-war movement of 1912, it could have been worth trying. And, successful or not, it probably would have changed the course of history. Such an attempt would have made the idea of national reconciliation and of truce policy nearly impossible. German and Austrian Social Democrats hindered such a policy from being tried out. But they were not the only ones to be blamed. When the German social democrat Hermann Müller went to Paris and suggested a common abstention of the SPD and the SFIO in the question of war credits on 1 August 1914, the leading French socialists followed their national interests and declined.<sup>37</sup> They saw France threatened by German aggression and announced they would vote in favour of war credits. Even if their political assessments were justified, this decision destroyed the International as an independent political force during the First World War. And when Müller came back to Berlin on 3 August, his report finally cleared the way for the social democratic group in the Diet and influenced its decision to vote for war credits. The Second International as an anti-war movement was over.

<sup>37</sup> See Henrik de Man, 'Hermann Müllers Pariser Sendung: Die letzte Aktion im August 1914', *Bulletin de l'association pour l'étude de Henrik de Man*, 11 (1982), pp. 40–55.

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