



# **International Relations and Area Studies: Focus on Western Balkans**

**Editori:  
Laura Herța și Adrian Corpădean**

**Presă Universitară Clujeană**

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND AREA STUDIES:  
FOCUS ON WESTERN BALKANS**

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**LAURA M. HERȚA, ADRIAN G. CORPĂDEAN**

**EDITORI**



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**LAURA M. HERȚA, ADRIAN G.  
CORPĂDEAN EDITORI**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Introduction

Laura M. Herța and Adrian G. Corpădean, <i>Why the Western Balkans should matter for the European Union</i> .....	9
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---

### I. The European Union's Enlargement and the Western Balkan Countries: Challenges, Dilemmas, Prospects

Stefano Bianchini, <i>Stati successori della Jugoslavia e dilemmi dell'integrazione europea: si può emulare l'esempio della UE?</i> .....	29
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

Roberto di Quirico, <i>Disintegrazione, de-integrazione, integrazione differenziata o allargamento per l'Unione Europea post-COVID 19?</i> .....	51
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

Mircea Brie, Islam Jusufi, István Polgár, <i>The Role of the Albanian Community in the European Integration Process of North Macedonia</i> .....	65
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

Anca Stângaciu, <i>Il futuro dei Balcani Occidentali nell'Unione Europea tra le riforme e la difficoltà di sviluppo economico</i> .....	91
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

Melania-Gabriela Ciot, <i>Identity Issues in the States of the Western Balkans (Republic of North Macedonia) in the Process of preparing for EU Accession</i> .....	115
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

Greta-Diana Roth, <i>The continuous Swing between East and West as a Challenge for Serbia</i> .....	133
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

Adela-Alexandra Cosgarea, <i>Montenegro's Accession Process to the EU: Sustainability before Momentum</i> .....	151
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

## **II. The Western Balkans: Historical Developments and Political Analyses**

Giulia Lami, *Dall'Ottocento al Novecento: i Balcani in un manuale di storia...* 173 Dejan

Marolov, *Small Power in Conflict with Great Power: A Case Study of the Serbia and Austro-Hungary Conflict*..... 193

Gian Carlo Falco, *Ascesa e declino dei commercianti-banchieri greci di Livorno, 1793-1891*..... 259

Dorin M. Dobra, *About the European vocation. Comparative study Romania - Western Balkans*..... 283

## **III. The European Union's Attitude towards the Western Balkans: Institutional Reform and Strategies for Communication**

Paula A. Mureşan, *The 2020 Enlargement Package of the European Commission for the Western Balkans. Case Study: Communication on Enlargement*..... 299

Radu Albu-Comănescu, *Beyond Western Balkans Integration: Scenarios for the EU Institutional Aftermath*..... 307

Elena Grad-Rusu, *The Western Balkans within the European Commission. Discourse analysis of president Ursula von der Leyen*..... 323

## **IV. Building Democracy in the Western Balkans: Focus on civil society, human rights and administrative reform**

Odile Perrot, *La dimension humaine de la construction de la démocratie* ..... 337

Diana-Gabriela Reianu, *Public Administration Reform in Western Balkans: An Analysis of Public Procurement Area*..... 351

Miruna Balosin, <i>The Europeanization of Interest Groups in Western Balkan Countries</i> .....	373
Michelle Abergel, <i>Europeanization in the Western Balkans – Challenges and trends Countries</i> .....	383
Pauline Soulier, <i>Serbie, les elections generales du 21 juin 2020, un plebiscite pour Aleksandar Vučić ?</i> .....	395
Tudor Vidrean-Căpușan, <i>The Western Balkans and the EU integration process: The legal and judicial perspective</i> .....	413
Tudor Dan, Diana Schuler, <i>Comparison between Croatia’s and Serbia’s policies in response to Covid-19. Dissimilar actions taken by two political and social structures</i> .....	425
 <b>V. Miscellanea</b>	
Violeta Popescu, <i>Il fenomeno “orfani bianchi” visto dagli italiani</i> .....	439
Amin Khalaf, <i>Peace Education in Times of Conflict: Integrated Education in Northern Ireland, Cyprus and Israel</i> .....	445
Hani Abo Reesh, <i>The process of enacting the Nationality Law in the state of Israel between consents and opponents</i> .....	461
 <b>List of authors</b> .....	475
<b>Index</b> .....	483





# SMALL POWER IN CONFLICT WITH GREAT POWER: A CASE STUDY OF THE SERBIA AND AUSTRO-HUNGARY CONFLICT

**Dejan Marolov**

## **Introduction**

This paper analyzes the conflict between Serbia and Austria-Hungary that practically led to the First World War. All the relevant circumstances and actors of international relations are presented from the respective historical epoch. The focus will be on Serbia and Austria-Hungary. We will try to present the options that were open to Serbia, the choices it made, and why it was decided that way. The goal is to see how two neighboring countries that started with excellent relations ended up in a war of total destruction. In all of this, it is important to determine a certain paradigm of behavior of a small state in a conflict with great power as well as the possible influence of third forces as allies. The above will be analyzed through some aspect of structural realism. The conclusion is that both countries believed in the inevitability of a military solution sooner or later but the support of their great allies were crucial. For Austria-Hungary, this was a war to preserve its prestige and status as a great power and ensure its internal stability. For Serbia, it was a war for freedom and the preservation of independence which they hoped could grow into a war of unification with the rest South Slavic lands that were part of the Habsburg monarchy. The two neighbors were kingdoms and, hence, this was not an ideological clash in this part. Nonetheless, there seems to have been a direct clash between the multinational concept of the Habsburg Empire and the national concept of the Serbian kingdom.

The Conflict between Serbia and Austria-Hungary (Habsburg Monarchy): This is an interesting example from which many conclusions can be drawn. It is a conflict between a small and a large country, i.e., a small power in the case of Serbia and a large power in the case of Austria-Hungary.



1

Historically, this crisis has had its roots for many years, but definitely the moment that is most famous in the relations between the two countries is the assassination of the Austro-Hungarian Crown Prince, Franz Ferdinand, in Sarajevo in 1914. Unfortunately, this moment is well known in world history because it is taken as the official reason for the beginning of the First World War. In order to draw appropriate and credible conclusions on the collision of a small with a large force, as in this case, it is especially important not to perform the analysis in isolation that would be limited to the two countries. This is especially true due to the fact that no state exists on its own and is completely independent and unaffected by the

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<sup>1</sup> Downloaded from Reddit.com 2020. *Political Map of Balkan States and Surrounding Regions 1912: Mapporn*. [online] Available at: <[https://www.reddit.com/r/MapPorn/comments/cr7rfk/political\\_map\\_of\\_balkan\\_states\\_and\\_surrounding/](https://www.reddit.com/r/MapPorn/comments/cr7rfk/political_map_of_balkan_states_and_surrounding/)> [Accessed 5 October 2020].

*Small Power in Conflict with Great Power: A Case Study of the Serbia and Austro-Hungary Conflict*

actions of other states. Previously, it is even more relevant to deal with a case like this one in which it is not about some isolated island states in a distant ocean, but a country like Austria-Hungary concentrated in the heart of Europe and its neighbor Serbia positioned on the Balkan Peninsula. The conflict itself, although bilateral, soon escalated into a world war. So it was not a local conflict as Austria-Hungary wanted, but other countries intervened (as Serbia to some extent wanted). At the beginning, it should be pointed out that in Austria-Hungary, they were quite aware of such a possible development, but they hoped that it would not happen. Thus, if there were interferences from other countries, they believed that they had a contingency plan.

Namely, right here, in the area of the European part of the dying empire - the Ottoman Empire (of which Serbia was a part, many years before it became independent) - the (often opposing) interests of the great powers intersected. Hence, it must be assumed that what was happening between the two countries to a greater or lesser extent affected not only their immediate neighbors, but also the great powers of the time, especially Russia, Italy, the United Kingdom, France, and even Germany. However, in order to get the full picture and the right conclusions, it is necessary for the analysis to take into account the international system at a certain period before the First World War. Of course, the fact that there was adequate progress in military technology and weapons production (in addition to "traditional" weapons of mass destruction such as nerve gases, etc.) must be taken into account. This is together with the fact that it flourished just before and during the First World War. Air warfare through the use of military aircraft has only emerged as a possibility. Yet, the world at that time was far from a nuclear weapon that does not yet exist. Of course, if it existed, it could give a completely different dimension to the conflict, and thus the analysis would be different. Hence, the potential threat to Serbia's security, however terrible, was reduced to a classic military threat, excluding the nuclear threat. In addition, it should be noted that the means of communication are far from the level as of today, but it still developed quite rapidly and were the most developed for that given moment in human history. Thus, with the perfection of the telegraph, messages arrived much faster than before. Already in 1900, the telephone was also discovered (although it was not in mass commercial use until the beginning of World War I). The existence of printing presses enabled the publication of newspapers and some mass propaganda. All this contributed to the

manner in which the crisis was managed, i.e., through classical diplomacy and away from the public eye. On the other hand, certain means of mass propaganda still existed but we can only assume how this crisis would have unfolded if modern technologies such as the internet and social networks were available just as we have them today.

### **1. The Secret Telegram**

We will begin this analysis from the end, and the end of our analysis is undoubtedly the beginning of the First World War, also called the Great War, because it was the greatest war that humanity has ever experienced. In order to give the simplest introduction to the main dilemmas which will be analyzed later in the text, at the very beginning we processed the secret telegram sent by the British statesman, Sir Edward Gray, to the British ambassador in Vienna (July 27, 1914) less than two days before the beginning of First World War (First World War n.d). The purpose of this telegram is to get acquainted with the content of Sir Edward's conversation with the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador in London. The points stated in the telegram are those which reveal the context of the problems between Serbia and Austria-Hungary and the possible implications. The telegram explains the Austro-Hungarian positions regarding Serbia. What is interesting is the fact that Serbia is written everywhere in the telegram as "Servia" instead of "Serbia", which indicates that perhaps the British policy did not give too much importance to this country and its policies. Trevelyan also confirms this, believing that British and American politics were not too familiar with Serbia and Serbs in general (Trevelyan, 2013). The telegram crystallizes the position of Austria- Hungary as dissatisfied with the incomplete acceptance of the requests sent to the Serbian government, which is accused of irredentism, propaganda, and making constant provocations. Serbia is characterized as a problematic neighbor. For Austria-Hungary, the events in Sarajevo (the assassination of Franz Ferdinand) showed in action what Serbian propaganda could lead to. As a result of all this, the United Kingdom (UK) is being asked to understand the possibility of Austria-Hungary by using force against Serbia. However, they emphasize that this use of force should not be seen as an act of aggression, but simply self-defense in a situation where all other options for Austria-Hungary are exhausted so as to ensure the security and safety of its borders. In addition, the Habsburg monarchy believes that through this way, the general European interest will be

*Small Power in Conflict with Great Power: A Case Study of the Serbia and Austro-Hungary Conflict*

satisfied. The representative of Austria-Hungary speaks with respect for the British people and its statesmen as a people with a high sense of justice. Therefore, they expect moral support and understanding for the future moves of Austria-Hungary. This is aside from all the beautiful phrases about peace, justice, order, self-defense and the likes. It is particularly interesting that the specific request to the UK to help, if necessary, keep hostilities local (First World War, n.d.). Therefore, the latter is essential for the success of the future action of Austria-Hungary. If the war remains a war between them and Serbia, Austria-Hungary will be able to do so successfully. The request for help to keep the war local clearly contains the awareness of the possibility of other states intervening. This refers, first and foremost, to Russia, which acts as a kind of patron state of Serbia. Its involvement would definitely complicate matters for both Austria-Hungary and the European continent, as it had the potential to provoke a larger war. From this, it seems clear that Austria-Hungary knew this risk and accepted it, but still thought that it could be avoided, among other things, because of the alliance with Germany (which we will write about later). Hence the official position of Austria-Hungary on that war is not about territory and border change, hoping that such defined military objectives will deter (or at least take away the argument) Russia from interfering. In addition, the telegram clearly states the position of the UK statesman that Serbia is already humiliated enough and had done quite enough by accepting most of the demands stated in the ultimatum. At the same time, the fear of the UK was visible that the start of military activities against Serbia without guarantees that Russia will not intervene in this war could cause unforeseeable consequences.

The previous telegram reveals and clarifies several dilemmas in the days before the First World War. First, Austria-Hungary was determined to go to war against Serbia despite accepting most of its demands set out in the ultimatum. Secondly, in all this, the possibility of Russian interference was quite real, but Austria-Hungary somehow hoped that it will not happen. Even if it did, it has Germany as its ally.

## **2. The Neighbors: Austria-Hungary and Serbia**

The Austro-Hungarian state was a dual monarchy ruled by the Habsburg dynasty. It was one of the largest European powers with a population of about 50 million and the third largest country (by territory) in Europe. As its name suggests, it consisted of two parts, the Austrian

based in Vienna and the Hungarian based in Budim and Pest. Both parts had their own parliaments (Sked, 2014). They were united by the Habsburg monarch<sup>2</sup>. In this dual monarchy, the Austrian Germans and Hungarians were a privileged class and first-class citizens. All others were second-class citizens (Trevelyan, 2013). The monarchy was a real mixture of people from different nations with different languages and even religions. Within its borders lived a large multimillion Slavic population. Austria-Hungary consisted of Slavs of Slovenian, Croatian, Serbian, Czech, Slovak, Polish, and Ukrainian descent.



It is interesting for our analysis to point out that Hungarians in Hungary numbered barely 45% of the total population (Trevelyan, 2013). The Austro-Hungarian army was quite large, consisting of 400,000 active troops and the ability to mobilize the reserves that were available at any time with just over 1,000,000 troops. It is estimated that as many as 8 million troops were mobilized during World War I. In addition, it had a navy, but the navy had no role against mainland Serbia (Austro-Hungarian Empire - Central Powers | NZHistory, New Zealand history online, 2020). Although it definitely did not have the most modern army in the world, it

<sup>2</sup> However, it was not a personal Union because there were other common bodies and policies, such as defense, foreign policy, etc.

*Small Power in Conflict with Great Power: A Case Study of the Serbia and Austro-Hungary Conflict*

was still a serious military force and undoubtedly one of the great European powers. Undoubtedly, however, one of the weaknesses of the monarchy was the fact that its army was also composed of various ethnicities that did not always "die" from wanting to get killed in the name of the emperor. Thus, over 60,000 soldiers during the First World War surrendered to the Serbian army in the sole desire not to be captured by the monarchy so they will bring them back to fight (Trevelyan, 2013, p.862). World War I would have a catastrophic outcome for Austria-Hungary, which would cease to exist as such, causing them to pay the price of a million killed and nearly two million wounded.

On the other hand, on a part of the southeastern border of the great monarchy was the neighboring state of the Kingdom of Serbia. It had a population of over 4.5 million<sup>3</sup> (Kingdom of Serbia - Allies | NZ History, New Zealand History Online, 2020). It seems that a large number of Serbs also lived in the monarchy, i.e., outside the borders of the free Serbian state. The former is especially true because in the Kingdom of Serbia, the entire Slavic population was not Serb<sup>4</sup>. Trevelyan is in similar positions (Trevelyan, 2013). However, at that time, there was a talk of creating an all- Slavic state for the southern Slavs, so the differences between the various southern Slavs were not considered a major obstacle. Hence, Serbia took the right and spoke as its own for all the southern Slavs in the monarchy, including not only Serbs but also Croats. The Slovenes were regularly mentioned as part of the future South Slavic state (although the Serbs made a clearer distinction with them as a different people of Slavic origin). Otherwise, the Serbian army, although relatively experienced, was still far from what modern European standards meant, but still was not to be underestimated. In 1914, before the outbreak of World War I, Serbia had about 90,000 troops at its disposal with about 400,000 reserves. The end of the First World War would cost Serbia more than a million victims, which given its total population is a really terrible percentage (Kingdom of Serbia - Allies | NZ History, New Zealand History Online, 2020).

From all the above, it is clear that we are talking about two asymmetric neighbors.

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<sup>3</sup> And that is after 1913 when the population of Serbia was significantly increased due to the confluence with the territory of Vardar Macedonia at the expense of the Ottomans.

<sup>4</sup> Thus, Macedonians lived in its southern part who due to the obvious difference with the Serbs were simply called "South Serbs". So, those 4.5 million inhabitants were not all Serbs.





5

Namely, Austria-Hungary was a much larger country both in terms of population and in terms of the territory it covered. It was also part of the great European powers. However, because of the ethnic mix of its population in the era of growing nationalism, it looked like a kind of clumsy elephant in a greenhouse, metaphorically speaking. On the other hand was small Serbia, which, for a period after its independence, was under strong Austro-Hungarian influence and dependence, but later chose a complete change of this policy and began to see its great neighbor as an enemy.

It is inevitable to ask ourselves how and why the two neighbors got to war in 1914? What decisions were they guided by? Why did war seem like a desirable option for some and inevitable for others? Why were their

<sup>5</sup> Image taken from Nzhistory.govt.nz. 2020. *Map of The Austro-Hungarian Empire In 1914* / Nzhistory, *New Zealand History Online*. [online] Available at: <<https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/photo/map-austro-hungarian-empire-1914>> [Accessed 12 October 2020].

foreign policies as they were? In order to answer these questions and understand the functioning of the states and the interests of the great powers in this region in the international system in the world before the First World War, we will have to go back to not one, but several steps back in history. Thus, one must first understand the so-called Eastern question and later policies, even from the time when Serbia did not even exist as a state but was only part of the Ottoman Empire. It should be first as an ordinary province and later as an autonomous entity that would eventually become an independent state. The analysis of the policies of the great powers in the long period before the First World War is necessary to be done in order to successfully perceive and understand the complexity of the Austro-Hungarian-Serbian relations and the reasons that led to the war in 1914.

### **3. Historical Retrospective and the Policies of the Great Powers**

Consequently, the once powerful Islamic Ottoman Empire stretched on three continents, and in Europe, it had already penetrated deeply through the Balkan Peninsula. Its ambitions did not stop there, but had pretensions in the rest of Christian Europe. There seems to be a key event that marked the end of plans for its future expansion. For instance, the unsuccessful invasion of Vienna in 1683 was the moment when, for the last time, the Ottoman Empire seriously threatened the survival of another great European power. Only a few years later, out of possible booty, Austria turned into a predator against the Ottomans. Already in 1697 at the Battle of Senta (in present-day Serbia), the Ottoman army suffered a severe defeat at the hands of the Holy League led by the Habsburg Monarchy. As a result, the Ottoman Empire was forced to sign the Treaty of Karlowitz (modern-day Serbia) in 1699, which would cost the Ottomans large territorial concessions at the expense of the Habsburg monarchy, including the former Ottoman territories of Slovenia, Croatia, and Hungary. After a long time, this was the first and serious loss of territory for the Ottoman Empire, which got used to and functioned in a way of expansion and constant conquest of new territory. Nevertheless, this meant something else. Part of the Serb Slav population (in Banat and Croatia) and a large part of the Croatian Slav population (except for a small part living in Bosnia and Herzegovina) found themselves on different sides of the border. It can be seen that the two empires did not attach any importance to the national character, and they determined the feelings and desires of

the local population and the borders by force. Thus, this did not make the two empires bad by definition, but empires did not function according to a national concept and at a time when representative democracy and caring for the wishes of the people were far from a serious reason for politics to be conducted by the ruling elites. From this, it can be concluded that the relations between the Habsburg monarchy and the Ottoman Empire were far from excellent. Thus, at first the Ottoman Empire was a direct threat to the survival of the monarchy, and after the unsuccessful campaign in Vienna (and for some time thereafter), the Habsburgs became a threat to the Ottoman territorial integrity in the European part of their empire and for literally taking away a great part of their territory. However, as we have said, this event was only a turning point, i.e., a kind of announcement for the beginning of the end of the powerful Ottoman Empire, which for a long time was a factor and part of the European powers.

In this period of time, we cannot talk about relations between Serbia and Austria-Hungary. This is for the simple reason that the former did not yet exist as a state and is within the Ottoman Empire. What is important to point out in this section is that the Southern Slavs (including the Serbs) found themselves divided within two large empires: Ottoman in the south and Austro-Hungarian in the north. This fact will bring cultural, economic, social, and other differences between the South Slavic population that would be visible in the years to come, perhaps even during the future Yugoslav federation which would again disintegrate into a bloody civil war in the early 90s of the 20th century.

For almost a century after the unsuccessful Ottoman campaign in Vienna, what later became known as the Eastern Question was slowly opening up. Furthermore, this term meant a series of questions about the future redistribution of forces in the European part of the Ottoman Empire after its expected destruction<sup>6</sup>. That this multinational and multi-confessional empire was moving towards disintegration is also shown by the synonym that was used for it. Namely, it was often called the sick man from the Bosphorus (for more on the Eastern question see Sowards, 1996). The Balkans or the region of Southeast Europe, which was part of the Ottoman Empire, was the crossroads of many interests of the great powers, and the region was composed of a number of ethnic, linguistic, and

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<sup>6</sup> Sometimes, the term “Balkanization” is used as a synonym for fragmentation of a certain country into smaller parts.

*Small Power in Conflict with Great Power: A Case Study of the Serbia and Austro-Hungary Conflict*

religious groups concentrated in a relatively small area. Later, with the processes of nationalism and national feeling and awakening, these groups would want to have their own states, and those who succeed would want to expand their borders, leading the region in constant turbulent waters.

1774 is a particularly important year because that year ended the war between the two great powers, the Ottoman Empire and Russia, in which the second side emerged as the undoubted winner. The Kuchuk kainarji agreement was signed in which Russia gained significant benefits at the expense of the Sultan's sovereignty. Thus, Russia was given the limited right to "interfere" in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire and to act as a kind of protector of Christians in the empire. The second important moment was gaining access to the Black Sea, i.e., the right to uninterrupted use of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles and the possibility of unimpeded naval trade with the Ottoman Empire. This agreement was only a step towards the idea of Tsarist Russia to achieve much greater goals for the Ottomans. Namely, their "final and ideal" goal was the de facto and physical control of Istanbul together with the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, thereby providing unimpeded access to the Mediterranean, which in turn provided the necessary basis for further expansion plans. However, as we shall see later, such an idea for the rest of the European powers seemed too megalomaniacal to be allowed because the balance of power would be significantly shifted in Russia's favor. Hence, Russia, faced with the impossibility of practically achieving its imagined projected goals, had to be satisfied with the existing benefits through which in the future it would try to maintain the possibility of direct influence within the Ottoman Empire through the right to "care" for the Christian population. This legal basis resulting from peace with the Ottomans gave ample room for maneuver to a large population of the Orthodox religion, including Slavic (such as Serbs), and also non-Slavic peoples such as the Greeks and Romanians, etc. Additionally, the pan-Slavic movement was promoted as a tool for Russia. However, the other great powers did not rest and could not allow a change in the balance of power in favor of Russia. Hence, they balanced their involvement and acted (seemingly) to restore some of the Ottoman sovereignty. Russia's privileged position is reduced formally and legally with the new treaty signed in Paris in 1856. This agreement does not only mean the deprivation of Russia's privileges in the Black Sea, but also of its status and the exclusive right of guarantor of the Christian population in the Balkans. Thus, now more great powers have become guarantors.

Virtually everyone was given the right to interfere in the internal affairs, but none had exclusivity. Hence, when it could no longer directly implement its original plans for physical domination, Russia reoriented its policy in support of the Orthodox peoples (such as the Greeks), especially the Slavs (such as the Serbs and Bulgarians), to the creation of independent states. According to this Russian projection, these new states were to become independent of the Ottoman Empire, and essentially dependent on Tsarist Russia, which would act as one of their Orthodox or Pan-Slavic patrons and guarantors of their security. Thus, the creation of the Greek, Bulgarian, and Serbian states was more or less directly (even militarily) supported by Tsarist Russia. However, Russia did not always secure control of these states. In Greece, the influence had to be shared with the UK, France, etc. In the example of Serbia, however, at some point it is acknowledged that it fell under the sphere of Austro-Hungarian influence primarily because of its geographical proximity. Later, things will change again, and Serbia would become their partner. In later developments, Russia will be particularly affected by the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) by Austria-Hungary. In order to counter Austro-Hungarian influence, Russia would support the formation of the Balkan Alliance, which would later enter into a final showdown with the Ottoman Empire over its European part. Eventually, Russia will end up at war with Austria-Hungary in support of its ally, Serbia. We write about this in more detail below. What is significant about our analysis is that these policies of Russia have remained firmly ingrained in the Serbs' consciousness of Russia as their Orthodox and fraternal Slavic protector in the great and powerful Muslim Ottoman Empire. All these developments at the international level forced the great European powers, in an attempt to balance, to intervene more in the internal affairs of the Ottomans, fearing the excessive influence of Russia. Russia and Austria-Hungary were undoubtedly the two major European powers whose interests were the strongest on the Balkan Peninsula.

From the above, it is undoubtedly seen that one of the greatest threats to the security of the Ottoman Empire was the Russian Empire. Hence, the Ottomans had no choice but to seek allies in other major powers in order to balance the pressure from Russia. This choice of foreign policy of the Ottoman Empire was in line with other great powers at the time, such as the UK, France, and later Germany, who did not even want to think about the realization of Russian aspirations in relation to the Ottoman

*Small Power in Conflict with Great Power: A Case Study of the Serbia and Austro-Hungary Conflict*

territories. It should come as no surprise that the Ottomans allied with the United Kingdom and France in the war against Russia in 1856, known as the Crimean War, which ended with the treaty mentioned above. Normally, the victory over Russia was far from a "pure" Ottoman victory over the Russians. The assistance of the United Kingdom and France in winning this war and thus annulling the previously acquired exclusive rights of Russia in the Ottoman Empire was obvious. However, this alliance had its price. Now it was not only the Russians who had the right to interfere in the internal affairs of the Ottomans. Now, such rights had been acquired by the UK and France. Hence, the Ottomans had to be careful that the balance they struck at the expense of Russia did not reflect too negatively on them and that the Ottoman Empire would completely fall

into the arms of another power. With all these developments, the status of the Ottoman Empire as one of the great powers was definitely called into question. However, due to its important geostrategic positions, as well as its ability to maintain its balance of power and prevent ambitious Russian expansionism, the Ottoman Empire was artificially allowed to maintain its status as a major European power for some time. In practice, however, the sultan often had to be content with only nominal, not real, and real control of parts of his territory<sup>7</sup>. In addition, relations with the new Balkan states created with the support of the great powers were bad for the simple reason that they had their own expansionist policies at the expense of the Ottoman Empire. It was interesting for Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece that from provinces in the Ottoman Empire, they would become independent states and a direct threat to it. In these intertwined negative relations for the empire, even its allies often at times acted clearly against the Ottoman Empire, e.g., during the Greek war of independence, when the UK and even France clearly sided with the Greeks. Earlier during the time of Napoleon, France was a threat to certain Ottoman provinces, etc. or when the UK even fought directly against the Ottomans for Egypt. However, due to the threat from Russia, the Ottomans were forced to seek allies. At the same time, they tended not to rely on just one great power on which they would be completely dependent. That is why, over time, it strengthened its alliance with Germany as a counterweight to the influence of the UK, and they probably succeeded in that after 1878. Of course, the alliance with

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<sup>7</sup> Such is the case of BiH, Bulgaria, and Serbia which before becoming legally independent were formally part of the Ottoman Empire as a kind of territories with wide autonomy.

Germany was not built too easily due to the strong ties with Austria- Hungary, which in turn had certain pretensions towards the Ottoman Empire, and to some extent helped the Serbian uprisings against the Ottomans. However, one thing is certain—Ottoman foreign policy had a clear purpose. Thus, they lost a little territory and maintained the status quo. The occasional riots and uprisings within the empire and especially the brutal way in which they were suppressed did not help in that goal due to the negative image in Europe. Finally, the Ottoman Empire, significantly shaken by the war with Italy and the uprising in Albania, found itself in a new war against the Balkan states organized in the Balkan Alliance in which Serbia was one of the key members. At this moment when the empire was quite exhausted from the war with Italy and the riots in Albania, it asked for more direct help from Austria-Hungary in neutralizing the Serbian threat, but did not receive a more specific answer and help. The former is particularly interesting because Austria-Hungary itself, as seen below, felt threatened by Serbia, but still had only a limited role without military action on ground during the Balkan wars. The outcome of this war would be the end of Ottoman rule in Europe and the creation of a larger and more powerful Serbia.

Where was Austria-Hungary in all this? The two empires bore great similarities in that they were multinationals. The eventual disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of nation-states could be a dangerous precedent that could be repeated in the Austro-Hungarian state. However, as stated earlier, their relationship was far from ideal. Consequently, with the attack on Vienna, the Ottomans were a threat number one to the survival of the state of the Habsburg monarchy, so that things change after the annexation of Hungary and Croatia by the Habsburg monarchy. Austria-Hungary's claims to influence were directed at the Balkan Peninsula, which was also the European part of the Ottoman Empire. However, due to the great Russian threat to the Ottoman Empire, as well as other policies of the great powers and the creation of smaller states in the Balkans, Austria-Hungary had to reorient its expansionist policy from a state that was a threat to the Ottomans to a state that wanted to maintain the status quo, that is, it did not want the destruction of the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, it did not want it as an overly powerful neighbor either. The last territorial expansion at the expense of the Ottomans was BiH. After the Congress in 1878, the territory of BiH was practically ceded to the administration of Austria-Hungary, but under the nominal

sovereignty of the Ottoman sultan. However, in the years that followed and the turmoil inside the Ottoman Empire, the revision of the Constitution was announced, which hid the possibility of re-integrating BiH into the Ottoman Empire. That is why the Habsburg monarchy decided on the formal legal annexation of BiH in 1908 (Urban, 2014). After this, Austria-Hungary had a rather conservative policy of maintaining the status quo. So from 1908, while other great powers expansionist fought and conquered colonies, Austria-Hungary had a policy of not changing its borders (Hannig, 2015). Of course, the previous claim can be disputed due to the indirect involvement in the Balkan wars in connection with the creation of an Albanian state (which we write about below). However, this move (the annexation of BiH) also complicated relations with Serbia and Russia. Furthermore, Austria-Hungary did not look with too much sympathy at the new Slavic Balkan states that were conceived as national as opposed to the multinational concept of monarchy. The former is especially true, as we have already stated, that the monarchy also had a huge Slavic population in its composition. Thus, when it became clear that Serbia would be a separate independent Slavic state, Austria-Hungary tried to "help" it by putting it under full economic (and any other) influence. However, as we will see below, Serbia would later become independent of Austro-Hungarian influence and, further influenced by Russia, enter the Balkan Alliance, which in turn would be victorious over the Ottoman Empire. Of course, all this meant a bigger and stronger Serbia. Austria-Hungary, however, did not decide on military intervention on the part of the Ottomans, which would try to maintain the status quo and prevent Serbia from becoming too powerful. Austria-Hungary seems to have had many dilemmas about taking a foreign policy course on this issue. Nevertheless, there were projections as to how much enlargement of Serbia could be tolerated, especially in the part of the projected Austro-Hungarian interest in the Western Balkans as their exclusive zone of influence. However, relations with Serbia gradually cooled starting with the economic war, then the annexation of BiH (accepted very painfully in Serbia, which had ambitions there) through indirect interference during the Balkan wars, until the key moment of declaring war in 1914. With regard to Bulgaria, the issue was complicated, but in the long run there was some idea that it should, at least, be in some kind of alliance with the monarchy. This happened during the First World War. The policy was similar with Romania, where on the one hand the monarchy was an ally in the face of



the threat from Russia. However, on the other hand, the monarchy was already inhabited by a large number of Romanians who were a kind of second-class citizens. Regarding the possible scenario for the destruction of the Ottoman Empire in its European part, Austria-Hungary projected its interests in the back of the Balkan Peninsula.

Speaking of the western part of the Balkan Peninsula, it should be noted that the Ottoman Empire (in which it was a part until the Balkan wars), Serbia, which wanted an exit to the Adriatic, Montenegro, the Albanian movement, and Italy were also interested in it. Otherwise, it should be noted that Italy was a country that was part of the European powers, but with a more recent date. Sometime before 1871, in fact, there was no Italian state, but numerous small states scattered across the Peninsula (although the unification process had already begun). Only after their unification did Italy gradually join the elite club of European powers. What needed to be pointed out is that the united Italian state was created precisely by a war against Austria, which wanted to dominate the small divided Italian states. After this, the Austro-Hungarian policy shifted to the Balkans, but this victory of the Italian idea of unification against the Austrian plans for domination would much later be a guide, example, and motivation for the Serbian plans to unite the South Slavs in one country and, if necessary, through war with Austria-Hungary. Long after joining this elite club of European powers, Italy was one of its weaker members. Geographically, it was relatively close to the even weaker Ottoman Empire which was falling apart. Hence, it seemed natural to try to concentrate its influence in parts of the Ottoman Empire. Projections of Italian influence gravitated along the Balkan-Ottoman part of the Adriatic, primarily in the Western Balkans and Albania (but also Dalmatia and other parts of Austria-Hungary). Additionally, when a chance was provided for that in 1911, Italy invaded and occupied the Dodecanese islands and Libya from the Ottoman Empire. In this way, Italy positioned itself against the Ottomans and also against Serbia (and Montenegro) who aspired to the Adriatic coast. Of course, this policy of Italy did not make Greece particularly happy too, but most importantly, it brought it into direct conflict with Austro-Hungarian interests. During the annexation of BiH, the change of spheres of influence and the Balkan wars, Italy did not play any major direct role and opportunistically acted that in case of possible border changes, it should also receive compensation. However, its war with the Ottomans over Libya was one of the key moments for the Balkan

*Small Power in Conflict with Great Power: A Case Study of the Serbia and Austro-Hungary Conflict*

states to decide to go to war with the Ottomans at that very moment starting (correctly) from the assumption that the empire was weakened by the war with Italy.

Similar to Italy, Germany was a country that joined the elite club of European powers only after its unification under Bismarck. Probably not until after 1871 we can talk about Germany as part of the European exclusive club of great powers. However, there was a crucial difference with Italy. Germany was a far faster growing and more powerful country than Italy. Its aspirations and policies were aimed at changing the existing balance of power worldwide. The Balkans was just a part of this for which they were not overly interested. As we have already mentioned, their policy was to function as a kind of patron of the Ottoman Empire, to develop economic relations, to maintain the status quo, and to create an ally in the face of Istanbul. This policy was part of Germany's broader strategy of creating alliances, in order at some point to be able to impose itself as a factor that would change the balance of power and at least become equal, and perhaps more powerful than UK and France. It was within this policy (among other reasons) that the partnership and alliance with the naturally close and Habsburg monarchy was built, where the Austrian Germans were a key deciding factor. However, because of them, Germany would later be pushed into the Balkan issues and problems. It should be noted that at times, they even corrected their policy towards the Ottomans in order to please the monarchy in their desire for annexation of BiH (which in turn contradicted the policy of maintaining the status quo towards the Ottomans). However, over time, Germany managed to establish itself as the number one ally of the Ottoman Empire, which in turn led them into conflict with Russia, the UK, and France. Germany had no interest in creating numerous Slavic states in the Balkans, and they supported the Austro-Hungarian ambitions (no matter how much interest it had) for the annexation of BiH and also later at the crucial moment of the Austro-Hungarian declaration of war on Serbia before the outbreak of World War I. Germany believed that Russia would think twice before declaring war on Austria-Hungary if it meant a war with Germany, and further believed that Russia was not ready for war at that time and would take a long time to mobilize. With the second scenario, Germany to some extent wished for war with Russia at that moment. What is interesting to us is that there was a minor likelihood of Austria-Hungary going to war with Serbia without clear German support.

In terms of the UK, we can say that it was undoubtedly one of the most powerful forces. As the most developed industrial power, it had a special interest in providing raw material routes to their colony in India. In accordance with the above, their interests in the Ottoman Empire were predominantly concentrated in the eastern Mediterranean and the Suez Canal. In order to secure its own direct influence in the region of the eastern Mediterranean and also in the Balkans, the UK intervened against the Ottomans to create a Greek state in the Peloponnese. As for the Suez Canal, it was de facto controlled by the UK, and the sultan had to be content with only nominal control. On that account, the UK was on the side of the Ottomans in the war with Russia. Of course, it was previously in the British interest as well, because their policy towards the Ottomans was to be a factor of balance. As explained earlier, the Ottoman Empire was in decline. As a result, it was expected that some of the European powers would try to impose themselves as a factor in the empire. UK did not allow that to happen. Due to the factual situation, it was Russia and so the UK opposed Russia by not giving them a monopoly. As stated earlier, they directly intervened in the Ottoman-Russian war in 1853 on the side of the Ottomans, thus saving them from certain defeat. However, this policy was slowly abandoned, and the place of the UK was slowly taken by Germany. Already, in the war between the Ottomans and Russia in 1878, UK remained neutral. We can freely say that for many years, the UK was the basis of the balance of Russian influence in the Ottoman Empire for a long time, just before the Greek uprising in 1821 until 1878. The change in this policy was probably due to the realization that it was impossible to keep the Ottoman Empire and the expectation of its imminent collapse (at least in Europe). However, the UK aimed to ensure that no major power secures dominance over the former Ottoman territory. British's neutrality (with promised support for a possible deepening war in Asia) cost the Ottomans the takeover of Cyprus in 1878 and the Suez Canal, i.e., Egypt in 1882. After all this, there was only some nominal control. At the same time, it maintained its influence in the Balkans through the Greek state as its patron. The Ottoman Empire was also important to many British businesses. Hence, the UK was trying to maintain the status quo for as long as possible. When the end of the Ottoman Empire in Europe was already apparent, the UK supported the creation of small new independent states in response to some ideas of dividing the empire among other European powers. The Ottoman Empire responded by approaching Germany, which

*Small Power in Conflict with Great Power: A Case Study of the Serbia and Austro-Hungary Conflict*

would eventually end in a military alliance during World War I and the war with the United Kingdom. Regarding Serbia, the UK did not have any major ties with it, which it considered a small insignificant state. However, during the First World War, the UK ended up as an ally of Serbia, but the reasons for that would not be an alliance between the two countries, but the unfortunate German action in neutral Belgium and the fear of changing the balance in Europe due to the possibility of Germany defeating France and Russia.

In this analysis, we cannot ignore the role of France as one of the European powers. In general, we can state that its role in the Ottoman Empire for most of the time mainly had an economic interest. However, if we go back in time, we will see that the time of Napoleon France even had big political plans for the Ottoman Empire. The French ambitions to control the Suez Canal and beyond Egypt and Syria (then Ottoman provinces) were no secret, especially in 1798 with the French invasion of Egypt and Syria. However, after the definitive defeat of Napoleon, the whole policy of France was changed. Trade with the Ottomans came first because it was very profitable for the French. However, over time and as the years passed after the heavy defeat of Napoleon, France tried to regain its place as one of the great European powers that should not be ignored. Hence, fearing that Russia and the UK would achieve complete domination and influence, it intervened jointly with them against the Ottomans in 1820 in order to create a Greek state. It also intervened in the Crimean War on the side of the Ottoman Empire. Through this way, it secured a strong political influence in the Ottoman Empire, following the Russian example. In addition, it received the right from the Ottomans to be a kind of protector of the Catholics living in the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, France maintained special ties with Romania, with which it was culturally close, following the example of Russian pan-Slavic influence. Romania was also seen as a bastion in the middle of Slavic culture. Through these instruments, France ensured a balance with Russia and also with the UK. However, after the creation of Serbia, the French tried to impose themselves as a factor despite the strong Austro-Hungarian and Russian influence. In fact, the acquisition of Serbian economic independence was due, among other things, to the cooperation with France, which was seen as very favorable in Serbia and friendly relations developed. Eventually the two countries ended up in the same alliance during World War I (and World War II).

The international system before the First World War was a system of balance of power between major European powers such as the United Kingdom, France, Russia, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, Italy, and Germany. There was no universal organization (such as the League of Nations after World War I, for example) where problems could be discussed, resolved, or a collective defense promoted. Instead, there was a system of occasional ad hoc congresses. Normally, only invited countries participated where practically the great European powers decided for the rest of the world (usually without representatives from the rest of the world). As we explained earlier, although they were part of this exclusive club, they were not equal in their power, and each of them had its own interests. When it became clear in time about the imminent collapse of one of them - the Ottoman Empire, it opened the Pandora's Box of influence and control of its territories. This moment had a strong psychological impact on Austria-Hungary, which, in many ways, had features in common with the Ottoman Empire. Austria-Hungary was determined not to allow itself to be the second sick man, this time from the Adriatic. Otherwise, it is a long period of time in which too much technology for communication between countries was not used. Nevertheless, things changed more and more with the rapid development of technology, both in the field of communications and in the military industry (especially during World War I). It can be said that in principle, the diplomats or ambassadors in foreign countries enjoyed great comfort and authority in presenting and interpreting the views of their home countries, not only because the official response from the home country could not always be expected, but also because the ambassadors themselves came from the aristocracy, often bloodily related to royal families (Sowards, 1996). Diplomatic language, i.e., the language used in diplomacy between diplomats and in communication with the representatives of the host country, was French. Hence, when diplomats were sent to a foreign country, they had to understand French, but not necessarily the language or local languages spoken by the population. In addition, this was not considered an omission because popular views and wishes were rarely taken into account in decision making. Diplomacy was simply considered something higher and something that the ordinary masses certainly could not understand. Diplomacy, negotiations, decision making, joining and withdrawing from alliances, and even issues of war and peace have often been conducted in secret, out of the public eye. As we earlier stated, efforts have been made to

use more modern means of communication in the service of diplomacy. Thus, for example, with the improvement of the telegraph, the messages arrived much faster than before, and already in 1900 the telephone was also discovered. Of course, these technologies have gradually had an impact on reducing the degree of independence. Furthermore, it has also introduced a kind of greater control over ambassadors who over time from co-creators became more and more interpreters of the policy of their countries.

## **4. The Creation of Serbia and the Basis of its Policies**

### **4.1. Creating a Serbian Nation**

Once we have made a general analysis of the international system and its main actors, i.e., the major powers, we can move on to a more detailed elaboration of Serbia, its creation and policies. In order to better understand the reasons and decisions that led to the war with Austria-Hungary in 1914, we will begin the analysis quite broadly and from a later date. A century earlier, the Serbs lived divided into two large multinational empires, ruled by dynasties, and ethnicity was not given much importance, at least not in the modern understanding of things<sup>8</sup>. The former was especially true of the Ottoman Empire (which included the entire territory of what would later become an independent Serbian state), where all were subject to the sultan. Practically, the only difference that was made and actually valid was the division between Muslims and Christians. However, over time, that would change. Undoubtedly, the national movements, through their actors, have done their thing. Yet, national awakening and nationalism did not come overnight. At the same time, it should be emphasized that the national awakening was combined with other objective factors. Thus, in the subsequent period after the defeat of the Ottomans in the wars with Austria mentioned above, a large number of Janissaries<sup>9</sup> who took part in the campaigns, along with a certain Muslim population fleeing from the territories occupied by Austria-Hungary, settled on the northern border of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, this is with a significant number in the Belgrade pashaluk (the place where the future Serbian state would be formed). The pashalik was led by Haji Mustafa as a

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<sup>8</sup> They were often recruited into the armies of their home countries and engaged in fratricidal wars.

<sup>9</sup> Turkish soldiers taken as children from Christian families to fight for the Ottomans.

representative of the sultan. It was with their arrival that things changed in the pashalik. Until then, the coexistence of the Serbian Orthodox (mainly rural) population and Muslims under the leadership of Hadzi Mustafa was relatively harmonious. Mustafa was valued by both the Muslim and Christian-Serb populations. However, it was the newly settled Janissaries who longed to rule and gain power, who killed Mustafa, after which they de facto took over the management of the Belgrade pashalik. More precisely, their leaders known as the four dahis came into power. Their government was largely autonomous and was beyond the control of the central government in Istanbul. The horror of the Orthodox population under their control included theft, rape, and all other forms of violence. Anarchy simply prevailed. Otherwise, the takeover of power in the Belgrade pashalik in 1801 was made possible, among other things, by the weakening of the central government in the empire and its preoccupation with the threat of Napoleonic France. Thus, in 1798, the sultan transferred a good part of the troops in the Balkans to Egypt because of the possibility of invasion by Napoleon. Of course, this contributed to the four dahis taking over the rule of the pasha without any serious resistance a few years later in 1801.

With all this, it can be concluded that the position of the ordinary Serbian peasant (and that was the vast majority of the population) had drastically deteriorated. The population was forced to pay double duties, one to the sultan's legal tax collectors and one illegal, imposed by local authorities. Of course, everything previously influenced the process of creating a common sense and the need to reject injustices, the arbitrariness of the government and the new taxes, which in turn accelerated the Serbian awakening and creates a sense of nationality. However, we cannot say that the feeling of uniqueness did not exist before. Even previously, the Serb population had a certain awareness of uniqueness. As we have stated earlier, in the Ottoman Empire, the basic difference made among the population was in the religious sense. Hence, the Serbs knew that they were not Muslims. Also, the Ottoman government did not force the local population to change their religion, but at the same time there were clear written and unwritten benefits for Muslims. In addition to their faith, Serbs could see their uniqueness through the fact that they had their own Slavic language, different from Turkish (the official language of the empire and the language of the Muslim majority in it) and also Greek (otherwise also the language of the Greek Orthodox people, but also the language in which

the services in the churches took place). The identity of the Serbs in the empire was further strengthened after the events after the failure of the Ottomans in the siege of Vienna. As stated earlier, one of the consequences of this adventure of the Ottomans was the relocation of the border to the south, which was now practically the border with the Belgrade pashalik on the Ottoman-Austro-Hungarian border. This contributed to the emergence of new ideas, views, and opportunities for Serbs. Thus, for instance, opportunities for cross-border trade opened up, and contacts between Serbs on both sides of the border gradually intensified. Some Serbs were educated in Austria-Hungary, where they received ideas for new European movements. Through these contacts, the Serbs of the Ottoman Empire had the opportunity to see firsthand the existence and functioning of a Christian state where Christians are the bearers of power and even a privileged class. Through these contacts, Serbs could see additional features of their own identity. Thus, the difference with the German language, between Orthodoxy and Catholicism, etc., was obvious. This conflict of the Ottomans with the Austro-Hungarians was important for another moment for the Serbs. During the war, there were Serbs who were recruited and served in the armies on both sides. This way, part of the Serbian rural population gained military experience and some knowledge of military tactics and ways of warfare.

We can probably say that the Serbian national movement was also encouraged, at least indirectly, by all these contacts and by the possibility for the Serbs to see how a Christian empire like Austria-Hungary worked. We should not forget that Austria-Hungary once had certain pretensions towards the European part of the Ottoman Empire. Hence, it probably wanted to weaken it through a certain influence and also gain certain sympathies from the Serbian Christian population. All this, combined with Russia's increasingly aggressive policy towards the Ottomans, began to create a feeling among the Serb population that defiance was nevertheless possible and even resistance to the Muslim Ottoman Empire, even from the local Orthodox population.

#### **4.2. The Serbian Uprisings**

Everything previously written about contributed to the start of the first Serbian uprising in February 1804 in the Belgrade pashalik (Smederevski Sanchak). However, there is another element that was important, and we have not mentioned it until now. Previously, Serbs in



the Belgrade pashalik enjoyed some minimal autonomy. Thus, they had the opportunity to collect the tax themselves and elect their own village leaders known as princes. There was even a certain Serbian militia, which was in the service of the sultan. Now it was those Serbian princes, parts of the militia and, of course, ordinary peasants who rebelled in the mountains and started the First Serbian Uprising. According to some estimates, it was not more than 30,000 people, which is not to be underestimated in relation to the size of the Belgrade pashalak. The leader of this movement that would later grow into an uprising is Karadjordje, the founder of the dynasty of the same name<sup>10</sup>. He enjoyed great popularity among the Serb population for his works as a local village leader - a prince. What is interesting about him is that he also had significant military experience serving in the Serbian regiment within the Austro-Hungarian army during the war with the Ottomans. However, it should be noted that the Serbs, despite the fact that they had their leader, still had large internal divisions. It was about the numerous princes and military leaders - dukes who opposed their leader. The princes formed the Council, which, as an authority, was often in conflict with Karadjordje.

However, although the revolt began as a mere movement against the arbitrariness of the Dahis, it quickly grew into a veritable uprising with higher goals. In fact, the developments on ground dictated that once the rebellion had begun, it was simply too difficult to turn things around. The Sultan, no matter how much he wanted to solve the problem peacefully, still could not ignore the Muslim character and element of the empire that demanded a strong, fast, and decisive confrontation with the Christian rebels who dared to kill Muslims in the Ottoman Empire. Any attempt at negotiation would have damaged the sultan's reputation. On the other hand, the sultan's authority was not particularly strong among the rebels, who hardly believed in his security guarantees if they laid down their arms. In fact, the revolt started because of the arbitrariness of the local authorities and the inability of the central government to maintain order. Hence, more or less, Sultan Selim was forced to send an army to suppress the Serbian rebels. It is this decision of the sultan that we consider crucial. This moment marked the character of the revolt as an uprising against the Ottomans, i.e., directly against the sultan and his armies. Until now, this

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<sup>10</sup> Named after his black complexion (black Gjorge translated from Turkish); otherwise his real name is Djordje Petrovic.

*Small Power in Conflict with Great Power: A Case Study of the Serbia and Austro-Hungary Conflict*

could have been treated as a local rebellion of armed disgruntled villagers. The direct confrontation of the Serbian insurgents with the sultan's armies attracted the attention of the great powers, especially Russia and Austria-Hungary, from which the Serbian insurgents expected support. Russia intervenes directly in the war against the Ottomans (for other reasons) thus giving strong support to the Serbian insurgents who, in 1807, even endeavored to liberate the largest city in Serbia - Belgrade. With Russia's support, Serbian insurgents could already consider demands they could hardly have considered when the uprising began, such as a demand for an independent state. This change in the situation was seen by the sultan who now offers autonomy to the Belgrade pashalik, but within the Ottoman Empire. It seems that the influence from Russia and the support for the creation of an independent Serbian state were crucial for the rejection of this status. However, the situation soon changed dramatically, both within the empire and internationally. Within the Ottoman Empire, there was a change of the sultan who was assassinated. The new sultan was not in the mood for negotiations and wanted to prove himself in his new position.

One of his first moves was to send a strong army to retake Belgrade in 1808. Serbian insurgents have been forced to flee where they started the uprising in Serbian forests and some of them across the Austro-Hungarian border<sup>11</sup>. However, this was not the end of the uprising. Internationally, in 1812, France invaded Russia and demanded for an immediate peace with the Ottomans, leaving the Serbian rebels in the lurch. After this great defeat of the Serbian insurgents, the sultan did not approve the request of the Serbian leaders for autonomy as offered by Sultan Selim. The uprising was brutally suppressed. Of course, this is an important lesson to be learned. The great powers will support you only as long as it is in their interest and they will not have any big moral problem to stop that support at the moment when it will be in their interest, regardless of the previously given promises. In fact, Russian support was inconsistent in the years before the French invasion of Russia, and the uprising in Serbia was used as a tool in their negotiating positions.

After the suppression of the First Serbian Uprising, the Ottomans regained full control of the Belgrade pashalik. In order to prevent future uprisings, they offered amnesty and the opportunity to return Serbian leaders as princes. However, it was not long before the Ottomans changed

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<sup>11</sup> It is estimated that over 100,000 Serbs fled across the border.

their approach and began to become more and more paranoid, using cruel methods to interrogate villagers looking for hidden weapons and the likes. In order to intimidate the local Serb population and demonstrate strength, the Ottomans also carried out various masccaras. At the same time, there was an increase in the amount of fees. However, all this had the opposite effect on the Serbs. Hence, the announcements and speculations that Karadjordje, the leader of the First Serbian Uprising, planned is to return from exile in Russia. However, as stated earlier, not all princes were happy with this leader. Among them was Prince Milan, who was one of the fiercest critics of Karadjordj in the Council we wrote about above. However, Prince Milan was poisoned in mysterious circumstances. His half-brother, Milos Obrenovic, directly blamed Karadjordje for this. In fact, Milos was also a great critic of Karadjordje. The Ottomans took advantage of this internal division and appointed Milos as administrator for three districts, effectively giving him great power. As Milos, who was previously popular with the Serb population, power increased overtime, so did his popularity. At the same time, he improved his position with the central government in Istanbul when he handed over his head to the leader of the First Serbian Uprising, Karadjordje, and killed him when he returned to Serbia. With this move he achieved two goals, eliminated his opponent, and gained sympathy in Istanbul. Understandably, this step was not approved by the Serb population. The Ottoman terror practices continued. Milos knew that his policy of remaining loyal to the Ottomans would make him unpopular with the Serbs in the long run. In addition, there were reports that the central government was preparing a mass murder of Serbian princes. All this contributed to Milos turning from a loyal subject of the Ottomans into the leader of the Second Serbian Uprising.

Undoubtedly, Milos was a very intelligent character, and his actions were probably in accordance with certain advice from abroad. Thus, the official propaganda of the insurgents was a struggle for the equality of the Christian and Muslim populations. Captured Ottoman soldiers were not killed, and civilians were treated in the same manner. All this was part of the propaganda aimed primarily at the West (including Austria-Hungary), where Serbian insurgents gained great sympathy as opposed to the Ottoman Empire through press interviews. Internationally, however, the turmoil finally subsided with the final defeat of Napoleon in 1815. The previous moment finally left the Russians` hands free for another strong Russian interference. As a result of this, the sultan rushed to offer

autonomy to the Serbs in order to stop the uprising. This time, the rebels accepted the offer. A very important element of autonomy was the fact that it included the creation of a formal assembly. The second Serbian uprising ended in 1917. However, Russia had its own interests and this was the reason it went to war with the Ottoman Empire, and the fact that the Serbs and Ottomans reconciled played a very small role in their decision to wage a new war with the Ottomans in 1828. However, the Serbs benefited from this military conflict because in 1830, their autonomy was further strengthened and over time they were only nominally part of the Ottoman Empire. The great role of the intelligent Milos was reflected not only in the rejection of Ottoman rule (de facto), but also in the provision of "spiritual autonomy" where the Serbian church freed itself from Greek ecclesiastical domination. Previously, it was extremely important for the process of creating the Serbian nation. This is because it was followed by the creation of an educational curriculum in schools (originally within the churches) in which Serbian history was taught in Serbian and young people were educated in the Serbian spirit. From this it can be concluded that even the smallest partner in an asymmetric alliance can have a benefit, even directly due to other goals and opportunities of its great ally. For more on the internal and external conditions during the two Serbian uprisings, see Sowards (1996).

#### **4.3. Draft (*Nachertanije*)**

An extremely important figure in determining the general long-term directions of Serbian foreign policy was the leader of the constitutional party, Ilija Garashanin. In 1843 Aleksandar Karadjordjevic, the son of the famous Karadjordje, returned to power. Ilija Garashanin had been appointed Minister of Interior in his government. What is significant about Garashanin is not so much the fact that he was Minister of the Interior, but the secret memorandum sent to Prince Alexander in 1844 titled Draft – *Nachertanije* (draft)<sup>12</sup>. In this document, Garashanin projects the Serbian spheres of interest in the Balkans and, based on that, the future long-term action in order to create a relatively large and powerful state. Serbian law on the territories projected, according to Garashanin, was

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<sup>12</sup> The original document is fully available in Serbian language by Garashanin (2011). Ilija Garashanin: *Начертаније*. [online] Нова српска политичка мисао. Available at: <<http://www.nspm.rs/dokumenti/nacertanije.html>> [Accessed 16 October 2020].

generally based on the historical heritage and glory of the medieval Serbian state. It is also based on the fact that some Serbs lived outside the Serbian state. This programmed Serbian expansionism will inevitably lead to further conflict with their southern neighbor - the Ottoman Empire, and in the longer term - the northern neighbor - Austria-Hungary. Subsequently, the Serbian vital interest was the territories of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Montenegro, as well as all other parts of the Ottoman Empire, where, according to him, Serbs lived<sup>13</sup>. However, the projected Serbian territories did not end here, but extended over part of Ottoman Albania, more precisely its northern part, in order to provide a safe and direct exit to the Adriatic Sea. In this way, Serbia would be included in the landlocked countries. According to this vision, Serbia would grow from a small Belgrade pashaluk several times in territory and population and would transform from a dependent landlocked state into a state with a sea in its borders, a powerful factor that could not be ignored in this part of Europe. Practically, all these territories, i.e., the territory of BiH, the northern parts of Albania, the part of Macedonia, etc. meant a policy directly directed against the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire (which included these territories), which is the same empire in which Serbia was once a part of. Achieving these goals requires a direct military conflict with an empire that was still militarily powerful and many times larger than Serbia. As stated earlier, the realization of these goals towards the Ottomans would be only a half success because the memorandum projected the Serbian territories in parts of Austria-Hungary such as Banat, Backa, Vojvodina, and even Slavonia and Dalmatia. That is, wherever, according to Garashanin, the South Slavs lived within this empire, he was also a little more careful in this part. As we have already said, this memorandum would later dictate the directions and goals of Serbian foreign policy, and it would also find its application in Serbian schools, etc. Understandably, the memorandum was kept as a top secret. This is more especially for the part of his intentions in relation to Austria-Hungary which should not be revealed at all before the successful completion of the projections in relation to the Ottoman Empire, in order for Serbia to avoid drawing the

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<sup>13</sup> According to him, this included part of Ottoman Macedonia, where although it is indisputable that there was a Slavic Orthodox population. While Garashanin considered it to be of Serbian character, the other Slavic state – Bulgaria - considered it to be of Bulgarian character. Few people paid attention to the declaration of this Slavic population simply as Macedonian, different from both Serbian and Bulgarian.

two powerful empires against it at the same time. Thus, its existence would be directly endangered. Additionally, the Serbian projections regarding Austria-Hungary were particularly problematic due to the fact that Serbia at that time functioned as a kind of protectorate of the same and was in great (primarily economic) dependence. Hence, Garashanin saw Austria-Hungary as a longer-term enemy. In struggling to maintain its independence (both in relation to the Ottomans and in relation to the great Orthodox Slavic Russia) and in trying to strike a balance, Serbia actually found itself in a situation of long-term dependent position in relation to Austria-Hungary.

Thus, let us return to *Nachertanije*. As earlier stated, this document was kept in the strictest secrecy. Still its effects were visible primarily in schools and the curriculum that was taught in the subject History. In the beginning of 1880 in Serbia, there was already a consensus on the need to provide mass education, and not as in the previous practice, when it took place exclusively in the churches but in state public schools. In a decade, half of the male population had completed primary education, which was a quantum leap over the previous situation. The education was organized as free and completely controlled by the state. Understandably, the memorandum was translated into the school curriculum. The young Serbs learned about their oppressed homeland and their many compatriots – Serbs - who still do not have freedom. Practically, what would later become part of the new state of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SCS) was presented in Serbian textbooks as Serbian countries. Even the formulation of South Slavic countries was rarely used. In this syllabus, besides the Serbian, the Slovenian and the Bulgarian were recognized as a separate South Slavic people. As for the Croats, however, they were simply identified as a Serb tribe of the Catholic faith. Regarding the Orthodox Macedonians, they were named as South Serbs. Since Bulgaria also claimed rights over the Macedonians, it was characterized as an enemy state. This way, young people imbued with a nationalist spirit were created, and they were ready to correct the historical injustice in the Serbian countries, both in the Ottoman and in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Of course, there were students who also came from BiH to receive education in Serbian. They all received the education that spoke of the glorious medieval Serbian state, the struggle for freedom, and all that intertwined with a lot of folklore and myth (Sowards, 1996).

Serbia aimed primarily at the territories of the Ottoman Empire in Europe. Serbia already had experience in fighting the Ottomans. However, it is one thing to fight in the Belgrade pashalik with the support of Russia (albeit erratic) in order to secure autonomy and perhaps independence at a time when the empire is facing more important threats to its security, and it is quite another thing to fight to, at the same time, defeat and seize its territory through the use of force. Let us not forget that the Ottoman Empire with all its weaknesses and problems was still one of the great powers with a powerful army. In addition, Serbian interests on the ground clashed with the interests and propaganda of other Balkan countries. So all this was quite economically exhausting. In order to compete with the aspirations of Bulgaria and Greece in Ottoman Macedonia, Serbia had to spend a lot of money on propaganda, build schools and the likes in order to create loyalty of the local Macedonian population. Later, this was not enough. Thus, Serbia financed the sending of armed detachments composed of Chetniks who acted as paramilitary formations in the territory of Ottoman Macedonia. In the meantime, Bulgaria became a completely independent state in 1908, which only strengthened its positions and claims to Macedonia. On the other hand, BiH was taken from the Ottomans and annexed to Austria-Hungary. This foreign policy situation was tragic for Serbia. On the one hand, a lot of money was invested in the realization of *Nachertanije* in the European part of the Ottoman Empire, and on the other hand, there was no result. In the example of BiH, quite the opposite happened; the hopes for the liberation of BiH from the Ottomans and the unification with Serbia were drastically dashed by its unification into the even stronger Austria-Hungary. Serbia felt betrayed and after this act, the hostility towards Austria-Hungary could no longer be hidden. This was quite understandable because a large number of Serbs lived in BiH, and Serbia worked on the ground against the Ottomans. Suddenly that fight, instead of giving the desired result, now had to be transformed into a fight against another empire. Relations between the two countries further strained during the First Balkan War, when Austria-Hungary issued an ultimatum to Serbia demanding that Serbian troops should immediately withdraw from northern Ottoman Albania, threatening war. In this way, Austria-Hungary did not allow the realization of the Serbian plans for going to sea. In fact, the Austro-Hungarian red lines were set on their exclusive influence in the Western Balkans. So, instead of creating a landlocked Serbia, they preferred the creation of a formally independent

Albanian state, and in practice a kind of colony of Austria-Hungary. Due to this, Serbia compensated with territories from Macedonia, which in turn was interpreted as a hostile move by Bulgaria that started the Second Balkan War. Furthermore, we wrote about the Serbian-Austro-Hungarian relations in more detail in the following section.

#### Serbian-Austro-Hungarian Relations

After three centuries of Ottoman rule, Serbia gained autonomy after the end of the Second Uprising, which practically gradually expanded to become a formally and legally independent state in 1878. The first king of this country was King Milan, from the Obrenovikj Dynasty. Serbia was a small newly formed state that soon fell under full economic (and even political) dependence on its large neighbor - Austria-Hungary. Thus, during the time of the first Serbian king, Austria-Hungary became the largest buyer of Serbian agricultural products. Austro-Hungarian banks provided loans to Serbian businesses and practically owned the railways. This course towards Austria-Hungary did not make the Serbian king the most popular among the ordinary Serb population. In addition, the failed war with Bulgaria in his time was the reason for his even greater unpopularity. Therefore, among other reasons, he in 1889 relinquishes his place in favor of his son Alexander. However, Alexander soon inherited his father's unpopularity, both for running the country and for the image he had built in his private life. In 1903, there was also a military coup in which 26-year-old Alexander was killed. The military coup at the head of state was brought by King Peter, a member of the Karadjordje dynasty. Simply, at home, the curse of the divisions of the First and Second Serbian Uprisings continued. So, the struggles between the dynasties were happening on a daily basis. This moment, in addition to having internal implications in Serbia, also marked the beginning of a change in the course of Serbian foreign policy and the rapprochement with Russia at the expense of Austria-Hungary (Mutschlechner, 2020). What is interesting about King Peter, in addition to his pro-Russian views, is the fact that he was educated in France where he received the ideas for modernization of the country on a modern Western European scale. He also developed certain sympathies for France. At home, he advocated the transformation of the state into a constitutional monarchy, the introduction of certain democratic instruments, a modern economy and freedom of the media. Externally, over time he removed his dependence on Austria-Hungary at



the expense of cooperation with Russia, and even France, and was quite successful at doing so. All this made Serbia an example in the eyes of other Slavic peoples, and Serbia began to be increasingly perceived as the basic nucleus for the creation of the future free united states of all South Slavs. King Peter supported the concept of creating a supra-Slavic state on the Balkan Peninsula with Serbia as its heart.

Otherwise, in terms of party life, until the new constitution was obtained from the sultan (even before Serbia became independent), according to which the assembly gained more power, it was dominated by the constitutional party. However, with these changes, the decade-long rule of the constitutional party had come to an end at the expense of the Serbian Radical Party, which seemed like a real European refreshment in little Serbia. Thus, it promoted greater political participation of the population and followed the Western European ideas, protections. Also, a large part of its leadership was educated in Western Europe. In his rhetoric, socialism was often used in combination with strong and rather aggressive patriotism. Certain democratic currents also prevailed (although this was far from what we have today for democratic standards). It was under the leadership of this party that Serbia went to war with Austria-Hungary. The leader of the radical party was Nikola Pasic. What is interesting about him is that he was an activist for the Serbian cause in BiH, where he smuggled money for the anti-Ottoman uprising there. A second important element is that he was previously sent as Serbia's ambassador to Moscow (1890), where he probably embraced pan-Slavic ideas. Pasic became prime minister in 1903, which in turn marked a change in the course of Serbian foreign policy towards Austria-Hungary (Sowards, 1996).

Naturally, these policies were not greeted with admiration at the Vienna Palace. After the arrival of King Peter, not only political but also economic relations were disrupted since the beginning of the trade war. This trade war is significant due to the fact that Serbia was practically, completely, and economically dependent on the great Habsburg monarchy until then. We can say that through this way, on the one hand, Austria-Hungary helped Serbia as an independent state for many years, with the largest exports for Serbian pigs from the numerous Serbian meat farms being directed precisely to the monarchy. According to some estimates, over 85% of Serbian exports ended up in Austria-Hungary. Conversely, over 50% of imports to Serbia came from Austria-Hungary. As stated above, the Austro-Hungarian state considered that it had strong

*Small Power in Conflict with Great Power: A Case Study of the Serbia and Austro-Hungary Conflict*

instruments in its hands with which it could "discipline" King Petar and Prime Minister Pasic. Thus, Vienna did not hesitate to impose economic sanctions on Serbia. Austria-Hungary closed the borders for Serbian pigs, expecting that this move will bring small Serbia to its knees. Serbia, under Pasic, responded to the challenge by reorienting exports to France through the port of Thessaloniki, and to a lesser extent through Bulgaria and Romania. These events are known as the "pig war". Of course, this was less economically viable, but as part of other measures, it manages to dispel Austro-Hungarian dependence. Thus, Pasic invested in opening food processing factories so they could export canned meat, unlike the previous practice of exporting live meat. Additionally, relations between the two neighbors deteriorated when Serbia decided to buy new modern weapons for its army and received a loan from France. These developments indicated that Serbia has no intention of continuing to play the role of a small state dependent on its huge neighbor (Hannig, 2015).

Thus, Serbia's relations with Austria-Hungary were not the same all the time. They had their own evolution from great relationships to totally broken relationships and finally a direct war for total destruction. Even at a time when Serbia was only an autonomous province within the Ottoman Empire, there were some positive signals between the Monarchy and the future independent state. After the independence, Serbia gradually became a state completely dependent on its large neighbor. Even the proclamation of Serbia as a kingdom was supported by Austria-Hungary. In a bid to balance the possible Russian influence and also to have an ally as a security guarantee from the Ottoman Empire, in order to maintain its independence, it actually became completely dependent on Austria-Hungary. The Serbian independent state seemed to have had some wanderings in its foreign policy, which for many years oriented itself towards Austria-Hungary, and later reoriented towards Russia and even France (Mutschlechner, 2020). However, as relations between the two countries cooled, Serbia showed defiance and sought a way to regain independence from Austria-Hungary, first relying on Russia. For economic reasons and caution, Serbia tried to build strong ties with France as well. After this, Serbia never again fell under Austro-Hungarian influence<sup>14</sup>.

We can say that after 1093, Serbia was already seen as an obstacle to the plans for Austria-Hungary's economic penetration of the Balkans. In

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<sup>14</sup> With the exception of the military occupation during the First World War.

Austria-Hungary, they were aware that the processes of nationalism that had already emerged made it a fragile Empire. Serbia is seen as a problematic country that can foster these processes within the monarchy, and even a country that is able to jeopardize its security. Hence, various scenarios for the destruction or partition of Serbia are considered. At the very least, Serbia could continue to exist but be economically subjugated (Gabor, 2020). A good part of the military leadership openly advocated the destruction of Serbia at the first opportunity when there was a reason and some justification (Llewellyn & Thompson, 2017). On the other hand, in Serbia, Austria-Hungary was seen as a neighbor with expansionist imperialism that kept the Slavs in slavery who were determined to either have Serbia as their vassal or destroy it (Llewellyn & Thompson, 2017). However, it should be borne in mind that such attitudes did not come overnight and they gradually developed through various events. Such events included the trade stated above. The next significant event of this magnitude (and probably greater) was the crisis over the annexation of BiH in 1908, from Austria-Hungary, at the expense of the Ottoman Empire. The events of this crisis and its outcome would have substantial consequences on Austria-Hungary, its relations with Serbia, as well as its international position, and above all on its relations with Russia.

Serbia felt most affected by this gesture, despite the fact that BiH territory was taken from the Ottomans. It must be noted, however, that at the time of annexation, BiH was only nominally under the sultan's sovereignty. In practice, it was ruled and administered by Austria-Hungary. Hence, for many, this gesture of Austria-Hungary was a surprise and the need to formalize the factual situation was not seen. However, the Habsburg monarchy feared that with the introduction of the most important new constitution in the Ottoman Empire, BiH would be reintegrated under the sultan's sovereignty, and thus its de facto control would be lost. Therefore, the Habsburg monarchy believed that it had to act and exercise not only de facto but also de jure control over BiH. According to some authors, Austria-Hungary did this in a way that made it a complete diplomatic victory. The other major powers were not notified of the move and were practically taken aback (Urban, 2014). There was a partial exception with regard to Russia (and Germany). To be precise, the Austrian Foreign Minister informed the Russians about the plans for the annexation of BiH, asking for consent and support, and on this note, it offered support for Russia's aspirations in the Bosphorus. However, all this

*Small Power in Conflict with Great Power: A Case Study of the Serbia and Austro-Hungary Conflict*

was presented in the form of possible directions of thinking and perhaps building a certain common framework for future action, but on the ground, the Austro-Hungarian state acted immediately as if the Russians had already given them free hands and as a result Russia feel cheated. In Serbia, this act was experienced very tragically, even as a kind of declaration of war. As long as BiH was administered by Austria-Hungary but officially part of the Ottoman Empire, Serbian hopes were strong. The formal unification in 1908 was a terrible slap in the face for Serbia (Llewellyn & Thompson, 2017). In response to the Habsburg monarchy's determination to annex BiH, Serbia even mobilized its army for a possible war with Austria-Hungary. However, there was no war due to the lack of support from Russia for such a thing, and Russia itself withdrew from any military solution due to the clear position of Germany and the support it gave to Austria-Hungary regarding the annexation of BiH (Llewellyn & Thompson, 2017). However, Russia had decided to act diplomatically and was preparing to organize an international conference of the great powers on this issue. A key player in this conference should normally be the Ottoman Empire, which de jure had sovereignty over BiH. Also, Austro-Hungarian diplomacy prevented the Ottomans from participating through a financial compensation deal for the takeover of BiH. Hence, Russia's plans for an international conference failed, and in the absence of a response from the other major powers, Austria-Hungary successfully annexed the entire territory of BiH without military conflict. In order for this diplomatic victory to be complete, Austria-Hungary insisted on a practically politically isolated Serbia recognizing the legality of the annexation and promising to maintain good relations with the monarchy, and it did (Urban, 2014). However, this "dazzling" diplomatic victory came at a high price. Serbia saw the promise as a mere gesture, and Russia lost confidence in Austria-Hungary as a partner in future agreements. At the same time, Russia already feared for the future imperialist intentions of the Habsburgs towards the rest of the Balkans and was considering measures to maintain the balance of power. In addition, the other European powers were not overjoyed with the way all this was done, especially not at the moment of ignoring them.

The annexation of BiH caused serious upheavals in Austria-Hungary as well. The tensions that arose in the relations between Serbia and Austria-Hungary (to some extent existed since the Pig War) were also reflected within the monarchy among a large South Slav population.

Furthermore, the South Slavic movement existed earlier within the monarchy. According to some historians as early as 1835, the Illyrian movement was formed in which it was believed that both Croats and Serbs could work together for their common benefit, something that would later become the basis for Yugoslavism (Desppalatorić, 1975). Although the basis of South Slavic nationalism in the monarchy was basically Croatia, there were still initiatives such as the 1905 resolution (Istria on the Internet - History - World War I - The Fiume Question, 1905) adopted by Croat and Serb politicians demanding autonomy, language rights, etc., assuming that Croats and Serbs are practically similar if not one and the same people. Such action was not greeted with admiration in Vienna. All these tendencies were further strengthened by the deterioration of Serbian- Austro-Hungarian relations. The BiH poll dramatically increased the number of both Serbs and Croats in the monarchy, making their demands even more visible than before. The annexation of the new territory also sparked a dispute between the two parts of the dual monarchy over which part should govern BiH. In the end, a compromise solution was found for a kind of condominium administered by the joint foreign ministry, which only once again showed the complexity of the functioning of Austria- Hungary as a state (Mutschlechner, 2020).

On the one hand, Austria-Hungary was forced to act in order not to lose BiH. This was in line with their basic doctrine that in order to maintain the status of a great power, it must continue to expand its economic, political, and cultural influence where it can do so, and that was what the Balkan Peninsula had as its sphere of interest. This included occasional expansion with new territory (Urban, 2014). Subsequently, the annexation was a direct inclusion of new territory that emerged from the concept of simple expansion of influence. It was the recent expansion of the territory that resulted in an action by Russia that began working on the ground to form something which would later become known as the Balkan Alliance. Practically, the idea was to form a defense alliance composed of small Balkan states in order to stop the further possible expansionist policies of Austria-Hungary in the Balkans. On the part of Balkans, the interests of at least 4 of the great powers such as Austria-Hungary, Russia, the Ottoman Empire and Italy were already in conflict, and the Balkan countries were an additional factor (Llewellyn & Thompson, 2017). Soon, the new Balkan Alliance would become a factor and enter into the realization of its own expansionist goals in relation to the Ottoman Empire, starting the first

*Small Power in Conflict with Great Power: A Case Study of the Serbia and Austro-Hungary Conflict*

Balkan War (Urban, 2014). In it, Austria-Hungary was neutral, but interfered indirectly by practically threatening Serbia with war over which territories it could conquer and which territories it could not conquer from the Ottomans, who obviously were losing the war. This moment was one of the essential ones for the deepening of the relations between Serbia and Austria-Hungary. Described below is the Balkan Alliance, as well as the dilemmas and attitudes of Austria-Hungary regarding its own action towards the Balkan wars.

Thus, in relation to the Balkan Union, it can be said that we can probably trace its origins back to 1904 when the two regional powers Serbia and Bulgaria signed a friendship agreement, which was followed by intensified cooperation in the field of customs. This was an important moment because the two Slavic states entered into friendly relations (although they had a war behind them) in order to achieve a common interest. However, this agreement is much more important for our analysis because of its other effect. The Austro-Hungarian government saw this customs agreement as an attempt to undermine its economic interests and a further attempt by Serbia, which until then was completely dependent on it, for its autonomous economic policy. As stated earlier, Austria-Hungary responded vigorously with the trade embargo of 1906, which would later become known as the Pig War. Thus, on the one hand, the Friendship Agreement cost Serbia dearly due to the trade war, but on the other hand, it contributed to Serbia's economic and later political independence. However, this was not the essence of the agreement between Serbia and Bulgaria. What greatly affected both countries was the inevitable collapse of the Ottomans and the division of their territory. However, the agreement did not provide detailed solutions for what that division would look like, but only formed a framework for alliance and identified disputed and undisputed territories that were yet to be resolved in detail. According to some authors, Serbia and Bulgaria entered the formation of the future alliance without the support of the great powers (Urban, 2014). However, this is not entirely true because the creation of the later official Balkan Alliance of Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Montenegro<sup>15</sup> was largely supported and encouraged by Russia, despite the fact that Russia's imagined goals were quite different from the Balkan Alliance in practice

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<sup>15</sup> Montenegro also joined the Balkan Union, for which it is interesting to mention that it talked about it with Bulgaria, and not as an example with Serbia (Urban, 2014).

and on the field. Subsequently, Russia aimed to create an alliance that would essentially maintain a balance of power against Austria-Hungary. It is true that the idea of such an alliance was not new, but Russian diplomacy supported it only after the Austro-Hungarian annexation of BiH. Thus, the treaty for the Balkan Alliance was signed in March 1912. The treaty was generally formulated to provide for a defense alliance, but there were sections that stated that its members would act together if a European power decided to occupy portion of the European part of the Ottoman

Empire. At the same time the agreement had a secret annex that was far more aggressive. This part talked about the division of the territories ruled by the Ottomans. A joint administration of territories for which no common language could be found was envisaged, including arbitration by the Russian tsar in the event of a dispute<sup>16</sup>. It is an interesting fact that part of the conversations between the King of Montenegro Nicholas and the Bulgarian King Ferdinand took place in the guest room of the emperor in Hofburg without the Austrian intelligence having any idea about it (Urban,

2014). It generally seemed that the intelligence of the Ottoman Empire was weak in the direction of revealing the Balkan alliance and its true intentions. According to Urban, the monarchy was not familiar with the Serbo- Bulgarian agreement until May 1912, when the information was then given to them by their German allies (Urban, 2014). According to Sked, Berlin informed its allies even before the First Balkan War (Sked, 2014). Russia's subsequent moves have suggested that the action of the Balkan Union went beyond the projections and goals of its creator - Russia. Russia's interest was proclaimed similar to that of the Austro-Hungarians, and that was to maintain the status quo in the Ottoman Empire. Obviously, the Balkan Alliance had the capacity to change the status quo. In addition, Bulgaria became quite powerful with ambitions, even for the capital of the Ottoman Empire - Istanbul. Previously, it directly endangered the Russian aspirations to control this city. Probably because of all this, on the eve of the First Balkan War, Russia tried to dissuade the member states of the Balkan Alliance from starting a war with the Ottoman Empire (Urban, 2014). Previously, it was in line with the Austro-Hungarian interests, and at the same time, after the short diplomatic action of Russia, it turned out that the other European powers had the green light for that. That was why

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<sup>16</sup> The territory of today's Republic of Macedonia was disputable above all. The idea of a free autonomous and all of Macedonia was set aside because of the interests of Serbia and Bulgaria.

*Small Power in Conflict with Great Power: A Case Study of the Serbia and Austro-Hungary Conflict*

Russia, together with Austria-Hungary on October 8, 1912, sent a telegram to the governments of the member states of the Balkan Union. The telegram urges for the peaceful settlement of disputes and explicitly states that any change of borders imposed by force will not be recognized (Urban, 2014).

However, we express a little skepticism in all this. Austria-Hungary and Russia were the most important players on the Balkan Peninsula. If their interest was to preserve the status quo, and in addition that interest was the same for at least one other European power that was directly affected - the Ottoman Empire, then it is really unlikely that the small Balkan states still decided quite autonomously to wage war against the interests of these three European powers. Additionally, given the closeness of Bulgaria<sup>17</sup>, and later Serbia with Russia, everything really did not seem likely before. However, one can only speculate that a new balance of power was agreed upon, with no European power directly benefiting from a territorial benefit while the Balkan states would have a direct territorial benefit, but in a way that it would not make any of them too big and too powerful compared to others. In fact, this in a way confirms the position of Austria-Hungary that it will have to tolerate some enlargement of Serbia as part of the Balkan Alliance and not to interfere because there was no consensus from the major powers for possible intervention (Gabor, 2020). Previously, it does not return to the assumption that a certain consensus between the great powers still existed, that none of them should interfere directly, and that the Balkan states would increase their territory

proportionally in order to maintain balance of power between them.

However, the First Balkan War began between the Balkan Alliance coalition against the Ottoman Empire, and the other major powers remained neutral. The Balkan states achieved a dazzling victory over their former hegemon who was forced to organize a defense, even over its capital. However, after a short truce, the member states of the Balkan coalition began to fight themselves, starting the Second Balkan War. The main reason was the dissatisfaction of Bulgaria over the division of Macedonia<sup>18</sup>. Serbia welcomed the end of the Second Balkan War as an absolute winner against both the Ottomans and Bulgaria, doubling its

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<sup>17</sup> Thus, Bulgaria's closeness to Russia was the main reason why Germany was very hesitant about the Austro-Hungarian alliance proposals with Bulgaria (Sked, 2014).

<sup>18</sup> For more on the Balkan wars viewed through the prism of a security dilemma, see Marolov and Stojanovski (Marolov & Stojanovski, 2015).



territory and increasing its population by over 1,500,000 (Llewellyn & Thompson, 2017).

This outcome was not the preferred option for Austria-Hungary. On the other hand, the First Balkan War was a partial success for the Habsburg monarchy, which did not allow Serbia to go to the Adriatic Sea and ensure the creation of an Albanian state. Serbia's eventual breakthrough on the Adriatic could mean permission to build a Russian military and naval base on the Adriatic. It was this argument that was crucial for gaining support from the other great powers for the creation of an Albanian state. That Austria-Hungary was serious about not allowing Serbia to cross the Adriatic at any cost is evidenced by the fact that although neutral, it mobilized its army four times during the Balkan wars and threatened war with Serbia (Gabor, 2020). This was in line with the established sphere of interest for Austria-Hungary in the event of a possible scenario for the destruction of the Ottoman Empire in its European part. Consequently, Austria-Hungary projected its interests in the western part of the Balkan Peninsula. Its interest was primarily economic. So accordingly, this strategy envisaged full cooperation with other Balkan countries (which in translation would mean some of their economic subordination) which included the right to full free access to the port of Thessaloniki (Sked, 2014). Most especially in the Western Balkans, it could not be allowed to fall under another European power, such as Italy, nor did it want to see it as part of the newly formed Balkan states. This was especially true for Serbia, which had certain pretensions towards the Adriatic. One can conclude that the monarchy was aimed at maintaining the status quo, but when it realized that the Ottoman Empire would not be able to maintain its position in the Balkan wars, it clearly advocated the creation of a new state in the Western Balkans - Albania - under its influence and would stop Serb (and Montenegrin) incursions into the Adriatic region. Otherwise, the creation of Albania was seen as a kind of colony (Gabor, 2020). In this way, Serbia would be left landlocked and probably after some time, more or less, dependent on Austria-Hungary again.

Even before the start of the Balkan wars, when the situation in the Ottoman Empire had already escalated through the uprising in Albania and the situation in Libya, i.e., the Italian-Turkish war, it became clear that the Balkan Alliance had the potential to change the status quo in the Balkans. As a result of this opportunity, the Council of Ministers met in

*Small Power in Conflict with Great Power: A Case Study of the Serbia and Austro-Hungary Conflict*

Vienna on September 14, 1912. The Council discussed the future course of action of Austria-Hungary in the new situation. There were generally two options (Urban, 2014). The first, which was in fact accepted, and used with diplomatic instruments, advocated the initiation of an international conference of the great powers in order to put pressure on the Balkan Alliance not to start a war. This position was supported by the emperor, Foreign Minister Franz Ferdinand (Sked, 2014). The second option was far more belligerent, and it was mainly advocated by military officials. According to this option, Austria-Hungary would have a clear position on Serbia in the form of an ultimatum by which, if Serbian troops cross the border into the Ottoman Empire, then the monarchy forces retain the former to act in the way they deem most appropriate. This option was far more risky because it hid the danger of escalating Balkan wars and a possible war with Russia (Urban, 2014). Additionally in such a situation, the intervention of Italy would also be quite possible. Hence, one can speculate that the choice of the second option for action would only accelerate the process of starting the First World War. In addition, a clear provocation by Serbia was needed in order to justify this Austro-Hungarian involvement (Gabror, 2020). Hence, when the first option prevailed, it was realized in a slightly different way than imagined, by sending a diplomatic note to the governments of the Balkan countries, together with Russia. Unfortunately, in Austria-Hungary (normally also in the Ottoman Empire), it did not have any significant effect on the Balkan states that were determined to go to war. This attitude of the monarchy practically meant a relatively passive policy and a simple observation of the course of hostilities. The reasons were simply that Austria-Hungary had no further territorial goals in the Balkans, but external factors were taken into account, such as the lack of clear support from Germany, and at the same time the danger of Russian direct interference. An additional headache for Austria-Hungary was the positions of Italy, which insisted that if the monarchy achieved some territorial expansion, then they would also seek certain compensations for themselves (Sked, 2014). However, it should be emphasized that this direction of action of the Habsburg monarchy, no matter how passive, is still a partial feature. As we have mentioned many times, Austria-Hungary was determined to prevent Serbia from entering the Adriatic Sea. It was this Austro-Hungarian policy that caused a series of events. Thus, Serbia remained dissatisfied with the inability to reach the Adriatic Sea, so it considered that it had the right to

compensation with the conquered Macedonian territory, which in turn was a reason for Bulgaria to declare war on the Serbs and the Balkans to find itself in the Second Balkan War. As it is known, Bulgaria lost the Second Balkan War. This begs the question: why did Austria-Hungary not intervene on Bulgaria's side and thus change the course of events? Although there may be more answers to this question, they undoubtedly move within the framework that the monarchy acted a little confusingly and indecisively, and seemed to be caught up in the whole situation. Additionally, Romania's entry into the Second Balkan War, practically on the Serbian side, complicated matters because Austria-Hungary was building alliance relations with Romania. The monarchy tried to balance between the two countries it considered allies, namely Bulgaria and Romania, and did not give clear support to either of them. In the end, neither Bulgaria nor Romania was satisfied with the role of Austria-Hungary. Also an important argument that must be taken into account was the position of Germany which was against any direct intervention in favor of Bulgaria (Sked, 2014). The indirect effect of the overall action of Austria-Hungary was against its ally, Bulgaria. Hence, this is because of the threat to Serbia to withdraw from the Adriatic (because of which Serbia demanded territorial compensations in Macedonia), and because of the annexation of BiH from before (because of which they simply redirected the Serbian aspirations to the south). The end result of this was a more powerful Serbia. Although it had a large territorial expansion that Austria-Hungary did not dispute (and to some extent allowed with its neutrality), their relations further deteriorated as Serbia now directly blamed the monarchy for that.

Hence, one can conclude that during the crisis with BiH, the monarchy was quite decisive while during the Balkan wars, it was less hesitant. It seems that it received it unprepared. Two options have emerged as possible courses of action. Both of them hid a certain risk that we have already written about above. However, the choice of a policy of neutral status in the Balkan wars could have been almost reversed if Serbia had not relinquished its Ottoman-occupied territories in northern Albania. In relation to Romania and Bulgaria, to some extent there is a certain rivalry between them for them to become too powerful. However, the policy of balancing between them has proven to be unpopular (Sked, 2014).

On the other hand, one can conclude that Serbia as a state and especially the Serbian army came out of all these events with great

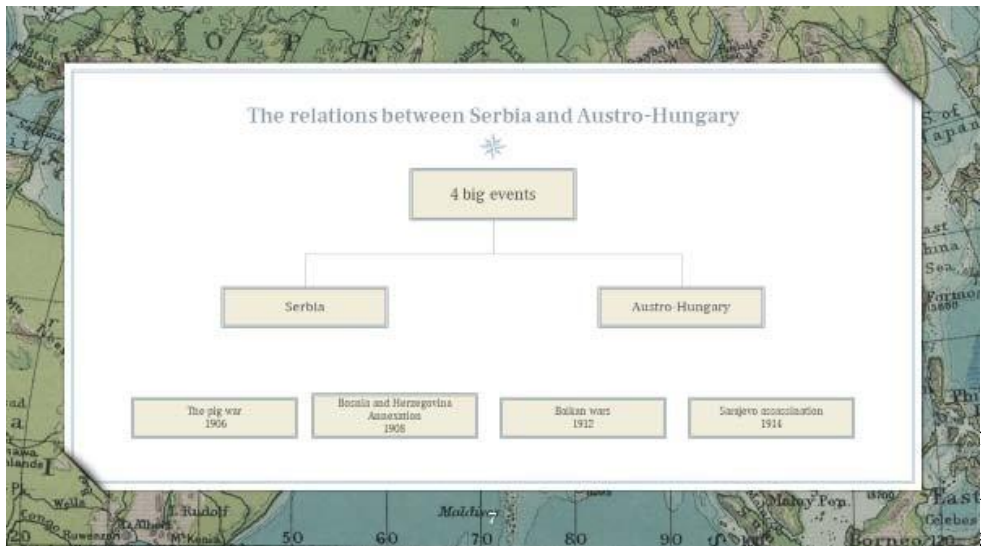
experience. They already had behind them a lost war with Bulgaria in 1885, two Balkan wars, but were successful against the Ottomans and a rematch with Bulgaria. It should be noted that there was some connection with Austria-Hungary and the Serbian army. Furthermore, many of its leaders received their education in Austria-Hungary at a time when Serbia was only a dependent state in the arms of its great neighbor. For example, the head of the Serbian army was educated in an Austrian military school. It is interesting that most of the officers in the Serbian army were essentially ordinary villagers and brothers with arms. This is because in Serbia, there was almost no class division (Trevelyan, 2013). The Serbian army had relatively powerful artillery. It was regularly supplied with food and ammunition. However, by Western standards, it was considered that it was rather miserably equipped and dressed and without adequate support (Trevelyan, 2013). On the other hand, due to the military successes, the Serbs felt victorious because they were able to defeat the powerful Ottoman Empire, and additionally defeated the powerful Bulgaria, which wanted to challenge some of their military booty in Macedonia. However, the fact remained that BiH was still further away from Serbia due to the annexation by Austria-Hungary. Otherwise, according to the situation on ground, Serbia entered and left alliances even with countries that it considered hostile, such as Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire (with which it indirectly cooperated in the war against Bulgaria during the Second Balkan War). However, the definitive collapse of the Ottoman Empire in its European part encouraged the Serbs that the same scenario was possible in Austria-Hungary, and many began to see this multinational empire as the second sick man (Sked, 2014). If analysis is made, one can see that Serbia was built on a completely opposite concept from Austria-Hungary. Also, Austria-Hungary was a mix of peoples, languages, and religions in contrast to Serbia's concept of a homogeneous nation - a state created by Orthodox Serbs (Urban, 2014)<sup>19</sup>. The fear of the Habsburg monarchy was the prevalence of this concept and the disintegration of the monarchy along internal ethnic lines, normally all this was aided by the external forces. This, therefore, is a process that would end with the creation of numerous

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<sup>19</sup> However, we are talking about different concepts and that does not mean that Serbia was homogeneous because Macedonians, Bulgarians, Roma, Turks, Vlachs, etc. lived within its borders.

small states in its place or its division. After all, what happened to the Ottoman Empire was a good warning (Trevelyan, 2013).

We can conclude that the relations between Serbia and Austria-Hungary started as excellent relations. Austria-Hungary supported the small Serbia, but it all came at a price, making Serbia completely dependent on its large neighbor. Serbia's quest for true independence had worsened relations with Austria-Hungary. They had a constant downward trend in the events that followed, and we singled out the pig war, the annexation of BiH, and finally the Balkan wars as key. Of course, the event that caused the biggest shock was the assassination of the Austrian Crown Prince in Sarajevo, which was stated below. After the end of the Balkan wars, one thing was certain: The Ottoman Empire was no longer a danger to Serbia, which now had no common border with it. The military victories boosted the self-confidence of Serbs who wanted to redress the injustice they believed was done to them with the annexation of BiH. On the other hand, Austria-Hungary increasingly feared the existence of an independent Serbia.



was the annexation of BiH (regardless of the purely

formal nature of that act). This was simply experienced very emotionally by the Serbs who had been working for years to liberate BiH from the Ottoman Empire. Probably the most emotional part of what was labeled as Serbian countries was that Orthodox Serbs lived there without any restrictions<sup>20</sup>. However, a key moment for the breakdown of relations was the assassination of the Austrian Crown Prince in Sarajevo. Hence, this led to the question of who committed the assassination and what was the role (guilt) of the Serbian state in all this?

Undoubtedly, there were secret Serbian associations in BiH that worked for its liberation from the Ottomans. Specifically, several Pan-Slavic nationalist groups existed and operated in BiH. They grew and strengthened after the cooling of the relations between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. They were mainly made up of young students and radicals

who saw themselves as freedom fighters against tyranny. They enjoyed the sympathy of the Serb population and had some support from some of the military officers in Serbia. Interestingly, they often advocated and agitated against both the Habsburg monarchy and the Serbian state leadership, which they considered incapable of adequately opposing Austro-Hungarian positions and interests (Llewellyn & Thompson, 2017). After the annexation of BiH, some of these associations continued their struggle and new ones were established, but what was crucial now was that they had to transform their struggle against the Habsburgs. One of the most important of these associations was "Young Bosnia", formed in 1911. Another notable association was Unification or Death, popularly known as the Black Hand. It was formed in 1910. One of the founders of this association is Apish, who later became the first man of the Serbian military intelligence after 1913. The National Defense Association, founded in 1908, also functioned in BiH which worked primarily on the ground in Ottoman Macedonia, mainly by sending its own armed detachments. Over time, the "Black Hand" became so strong that even Pasic's ruling radical party feared it.

That is why we believe that Serbia was probably partly to be blamed indirectly because of the overall atmosphere created by the propaganda and were less direct; not because of its government or king, but because of the independent operation of part of the Apish-controlled army and military intelligence. Otherwise, the rivalry between the official

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<sup>20</sup> Unlike, for example, Macedonians, who were called South Serbs, or Croats, who were considered Catholic Serbs.

actions of the government and the "renegade" Apish was seen in the internal struggle for supremacy in terms of governing the state, especially in relation to the newly conquered territories in the south. It is important to understand and clarify beforehand why after the assassination, official Vienna immediately pointed the finger of blame directly at the Serbian government, which in many cases was not true. Firstly, the assassination was carried out by Austro-Hungarians, not citizens of Serbia. Secondly, there was no evidence that this was carried out on the orders of the Serbian government. Thirdly, the only connection that could be transferred to Serbia is Apish, who in turn, was in conflict with the central authorities in Belgrade, for which he would later be sentenced to death in a trial in which he was accused of betraying the Serbian king. However, to be completely objective, there were undoubtedly security reports that a possible assassination was being planned. These reports also reached Pasic. Although Pasic later denied any information about the assassination plot, there is evidence that he not only knew but also informed his ambassador in Vienna, who was given the task of discreetly informing the authorities about it. However, it is believed that the ambassador was even too discreet and used diplomatic vocabulary that the authorities failed to read in between the lines. Among other things, the ambassador stressed that the planned visit and parade to Sarajevo scheduled for June 28 was a terribly bad date, as it could be seen as a direct provocation to Serbs (the day of the Kosovo battle engraved in the minds of Serbs) (Sowards, 1997). However, this very well-intentioned indication could easily be interpreted as a kind of threat to Vienna and a kind of interference in internal affairs, telling them when they can and when they cannot organize a visit and parade in a city in their own country. However, although Pasic later denied all this (and of course for reasons in front of the Serbian public), it was this move of a kind of co-operation with the authorities in Vienna that distinguished between the Serbian official government policy on the one hand and the action of renegade military intelligence on the other.

Regarding the direct perpetrators of the assassination, however, it is indisputable that the Habsburg police acted quickly. All participants were arrested and confessed to the crime. However, what is crucial for determining Serbia's guilt is the question of whether there is a clear connection between them and the Serbian state. The assassination was carried out by high school students, probably assisted by the "Black Hand", but still guided by their own motives and beliefs. Franz Ferdinand's visit

*Small Power in Conflict with Great Power: A Case Study of the Serbia and Austro-Hungary Conflict*

was conceived as a kind of parade among the masses. He was driving with his wife in an open car that was moving slowly in order to make visual contact with the masses. The famous assassin, Gavrilo Princip, was just one of the conspirators that day. It was a large group of young people from BiH deployed along the route that Ferdinand was to take. Mehmed Mehmedbasic was among them. Obviously from the name, it is not about an Orthodox Serb but a Muslim from Bosnia. Besides him, there were six others of whom the 19-year-old Princip was the last. Vaso Chubrilovic, a 17-year-old boy who actually tried to carry out the assassination by dropping a failed bomb, was deployed in the third position. After this attempt, the prince's car did not move on the planned course and was intercepted coincidentally by Gavrilo Princip which resulted to the prince's assassination. The assassination was used as a reason to declare war.

Nonetheless, the logical question is: what were the goals they wanted to achieve with it? As earlier stated, the direct perpetrators were arrested and did not deny the crime. During the trial, they did not invoke any Serbian or Croatian ideas or national feelings, and in fact there was a Muslim among them. They all said that with the act, they had the idea to symbolically send a message against the Habsburg rule with BiH. In addition, what they all had in common was the fact that they were young people protesting. Their idea was not that their act could lead to a war with Serbia. In fact, the war was desired by Austria-Hungary, so the previous claim can be believed. The theories that Serbia wanted a war are not the most sustainable because in those moments, Serbia was not the most prepared for war. Furthermore, the administration in the recently occupied Vardar Macedonia was not well organized and the Serbian army had just emerged from the two hard and cruel Balkan wars. However, on the other hand, while the First World War in 1914 was the end of a relatively long period of peace in Europe, for Serbia it was a simple continuation of the Balkan wars.

Additionally, the understanding that during this period the assassinations were more or less normal and were not rare at all should be taken into account. As it will be shown later, the assassins wanted to send a message by killing a representative of the monarchy, and the nuances decided that it was Franz Ferdinand. As a matter of fact, Bosnian youth had acted before. Thus, for instance, Bogdan Zerajic tried unsuccessfully to assassinate the Austrian Governor of Bosnia in 1910. However symbolic the assassination was, it still had a strong message in it. Franz Ferdinand was



not just anyone but the Austrian heir to the throne. His assassination in BiH sent the message that Austria-Hungary had no future there because its future was killed that day in the person of Ferdinand. However, we believe that the theory that the Serbian side wanted to provoke a war with the assassination does not really have many arguments for the reasons we have explained above. On the other hand, there is a theory that Ferdinand's assassination actually had much longer-term goals, which consisted, above all, in the possible future rearrangement of the monarchy. Ferdinand was the bearer of a rather liberal idea. He advocated the transformation of the dual monarchy into a trilateral monarchy, where, in addition to the Austrians and Hungarians, the Slavic population would be a constituent and equal part<sup>21</sup>. Such ideas of Ferdinand were not welcomed by the Hungarian part of the monarchy, who thought that through this way, the balance within the country would be disturbed at their own expense. On the other hand, these ideas may not have been welcomed most favorably by certain circles in Serbia, as obtaining such a favorable status for the South Slav population within the monarchy could have deterred the Serbs from realizing their intentions for unification with BiH, and so on. Based on the above, two directions of thinking are also possible. According to the first, the assassination was in fact at the request of the Hungarian court. According to the second, it was "ordered" by certain circles in Serbia. Those particular circles came down to Apish and military intelligence. For the first theory there is no serious evidence, while for the second, certain actions of the Apish go in that direction. Thus, this still does not confirm the theory that he acted for that purpose, much less certain that he wanted to provoke a war. It is possible that he acted and gained additional sympathy from the Serbian people, in order to strengthen his own positions in the conflict with the Serbian king. Thus, Gavrilo Princip was known to have come from Belgrade in 1914. He also carried weapons that he could hardly carry without the help of certain structures, such as military intelligence. At the same time, Princip knew the exact date of the visit and the exact route of movement planned for Franz Ferdinand. Of course, everything before indicates that Princip had the help of intelligence. This does not mean that the assassination was deliberate and planned in

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<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, Ferdinand was one of the biggest supporters of the option of war against Serbia during the Balkan wars (Sked, 2014).

Belgrade. As earlier stated, Bosnian organizations acted quite independently, but that does not mean that military intelligence was infiltrated and did not provide logistics. It is alleged that the original ideas of the Bosnian assassins to assassinate the Governor of Bosnia or even the Emperor Franz Josef may have been redirected to the Crown Prince Franz Ferdinand under the influence of Apish. Hence, by all logic, Apish did not believe that assassination could provoke a war, and if he really wanted a war, he would help the young Bosnians assassinate the Bosnian governor or even the emperor, which would be a far more certain cause of war (Sowards, 1997).

### **5. The Austro-Hungarian Side**

The assassination of Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo was used as a reason to start a great war. However, the fact that Austria-Hungary did not react immediately, but waited for almost two months, tells us that its decision to declare war was not reckless and was not a spontaneous reaction to revenge against Serbia. Austro-Hungarian diplomacy sold this fact as an attempt to resolve the situation peacefully through diplomatic instruments instead of immediately starting a war, which in principle was not the case because they identified the culprit in advance and convicted him (Gabor, 2020). The fact of the assassination, no matter how politically problematic it was, was not the main reason for the war. However, the reason for starting a war with Serbia was only sought and it was found in this act. Purely for illustration, Empress Elizabeth was assassinated in 1898 in Switzerland by an Italian, so this was not an occasion for Austro-Hungarian war with Switzerland or Italy.

Nevertheless, let us return for a moment to the dual Austro-Hungarian monarchy. It was a rather complicated creation in which decisions were made in an equally complicated way. It was headed by the emperor of the Habsburg dynasty who was the joint body for the two constituent parts of the monarchy. In addition to him, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the factions of the two constituent parts of the monarchy, and the army also participated in the decision-making process. The situation in these relations was far from that in Serbia, where part of the army practically acted autonomously under the command of military intelligence. The Minister of Foreign Affairs was Leopold Berchtold. It is interesting to know that he came to the position in 1912 after completing his service as an ambassador to Russia. He was the youngest foreign

minister in Europe. He is considered not to have had much knowledge of Balkan affairs (Sked, 2014). By the way, the emperor Franz Josef, who was most responsible for foreign policy, almost delegated his responsibility to his foreign minister in the period before the First World War. For illustration, in the three years before World War I, the emperor did not attend any of the 39 meetings of the Council of Ministers (Sked, 2014).

The assassination in Sarajevo caused great controversy within the monarchy, both for the lapses and for the next steps. It was stated that a mass investigation was followed with an arrest. As earlier stated, practically all the perpetrators were found and convicted. Despite the fact that these were executors (citizens of the monarchy) which was still in almost all discussions, the finger pointed at Serbia. The connection to such allegations was the investigation which showed that the weapons or part of them came from Serbia. This was not an in-depth analysis to see if the Government of Serbia was really behind this act, but simply pointed the finger directly at the Government of Pasic. Even if someone tried to make a more realistic assessment of the activities of various associations in BiH, it was not done too deeply and as such the National Defense Association was accused (otherwise an organization that operated much more in Vardar Macedonia than in BiH). Probably all this was not so essential. What was essential was the determination for a war against Serbia, for which only a good occasion was awaited. In addition, full and unequivocal support was provided by Germany. We can say that on this issue, Austria-Hungary received a kind of blank check from its ally Germany. The German Kaiser wrote that he "remains loyal to Austria-Hungary in accordance with the obligations of the treaty and the old friendship" (Amt, 2014, p.1). More or less everyone was in similar positions with the generals being even fiercer. The only one who was a kind of opposition to these views and against military action against Serbia was the Hungarian Prime Minister, Stefan Tisa. In his mind, even the most positive scenario (rapid defeat of Serbia) was not a desirable scenario. Simply by annexing Serbia to the monarchy, the number of Slavs will increase dramatically. He feared that this expansionist policy would eventually return to them like a boomerang, with Hungarians becoming a minority in their own country. Such a scenario would sooner or later lead the monarchy to trilogy by giving equal status to the Slavic population, which would significantly reduce Hungary's position. Hence, he was actually an opponent of the heir to the throne Ferdinand, who again advocated for such a solution, and ironically

was killed by a Serb, which in turn will be the cause of war against Serbia. In his letter to the emperor on July 1, he says that going to war with Serbia would be a fatal mistake at the worst moment, he believes that they have no support for Romania, and Bulgaria is too weak and, in fact, there is no clear evidence that Serbia is behind the assassination (Gabor, 2020; Sked, 2014). However, under the pressure of the whole atmosphere in the monarchy, the prime minister simply had to partially retaliate from these views. For example, the entire Austrian Council of Ministers sided with the war on 7 July. So there were no dilemmas for the Austrian part of the monarchy. The dilemmas existed among some Hungarians. In order to find some sort of compromise with Tisa's views, the Council nevertheless agreed not to declare war on Serbia immediately, but to first issue an ultimatum with demands and thus gave a glimmer of hope that the war would be avoided. However, it was more than clear that all this was a dead letter on paper, and in practice the requirements were so difficult, and the response time after the ultimatum was very short and it was formulated in such a way that Serbia was only expected to reject it (because it was formulated to be rejected by any state) with premature demands that violated, humiliated, and undermined Serbian sovereignty. Practically the ultimatum was sent in order to be rejected (Amt, 2014).

Nevertheless, Tisa had to agree to this "compromise", called a 48-hour ultimatum, which was handed over to Belgrade on July 23rd. Tica, who really did not have much room for maneuver, agreed with the former, but sought a clearly proclaimed position on the aims of the war. Hence, he demanded that it be clear that the war was not a war for territory and that the defeated Serbia will not cling to Austria-Hungary. He managed to impose his position by justifying it by saying that it could provoke sympathy and understanding between European powers, and could even take away Russia's reasons for interference. At least, some border corrections could be expected, and Serbia would at best be spin-off of satellite-state status (Gabor, 2020). More or less, such scenarios included the gradual colonization of Serbia through the settlement of Hungarian and Austrian farmers, and some border changes would be made by Montenegro, especially in the part of the Adriatic coast at the expense of Albania (Sked, 2014).

However, Serbia's response was rather unexpected. It accepted almost everything stated in the ultimatum, except for one point (which referred to the right of the Austro-Hungarian authorities to conduct

investigations on the territory of Serbia) and what it refused, which the country was ready to discuss further in order to find a solution (Amt, 2014). The position of the emperor in this context is also interesting. He was already in his advanced years and demanded revenge for the assassination in Sarajevo. However, after receiving the answer from Serbia, he commented that he no longer sees a reason for war (Amt, 2014), but obviously things had already gone too far, because it seemed that this was the ideal opportunity to find a reason for war with Serbia that they had been waiting for so long and this war was seen as an inevitable act even before the assassination (Gabor, 2020). Williamson is of the same opinion, according to which the assassination was a good enough reason and opportunity to finally subjugate Serbia (Williamson, 2007). According to the understanding of part of the Austro-Hungarian leadership, especially its military part, Austria-Hungary was already in a war practically started by Serbia. This war was inevitable for them and could only be postponed for a few years, probably with worse conditions for Austria-Hungary. Certainly there was a fear of an Ottoman scenario if Austria-Hungary did not enter into a decisive war with Serbia (Sekd, 2014). Although the war in 1914 was marked as self-defense by Austria-Hungary, it was in fact a preventive war according to their conceptions. In fact, for them it was a war for the survival of the dual monarchy (Gabor 2020). For instance, *General Franz Konrad von Hezendorf* spoke publicly about the need for a preemptive war and a settlement with Serbia. General Franz claimed that the monarchy was surrounded by enemy states, so it was much better to go to war with them one by one. Thus, according to him, this was a good moment for an attack on small Serbia, which was already weakened by the Balkan wars, and in terms of possible Russian support, he thought that it would not happen because of the support that Austria-Hungary enjoyed from Germany. Such a foreign policy will have an impact as well. Thus, Serbia's military defeat was a demonstration of power and a defeat of the Slavs' hopes inside Austria-Hungary. Hence, this foreign policy was a kind of tool for neutralizing problems at home (Mutschlechner, 2020). According to Sked, there are two different explanations for the main reason for deciding to go to war in 1914. According to the first, it was the inability to federally reorganize the state; hence there was a need to go to war to prevent national issues from destroying the Austro-Hungarian state from within. The second explanation claims that the decision for war was made because of the dynasty's international prestige. In fact, the very decision of

war could not have been made without the explicit consent of the emperor (Sked, 2014).

However, we should point out that there are authors who believe that the situation was reversed. That is, Austria-Hungary did not want the war but it was desired by Serbia. Such an attitude, for instance, is for Hannig, who blames Serbia for their indisputable desire for part of Austro-Hungarian territory. According to her, the position of the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister that the monarchy has an irreconcilable situation with its neighbor Serbia, because it has expansionist intentions towards territories that are part of his country, is quite understandable (Hannig, 2015). However, this very argument can be interpreted reversely. That is, we can say that again Austria-Hungary wanted the war, because it considered it inevitable due to the existence and operation of the Serbian state. At the very least, if it did not want it then, it perceived it as inevitable. Hence, the calculations of the monarchy were that in a possible war with little Serbia they would be a certain winner, and the possibility of Russian interference would be neutralized due to German support for this action. In fact, such a situation already existed during the annexation of BiH, where Serbia did not dare to react due to the vague support from Russia, which in turn retaliated due to the clear German position on this issue. In this analysis, it was pointed out that there are opinions, according to which Germany is actually to blame for the war, without whose blank check Austria-Hungary would not have dared to declare war on Serbia. According to others, the blame for starting the war lies primarily with Russia, and partly with France. Russia was determined to respond militarily to the situation, even before Serbia was given the opportunity to respond to the ultimatum, while France knew about it all the time (Sked, 2014). In addition to the above, the military capacities are also emphasized. Thus, it is estimated that Germany, together with Austria-Hungary, had at its disposal some 3.5 million troops as opposed to the 5 million cumulative armies from Russia, France, and Serbia (Sked, 2014). In our view, the war was in fact the product of more circumstances than just the desire of one state or another, although it is quite indisputable that Austria-Hungary wanted a military solution or at least sees it as inevitable at the very least.

## **6. Serbia vs. Austria-Hungary and the Prisoner Dilemma**

The threat from Austria-Hungary and the choices that Serbia had at its disposal and decided on can also be analyzed through the use of the theoretical framework of the prisoner dilemma (Poundstone, 2011).

One possible scenario would be one in which Serbia decided to cooperate fully with Austria-Hungary. This option would mean that Serbia fully accepted the ultimatum. At the same time, it simply hoped that Austria-Hungary would really respect the agreement after this and would not endanger Serbia's independence. However, this was far from a realistic scenario, because the acceptance of the ultimatum also automatically meant a violation of the sovereignty and independence of Serbia. In this scenario, Serbia, although probably falling back under the Austro-Hungarian sphere of influence, still survived as a subject without sacrificing a single soldier (scenario marked No. 1 in green - see upper left column of the table below). However, if Austria-Hungary decided to cheat and use this full cooperation of Serbia to unite, then this scenario is transformed into the scenario under No. 2

The second possible scenario was actually the worst for Serbia. Thus, Serbia, playing less naively, fully accepted the ultimatum, ignoring the open support from Russia. At the same time, Serbia hoped that there would be no change in the borders and that in this way it would prove its innocence in the assassination and remain independent. As a matter of fact, the opposite was happening. That is, Austria-Hungary used this situation to return Serbia to its sphere of influence as a transitional phase to the ultimate goal, which was to make it its integral part, similar to BiH. However, it was not realistic to expect that Serbia would voluntarily accept to fall under Austro-Hungarian influence again, despite all the historical events it had to go through to get out of it. Finally, ignoring the blank support provided by Russia was also unlikely (Scenario 2 marked in yellow

- see upper right column of the table below).

The third possible scenario according to this theoretical framework would be if Serbia somehow managed to deceive Austria-Hungary by partially accepting the ultimatum which would not be realized in practice later, in addition to giving some promises of non-interference in BiH and other parts of the monarchy and thus turn international pressure on Austria-Hungary, which in turn would simply wait and not invade Serbia (Scenario No. 3 marked in yellow - see left column of the table below). With this scenario, Serbia not only survived, but also kept its entire territory without a single sacrificed soldier, further retaining its ambitions for BiH,

*Small Power in Conflict with Great Power: A Case Study of the Serbia and Austro-Hungary Conflict*

as well as the other territories in the monarchy that we have mentioned. However, such a scenario would be too naive to be realistic in terms of behavior in accordance with the contours of offensive realism by Austria-Hungary with the blank support received from Germany.

The fourth option for Serbia was a war with Austria-Hungary in a situation where it clearly rejected the ultimatum and it would be clear that it was trying to defend itself with dignity and was indisputably subject to aggression. Thus, this option contained the possibility of eventual extinction of Serbia as a subject, but the difference with the second scenario is that this option is the only option there (scenario No. 4 marked in red - see lower right column of the table below).

The analysis of what happened in practice tells us that, as a matter of fact, Serbia played some combination of scenarios with No. 3 and No. 4. Scenario No. 3 basically accepted the ultimatum in part, thus gaining sympathy for having done enough for an independent state. Furthermore, whatever happened, Serbia was a state only defending itself against the expansionist imperialist power of Austria-Hungary. However, the end result was that of scenario No. 4 because Austria-Hungary still committed aggression.

<p>1.</p> <p><i>Serbia fully accepts the ultimatum. Austria-Hungary is not performing aggression against Serbia.</i></p>	<p>2.</p> <p><i>Serbia has been deceived by Austria-Hungary and ceases to exist or ceases to be independent.</i></p>
<p>3.</p> <p><i>Austria-Hungary has been deceived by Serbia. There is no aggression and Serbia remains independent and a possible threat to the monarchy.</i></p>	<p>4.</p> <p><i>Serbia rejects the ultimatum in its entirety. Austria-Hungary is performing aggression.</i></p>



Display No.1. Theoretical framework "prisoner's dilemma": The case of Serbia and the threat from Austria-Hungary in 1914

### **Conclusions**

The fact that the newly formed Serbia was a small state located on the border between the great Austro-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire seems to be indisputable. Serbia did not have some great resources and was located geographically, not so conveniently, without access to the sea and for a good part of the time with relatively hostile relations with its neighbors. However, defining Serbia as a small state contradicts a number of theoretical definitions. Thus, by one definition, small states are incapable of changing the rules of the game of the "big ones" (Archer, Bailes & Wiver, 2014) (in this direction of thought is Jaquet too; Jaquet, 1971). However, the previous analysis shows that Serbia still proved (to some extent) capable of maneuvering among the big ones. For instance, Serbia managed to reject its dependence on Austria-Hungary. According to another definition, an essential element for a state to be considered a small power is that its demands and interests are limited to its own areas (Fox, 1959). Thus, it can be seen that Serbia projected its interests far beyond its own sovereign territory, both in the Ottoman Empire and in parts of Austria-Hungary. Furthermore, according to a certain definition, the leadership of the country was reconciled with the position of a marginal force, and such a position was confirmed by the other "players". According to Keohane, the very self-perception of the state elites was powerless to make any difference, and this puts the state in the group of small states (Keohane, 1969). Rothstein has a similar position, according to which small countries recognize that they are not able to enjoy security without relying on other countries, but this inability is also recognized by other countries (Rothstein, 1969). However, Serbia partially does not fit into these definitions either. Thus, its leadership (after the removal of its dependence on Austria-Hungary) was not perceived as a marginal power because in its projections, it had planned to conquer new territories at the expense of great states and great powers. In addition, other players did not always see Serbia as a marginal power that did not have the capacity to make any difference. Thus, Austria-Hungary considered that Serbia had the capacity to even be a threat to their territorial integrity. The definition is indisputably applicable in terms of reliance on other countries in order to achieve

*Small Power in Conflict with Great Power: A Case Study of the Serbia and Austro-Hungary Conflict*

security. For Serbia, it was Austria-Hungary first and later Russia. According to another definition, small states are consumers, not security policy makers (Army, 1964). The former is only partially true of Serbia. It considered that it could be the creator of a security policy if it realized certain of her plans to increase its territory and exit to the Adriatic. Also interesting is the definition according to which small states do not expect to be able to make a significant step by acting alone or even in small groups in terms of security (Keohane, 1969). This is only partially applicable to Serbia, and even to Bulgaria, which according to certain literature acted independently on several occasions and endangered even the survival of the Ottoman Empire. According to other authors, the small state was recognized by its characteristic of the weaker side in an asymmetric relationship, and was not able to change the nature of the function of that relationship (Archer, Bailes & Wivel, 2014). Previously, it was again only partially true of Serbia in the period before the arrival of King Peter. However, Serbia was definitely a small country by the following two definitions. Thus, a small state is one that cannot handle a war with a powerful state on an equal footing (Vandenbosch, 1964). According to Bjol the state is small only in relation to the larger one (Bjol, 1971). Knudsen believes that relationships, not size, are the deciding factor that can help define (Knudsen, 1996). We believe that the latter is a particularly important definition and this is why Serbia was indisputably a small state and a small power. However, the relations in international relations, the awakening of nationalism, the alliance with Russia, etc. made Serbia able to play "outside" the scope of what would be expected of a small power and within the previous definitions.

Hence, all this goes in favor of our basic claim that the resources available to the state, level of development, economy, military capabilities, diplomacy, history, geostrategic position and the importance at a given moment of the relations of forces in the international system are a combination of variables that create the degree of power of a particular state. Specifically, the possession of resources was not the main fact, but much more the way they are used and the decisions of the state leadership make the specific state to be powerful, whether it is a small or large state. Hence, the outcome in a particular situation will be due to the political decisions and the manner of use of these tools by the state leadership, normally in accordance with the geostrategic context and moment. Thus, the character of decision makers cannot be neglected.

Regarding the Serbian army, we can conclude that although it was not specially equipped (and by European standards even poorly equipped), from time to time there were attempts at modernization such as the purchase of new weapons from France. However, it was definitely and relatively experienced and had military traditions from the first Serbian uprising, through the Balkan Wars until the First World War. At home, however, there were some problems because the country itself was relatively new. The problems intensified with the annexation of Vardar Macedonia when problems arose regarding the administration of these new territories. Tensions and a kind of rivalry between the government and the military were particularly acute. There was no such thing in Austria-Hungary, but what the military leaders of the two countries had in common was the fact that they were in a more aggressive mood than the civilian leadership of their governments.

Externally, on the other hand, it seemed that Serbia always had a certain alliance that in some way guaranteed its security and with the help of which a balance was struck against the possible threat from another great power. Thus, in the beginning, it was Austria-Hungary against the Ottomans, but this was at a very high price for Serbia, putting it practically in a dependent position and a kind of semi-sovereign state. Later it was Russia (and to some extent France) against Austria-Hungary. Hence, Serbia was in a strong alliance with Russia, i.e., it entered into a balancing alliance with Austria-Hungary. When the Austro-Hungarian threat became real, Russia did not back down from its alliance because it coincided with their interests. Simply put, Serbia was a key part of the balance of power in the Balkans that Russia was unwilling to allow to its detriment. Although in the past, when Russian interests did not coincide with Serbian ones, Russia knew how to retaliate from the alliance and even bargain at the expense of Serbia's interests (e.g., Annexation of BiH). Practically, Russia and Austria-Hungary entered the so-called "chicken game" around Serbia. The non-departure of any of the players led to a really big clash and the First World War. In all these developments, Serbia chose maximum cooperation with its ally Russia. Some of Serbia's options allowed for a return to national pride and a return to the Austro-Hungarian embrace. The results obtained from the prisoner dilemma we wrote about above are illustrative enough for Serbia's choices.

Hence Serbia was in a classic situation of trying to balance as explained by Waltz (Waltz, 1979). After all, the creation of Serbia was a

*Small Power in Conflict with Great Power: A Case Study of the Serbia and Austro-Hungary Conflict*

product (among other factors) of the change in the balance of power and the irreversible weakening of the Ottoman Empire. Serbia directly contributed to a new balance of power by defeating the Ottomans and Bulgaria during the Balkan wars. Serbia even wanted to go to war with Austria-Hungary over their annexation of BiH, but did not receive support from Russia for such a move. Hence, we conclude that whenever a new balance of power is in sight, neighboring countries feel summoned to react because if they do not, someone else will do it and the balance will be upset to their detriment. Due to all this, for a long time, this whole region was quite unstable. Internally, Serbia was building economic and military capabilities. Externally, it had an alliance with Russia, and built a basis for such a thing with France. However, these solid foundations for balance did not save her from military conflict. Obviously, Serbia's long-term intentions were not to maintain the status quo, but to want a new redistribution, and in fact Austria-Hungary, through a war with Serbia, wanted to maintain the status quo which it believed Serbia had the capacity to change in the long run and to strengthen its positions, etc. In all of this, the line between behavior in line with the contours of defensive and offensive realism is very small in the behavior of Austria-Hungary, which annexed BiH and later declared war on Serbia. What is interesting to note is that Austria-Hungary considered the re-subjugation of Serbia to be of particular importance to the monarchy because of the prevailing situation. Hence, we can say that Austria-Hungary, wanting to fulfill the goals of defensive realism (maintaining its own security) felt compelled to act within the framework of offensive realism (to gain as much power as possible). Nonetheless, a similar logic can be applied to Serbia. Thus, Serbia considered that the only way to have security is by increasing its territory and access to the sea. This is because, in that way, it would become a factor and truly independent from other countries. In the long run, Serbia predicted behavior in accordance with the contours of offensive realism, except in the moments of Austro-Hungarian aggression when it had to practically fight for the survival of the country. Hence the debate between defensive realists and offensive realists is largely superfluous. Thus, the state, above all, wanted to survive, but when that was already provided, it would want to have as much power as possible. If in the meantime its survival is called into question again, survival will be the main goal again. Serbia entered the conquest wars against the Ottomans, but when Austria-Hungary declared war, it found itself in a situation of struggle for survival.

This whole analysis was made in a multipolar system in the presence of multiple great powers and in the absence of a permanent international universal organization, i.e., in the classical situation of an anarchic system. Theoretically, this is a situation of structural realism where states behave selfishly looking at their own interests and not submitting to the interests of other states. Previous behavior shows the same characteristic of Austria- Hungary and Serbia, as well as their allies. As we have said, the two main actors in this analysis mainly acted in accordance with the contours of offensive realism.

Regarding the debate in both directions for the creation of a security dilemma, it seems that the representatives of the offensive realism win, who claim that it is inevitable, unlike the defensive realists who think that sometimes it can be avoided. Thus, in this particular situation, both countries were safe. Austria-Hungary was safe because of its own capabilities and Serbia was safe primarily because of the alliance with Russia, and yet there was a war. Undoubtedly, the two countries were in a situation of security dilemma (Jervis 1978), but certainly not in that classical theoretical framework of it. Therefore, one of the essential elements in establishing its existence is the lack of a real desire to start a war, but circumstances and tensions have led to that. However, our analysis shows that the ruling circles in the monarchy wanted war (or at least considered it inevitable). Similarly, in Serbia, it was considered that at some point in time, a war over BiH was inevitable. It can now be argued that Serbia did not want the war at that particular moment when it started. On the other hand, we have in part the moment of misinterpretation of other people's attempts for greater protection as aggressive behavior. Thus, Serbia bought weapons from France. However, the part of the security dilemma that says that one of the reasons for its creation is the lack of communication or misunderstood communication between stakeholders is not fully secured in this case because certain communication still existed, and we do not have any misinterpretation of signals. This means that the Austro- Hungarian ultimatum has no possibilities for different interpretations except as a real threat of war. Regarding the intensity of the security dilemma, in our case, it was in the first of the four options proposed by Jervis (Jervis, 1978), i.e., offensive and defensive behavior can practically be distinguished. However, being offensive has a slight advantage. It is a situation of very intense security dilemma, where the status quo states behave aggressively, and the chances of cooperation are very small.

Therefore, this is a definition of our example and behavior primarily for Austria-Hungary and for Serbia.

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*Small Power in Conflict with Great Power: A Case Study of the Serbia and Austro- Hungary Conflict*

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*List of Authors*

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*List of Authors*

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## INDEX

- accession (to the EU), 18, 24, 76, 88,  
125, 126, 133, 134, 135,  
162,164, 415, 417, 419, 421
- Albanian community, 17, 65, 66, 67,  
72, 73, 74
- civil society, 77, 84, 100, 120, 374, 375,  
378,379,448,449,454,456,  
458
- COVID 19, 17, 23, 24, 38, 51, 58, 59,  
60, 79, 127, 143, 145, 146,  
304,326,340,344,395,402,  
404,425,426,429,430,432
- conflict, 67, 154, 159, 165, 173, 196,  
218, 221, 232, 233
- Croatia, 16, 23, 24, 116, 117, 120,  
151,  
154, 157, 198, 201, 206, 228,  
239
- crisis, 65, 79, 82, 137, 140,314 144,  
146, 155, 156, 194, 196, 226,  
234, 309, 386, 387, 389,391,  
425, 428, 434, 435, 462
- culture, 23, 80, 91, 121, 151, 161, 165,  
211, 285, 286, 287, 289,295,  
310, 351, 373, 378, 379, 391,  
447, 449, 450, 452, 454, 457,  
463, 464, 465
- democracy, 17, 22, 23 83, 120, 123,  
124, 133, 156, 161, 202, 293,  
304, 323, 341, 373, 384, 414,  
417, 451, 470, 471
- democratization, 18, 23, 118, 135, 136,  
373
- discourse, 16, 17, 21, 22, 120, 142,305,  
323, 324, 330, 331, 374, 450,  
453, 466
- disintegration, 17, 65, 71, 72, 86, 118,  
119, 122, 202, 206, 235, 390,  
417
- Eastern Europe, 12, 19, 21, 22, 24, 30,  
119, 120, 140, 156, 157, 161,  
286,289,292,296,297,307,  
310, 311, 417
- Eastern Question, 201, 202
- ethnicity, 84, 85, 123, 124, 166, 213,  
290, 387
- EU Court of Justice, 415, 428
- Enlightenment, 13, 17, 128, 300, 301,  
309
- EU reform, 21, 85, 307
- European integration, 16, 17, 20, 23,  
24, 65, 66, 67, 71, 72, 75, 77,  
78, 79, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87,  
134, 136, 159, 283, 284, 285,  
289, 296, 307
- European Union, 7, 9, 13, 15, 17, 18,  
23, 24, 25, 26, 56, 59, 60, 62,  
63, 65,  
66, 67, 68, 69, 75, 82, 83, 96, 97, 98,  
101, 113, 138, 142, 201
- European values, 118, 120, 129, 135,  
378
- Europeanization, 18, 22, 23, 86, 118,  
121, 283, 284, 285, 291, 293,  
297,374,375,376,377,378,  
379, 383 384, 391
- great power, 18, 20, 146, 147, 193,  
195, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205,  
206, 207, 209, 217, 218, 222,  
227, 228, 229, 231, 232, 233,  
248, 250, 252
- Greece, 13, 14, 78, 116, 117, 118, 125,  
126, 204, 205, 208, 222, 229,  
283, 290, 419, 420, 426
- Habsburg monarchy, 20, 193, 196,  
201, 202, 206, 209, 224, 226,  
227, 232, 233, 235, 237

## Index

- human rights, 10, 17, 22, 23, 124, 135, 166, 376, 385, 386, 388, 389, 390, 391, 414, 417, 418
- intercultural education, 456, 459
- interest groups, 22, 23, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379
- Kosovo, 13, 15, 16, 22, 23, 34, 43, 44, 46, 67, 73, 80, 81, 91, 92,, 94, 96, 97, 99, 107, 109, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 146, 151, 156, 161, 173, 174, 238, 300, 303, 326, 327, 343, 345, 351, 358, 359, 362, 365, 368, 369, 384, 402, 413, 419
- nationalism, 18, 80, 85, 116, 121, 123, 136, 200, 203, 213, 226, 228, 249, 387, 46 467
- North Macedonia, 14, 17, 18, 22, 23, 27, 74, 75, 76, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 115, 128, 163, 302, 303, 309, 312, 325, 326, 327, 328, 331, 351, 358, 361, 362, 364, 366, 367, 369
- Ottoman Empire, 70, 71, 195, 201, 202, 203, 204-22 222, 225-228, 230-237, 248, 249, 251, 287, 289, 290, 291-296
- peace education, 17, 25, 445, 449
- political influence, 119, 133, 142, 211, 352
- populism, 396, 406, 407, 408
- protests, 23, 80, 156, 167, 343, 345, 425, 429, 434
- public procurement, 22, 127, 351-370
- regional cooperation, 18, 45, 85, 127, 160, 302, 303, 323, 328
- Romania, 5, 7, 8, 10, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 57, 58, 64, 65, 68, 69, 70, 71, 74,,80 83, 95, 127, 129, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 166, 175, 215
- rule of law, 10, 24, 79, 120, 124, 134, 299, 303, 309, 310, 312, 323, 326, 327, 376, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 422
- security, 65, 80, 82, 85, 86, 123, 127, 128, 133, 134, 139, 140, 141, 144, 161, 164, 165, 195, 196, 204, 216, 222, 225, 226, 238, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 284, 288, 305, 308, 310, 317, 326, 357, 359, 368, 375, 376, 385, 386, 390, 414, 422
- small power, 193, 248, 249
- Stabilisation and Association Agreement, 77,, 160 355, 418,
- Ursula von der Leyen, 21, 299, 323, 324, 326, 327, 330, 331, 332
- Yugoslavia, 17, 19, 31, 65, 70, 71, 72, 75, 80, 115-119, 122, 125, 153-158, 160, 297, 384, 385, 387, 390, 391, 413, 417



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