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United States Marine Corps
Command and Staff College
Marine Corps University
2076 South Street
Marine Corps Combat Development Command
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068

MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

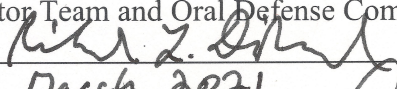
THE ROLE OF MACEDONIA IN THE ADVENT OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

Maj. Tomica Jovan Ristoski

AY 2020-21

MMS Mentor Team and Oral Defense Committee Member: Dr. Richard L. DiNardo

Approved: 

Date: 24 March 2021

Oral Defense Committee Member: Dr. Anne Louise Antonoff

Approved: 

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*United States Marine Corps
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Executive Summary

Title: The Role of Macedonia in the Advent of the First World War

Author: Major Tomica Jovan Ristoski, Army of the Republic of North Macedonia

Thesis: Macedonia was a territory that had a profound influence over the advent of WWI because it was used as a means for the satellite states of the major powers of the day to fulfil their national aspirations and territorial aggrandizement, thus fixing and hastening the clash between the major powers.

Discussion: The words of the Chancellor of Germany Otto von Bismarck: “One day the great European War will come out of some damned foolish thing in the Balkans” summarize the volatility of the Balkan Peninsula. The strategic position of the Balkan Peninsula and the central position of Macedonia on it, was bound to cause disturbance and attract attention. In the mix of nationalities and religion that were present on the Balkan Peninsula, the only open and unresolved question was the Macedonian question. The predicament caused by evidential decay and dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire in the late 19th century formed the Eastern question. Within the Eastern question the only unresolved issue was Macedonia, a piece of the geostrategic puzzle that was important to all, but as it seems nobody was able to admit it.

Conclusion: The lesser powers on the Balkan Peninsula, by acting in their intentions for territorial aggrandizement over Macedonia, compelled the major powers into intervention. By not resolving the Macedonian question the major powers created a vacuum in the middle of the system of autonomous states they supported (if not created). Instead of solidifying their influence over their satellites, the major powers, via Macedonia, introduced another set of “Clausewitzian” trinities that proved impossible to control or manage.

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Preface

The period prior the start of the First World War is very important for the future constellations of the relations on the Balkan Peninsula, reaching even to the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. Macedonia, being an integral part of the Balkan Peninsula, influenced the international relations and the subsequent impact of its neighbors over the Great Powers of the day. This paper is focused on the influence of the Macedonian question, as a part of the Eastern question, over the advent of the First World War.

There are numerous mentions of Macedonia when explaining the causes for the First World War, but there is no immediate connection between the Macedonian question and the advent of the war. It is as if there is an almost deliberate omission of that knowledge. The vast amount of information in the published work of the contemporary authors, as well as from the modern-day historians, provided a sufficient basis for a synthesis of the existing literature into a description of the influence of the Macedonian question on the advent of the First World War.

The author wishes to express his utmost gratitude towards his mentors, Dr. Richard L. DiNardo and especially Dr. Anne Louise Antonoff for her acceptance and mentorship for this topic, and for her guidance through the writing process. The exemplar leadership by Lieutenant Colonel Zachariah Anthony provided the much needed support and reassurance. The Leadership Communication Skills Center faculty members, especially Mrs. Stase Wells, which provided the author with confidence in his English Language writing skills.

Introduction

Few topics in 20th-century history have caused as much controversy as the debate surrounding the advent of the First World War (WWI). Richard Hamilton and Holger Herwig, in their book *Decisions for War*, divide the belligerents of the war in two groups: (1) the major powers and (2) the lesser powers¹. In the first group they place the five major European powers: Great Britain, France, Russia, Germany, and Austria-Hungary. The major powers were interdependent and interconnected via various overt and covert treaties and agreements. Those agreements added to the insecurity of the ruling classes and to the instability of the diplomatic scene. Concerning the major powers, a conclusion can be reached that the constellation of the treaties played a part in the advent of WWI, but it was not a decisive role. Four, out of the five continental powers, either tried to stop their decline, or to block a threat from the rest of them.

The Eastern question, as defined by Dr. Steven W. Sowards, was revolving around the intentions of the major powers to prevent Russia (or any other) to dominate the vast Ottoman holdings in Europe, in the face of its imminent dismemberment². The diplomacy of the Eastern question was managed from the top down, and it was performed by individuals who defied and ignored the popular wishes and the ramifications on the societies. The major powers went forward in disregard, and often ignorance, of the wishes of the nations on the Balkan Peninsula. Because of its traditions and structures, the major powers' diplomacy was poorly equipped to deal with popular movements, like nationalism. As a result, the major powers' diplomacy in the Balkans often failed because it did not take into account important forces operating from the bottom up.

Sir Winston Churchill claims that the situation on the Balkan Peninsula was too complicated to be solved immediately³. Britain was preoccupied with the safety and security of the maritime route connecting the Empire and the stability of the Arabian lands. An additional problem was the crumbling Ottoman Empire. The weak Ottoman Empire gave an opportunity to Russia to expand territorially in the Caucasus and Caspian regions, as well as, on the weakly defended Dardanelles. The Russian control of the Dardanelles would have meant Russian warships and maritime commerce in the Mediterranean⁴. That notion was strictly countering the British notion of freedom of navigation in the Mediterranean.

To avoid that situation, the British were looking for a way to secure the Dardanelles, but without Russian help. After the initial failure to secure the Turkish allegiance, the British started thinking about supporting the Balkan states to defeat Turkey⁵. But the advent of the First and Second Balkan War complicated the system even more. Therefore, another territorial redistribution on the Balkan Peninsula was in order. In order for the “Balkan Confederation” to last, Greece would have gotten Cyprus, but given Kavala to Bulgaria, and Serbia should have given Monastir to Bulgaria⁶. The required territorial redistribution points to the claim that the vacuum created by the unresolved Macedonian question gave possibilities to the major powers to gain compellence from the lesser powers. Therefore, the various foreign policy decisions, made by the leaders of the major powers, were based on defensive consideration on protecting their power and prestige, rather than on offensive considerations for their territorial expansion⁷. That offers support to the argument that the international alliance system before WWI was an inadequate cause to start WWI, mainly because it lacked the compelling force to achieve that.

The lesser powers group consisted of the states that entered the war later: Japan, the Ottoman Empire, Bulgaria, Romania, Greece, and Italy. These states are best described as

negotiators, dealers, or opportunists. They offered their interventions in exchange for territorial gains and possibly to gain some prestige and international recognition⁸. In the clash between the established “sick man of Europe” (the Ottoman Empire) and the emerging “sick man of Europe” (Austria-Hungary), a new and powerful regional state was formed, and that was Serbia. It was perceived as a threat by Austria-Hungary because it provided an example for the rest of the Slav nations that were living within Austria-Hungary, such as Croatians, Romanians, Poles, and Czechs. The end of the Balkan Wars and the subsequent Bucharest Treaty from August 10, 1913 left the Balkan satellite-states unsatisfied and the Macedonian national question unresolved. Neither Serbia, nor Bulgaria, nor Greece was satisfied by the substantial territorial gains. As stated by Matthew Smith Anderson, in his book *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923*, the division of Macedonia did not satisfy their appetites⁹.

The backing of the Russian court to the Serbs and of the Austria-Hungarian court to the Bulgarians was evident. The Russian influence in Serbia can be traced further back to 1826, when with signing of the Ackerman Convention between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, the Serbian autonomy was established, and with it, the Russian protectorate on the Balkans¹⁰. With the ascension of the Obrenovič dynasty on the Serbian throne, in the period 1858-1903, there was a break in the close Russo-Serbian relations, because of the pro-Austrian tendency of the Obrenovič dynasty. But that hurdle was prevailed by the pro-Russian coup-d'état and the establishment of the pro-Russian dynasty on the Serbian throne, the Karagjorgjevič dynasty¹¹. This only goes to show, that besides the best interest to establish its influence in Serbia, Russia was never able to recreate its successes from Romania and Bulgaria¹².

The final Bulgarian succumbing to the Austria-Hungarian influence happened with the ascension to Bulgarian throne of the German prince, and Austrian officer, Ferdinand I of Saxe-

Coburg-Gotha, in 1887. That influence was confirmed with the later proclamation of the Bulgarian independence just a day before Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia and Hercegovina¹³. The subsequent efforts from Austria-Hungary and Russia in the Balkan Peninsula were carried out through their support of their satellite states. Russia was looking to establish its influence over the South Slavs and to avoid being demoted to a “second tier” power by facing another humiliation on the Balkan Peninsula, after the humiliations suffered from, Germany-backed, Austria-Hungary in the crisis over Bosnia and Hercegovina in 1908, and from Japan in the Russo-Japanese War of 1905. Austria-Hungary was fighting the establishment of the great South Slav block to the South and the East of its borders. Serbia was seen as a revisionist power, which with Russian support could galvanize and unite the rest of the South Slavs, at the expense of Austria-Hungary¹⁴.

The Balkan Peninsula was ultimately turned into a powder keg, ready to explode at the smallest outside influence. As Paul Schroeder states in his article “World War I as Galloping Gertie: A Reply to Joachim Remak” the greater danger came not from the German or Russian power but from the Austrian weakness¹⁵. The rising German power was present and noted, together with the emerging Russian rearmament and industrialization, and they were controlled by the rest of the major powers. But, the weakness of Austria-Hungary was largely ignored by the international system and the balance-of-power policies. One of the incontestable points of the balance-of-power theory is that the preserving of the system depends on the preserving of all of the essential actors in it. Nothing is more likely to cause a major war than a threat of the existence, or the major power status, of an essential actor¹⁶.

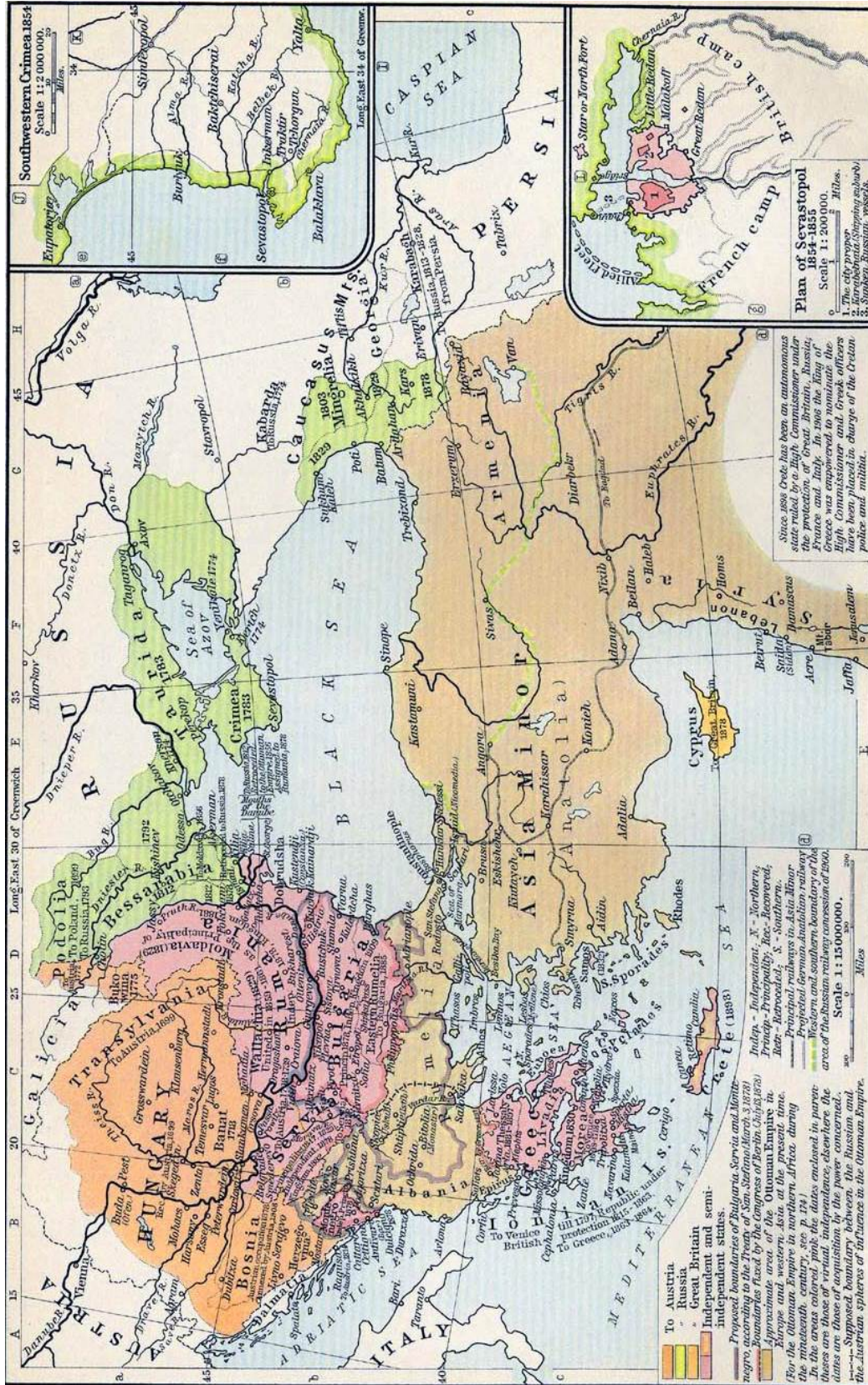
The efforts to focus on the social causes for the war, which are described by nationalism, militarism, imperialism, and social Darwinism, are best described as incomplete, or unverified,

arguments. The major powers were firmly established states that had established and functioning societies, and it is difficult, in those circumstances, to determine what percentage of the societies were pro-war. There is also the difficulty in that logic: three of the five major powers were led by monarchs, which were routinely described as committed authoritarians, but (for the sake of the argument) the monarchs wanted to present themselves as common pawns, forced to respond to the popular sentiments in their countries. The combinations between the Dynastic Elites, Political Elites, and Business leaders, as coteries, in the major powers' societies gave precedence to (or, from which emerged) a distinctive concept, today known as national interest¹⁷. And there was no one better to represent the national interest than the head of the state, or the head of the government.

The emergence of the wave of national awakening movements and the militarism was an important event, not in the major societies, but in the Near East of those days, on the Balkan Peninsula. The established states, in the decades prior, had drawn their borders on the Balkan Peninsula. What was left in the vacuum behind the parting Ottoman Empire was Macedonia. That territory did not have any representation in Bucharest when the 1913 treaty ending the Second Balkan War was signed therefore, it was used as a bargaining tool, which the major powers used to motivate their satellites into intervention on their side.

This work will concentrate on the influence of Macedonia over the advent of WWI. Macedonia was a territory that had a profound influence over the advent of WWI because it was used as a means for the satellite states of the major powers of the day to fulfil their national aspirations and territorial aggrandizement, thus fixing and hastening the clash between the major powers. The clash could have been easily avoidable. If Russia had not committed its help to Serbia, the conflict would have remained a clash between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. Likewise,

if Austria-Hungary had not had the support from Germany, a war would not have happened, even one geographically limited to the Balkan Peninsula. One of the chief controversies of the day revolved around the division of Macedonia, an area where the Serbian, Bulgarian, and Greek great-national myths collided.¹⁸ Bulgaria sought the recreation of the San-Stefano state, Greece had its “Great Idea” of reviving the Byzantium Empire, and Serbia had a vision of forming a state that was not based on ethnicity, but on history and national mythology¹⁹. Therefore, the lesser powers tried to use the unresolved Macedonian question for their territorial aggrandizement, thus pulling the major powers into a conflict.



Map 1: The Balkan Peninsula in 1903

The Macedonian national question

Macedonia was the target for the Bulgarian expansion westwards. The Serbians were claiming that the Macedonian Slavs were really Serbian, and that their language was closer to Serbian than Bulgarian. Davide Rodogno in Chapters 7 and 10 of his book *Against Massacre Humanitarian Interventions in the Ottoman Empire, 1815-1914* explores the humanitarian interventions as a phenomenon of international relations in the Balkan Peninsula at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries²⁰. He describes the influences within the territories of the Macedonian provinces. Also, there was the struggle of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO), which fought for Macedonian autonomy, and ultimately independence, from the Ottoman Empire²¹. The neighbors, or the lesser powers in WWI, were working constantly on their intentions for territorial aggrandizement by delegitimizing the separate nationhood of the Macedonians. The major powers recognized that fight over who will take the Turkish possessions on the Balkan Peninsula and were in no rush to solve that question. The fight between the major powers to sustain the status quo, or the balance of power, between themselves meant that they would use the Macedonian question as the bargaining tool to gain intervention from their satellites.

No one, from the major powers, seemed to be directly interested in the territory or the people. Germany was supporting Austria-Hungary's decisions to help and set up Bulgarian independent state on the Balkan Peninsula. Two instances support this claim. The first was in 1908, with the proclamation of the Bulgarian independence that happened just a day before Austria-Hungary formalized the decision to annex Bosnia and Hercegovina into the Dual Monarchy. The start of the Second Balkan War in 1912 was a continuation of the Balkan Wars.

Then Bulgaria, unsatisfied by the division of the Macedonian territories, attacked Serbia and Greece in order to complete its aggrandizement intention and gain the whole of the Vardar River valley and the North coast of the Aegean Sea. At that time, Austria-Hungary influenced the Italian intervention in Albania and secured the Adriatic and Ionian coasts against the Serbs, thus preventing them from seizing a port in that region. The Bulgarian ties to the Austria-Hungarian court were long standing. The ascension at the Bulgarian throne by Ferdinand I, of the House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha meant reversion from the pro-Russian coup in Bulgaria from 1886. Apart from departing from the Russian influence, this also meant that Ferdinand I would follow the footsteps of his predecessor Alexander of Battenberg, who, by this time, was a General in the army of Austria-Hungary. Alexander of Battenberg had already secured East Rumelia before his abdication and laid the foundation for the Bulgarian territorial expansion on the expense of the Ottoman Empire and over the Macedonian territories. Austria-Hungary had total disinterest for who would ultimately end up with a possession over Macedonia. What interested them was to diminish the Russian influence over the South Slavs and quell the Pan Slavic movement on the Balkan Peninsula.

Serbia, on the other hand, used the pretext of liberating the South Slavs from the yoke of the Ottoman Empire. The Serbians had also aggrandizement intentions for overtaking Macedonia from the Ottoman Empire, for themselves. The territorial and population gain would have helped Serbia to establish itself as a regional power, backed by Russia. Macedonia was there and it was open for the taking from the Turks. The Turks had a depleted and demoralized single army Corps situated in Thessaloniki. That was no match for the Serbian Army, which was confirmed by the success of the coordinated campaigns in the First Balkan War, from Serbia, Montenegro, and Greece. That success emboldened the Serbs to break the initial treaty and not to leave the

territory South and East from the Šar Mountain and west and north from the Struma River autonomous. Those territories roughly correlate to Macedonia and were to be left autonomous, and the decision for their distribution laid within the Tsar. The Russians did not object to the situation and basically were satisfied that their satellite was successful. Their intention to support the Pan Slavic movement for the unification of the South Slavs was partially fulfilled without any direct intervention from them. The Turks were effectively removed from Europe. What was left, by that time, was to finish the encirclement from the South and the East of Austria-Hungary. In the long run though, it would have enabled Russia to gain the much-sought-after exit to warmer seas and influence directly into the hearth of Europe. In the later stage and after the Russo-Japanese War, Russia was also hoping to regain some of their lost prestige and influence from that war.

The French were only supporting their ally Russia, hoping Russia would come to their aid and attack Germany's east border, in case of German resurrection and attack on the French soil. But also the French had their hands partially tied because they needed to be mindful of their stance with the Germans in Morocco.

Britain did not have a Macedonian Policy, being preoccupied with its imperial and colonial interests in India, Central Asia, and the Suez Canal. It seemed that everybody needed to freeze the Macedonian question, while pursuing their own interests and hoping for future cooperation²². Once the British secured the Anglo-French Convention in 1904, they solved their friction-causing questions with the French, and by doing it they secured two major points on the map of the British Empire. The first was the Suez Canal, by securing the French non-interference in Egypt; and Gibraltar, by securing a kind of demilitarization of the Moroccan coast opposite of the Gibraltar. In 1907 the British secured the Anglo-Russian Convention, and that in turn solved

their Middle and Far East issues of power sharing with the Russians. The British gained the “open door” policy to China from the South East Asia, and they got security to the west-Indian flank by the establishment of the buffer-state of Afghanistan. After that, they agreed with the Russians to discuss, but not to solve the Eastern question. The British were trying to establish their influence over the Bosphorus and Dardanelle Straits. They had already lost their influence over the Ottoman Empire by letting the Kaiser to gain the railway concessions in Asia Minor. What was left for them was the military option, or in another words, the Turks had to be chased out of Europe. But they were fragile, their Army was dispersed over their colonies, and they lacked the immediate resources to fight a war with the Turks, which is why they opted to use the Russian proxy on the Balkan Peninsula. Once Turkey was weakened enough they would have moved in for the kill and gained control over the straits. Since Austria-Hungary could annex Bosnia and Hercegovina, the British felt that they could seize the straits. Therefore, to the British, Macedonia did not have any direct importance, but was a valuable asset to have and to offer to the allies in exchange for their cooperation and support.

Nadine Lande-Akhund in her book *Macedonian Question 1893-1908, from Western Sources* describes the relations of the major power in solving the Macedonian question. The author describes that in the Ottoman Empire there was no notion of nationality. The nationality under the Ottoman rule was bound to the religion of the populace²³. Therefore, for the Ottomans it did not matter much whether or not the population was claiming to be Serbian, Bulgarian, or Macedonian; what mattered to them was that they all were Orthodox Christians. Lande-Akhund also concurs that the accession to the Bulgarian throne by Ferdinand I of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha was a major victory for Austria-Hungary, because in effect, it also succeeded in alienating Bulgaria from Russia. The author seems to agree with the rest of the claims that the Macedonian

neighbors had some kind of pretensions over the territory and/or the population. Even the Albanians from the west are recorded to perform pillaging in the western parts of the country²⁴.

After the Mürzsteg Agreement (see Annex A of his paper) was in power, the International Administration of Macedonia was established. As stated before in this work, the effects of that administration were merely cosmetic. There was no effect in terms of improving the lives of the Christians in Macedonia, which was the main reason behind the intervention. The Austria-Hungarian representatives rushed to establish their part of territory in the central corridor, insisting on connecting the cities of Skopje and Thessalonica. The Italians were scared by that spread of the Austria-Hungarian influence in Macedonia and wanted to prevent the Austria-Hungarian efforts to expand their influence towards the south of the Balkan Peninsula. And all of that negotiating between the major powers was done with no regards for the people that lived there.

The required resettlement of the displaced Macedonians in their former residences, as required by the Mürzsteg Agreement, in Article 6a, meant a lot trouble for Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia. Bulgaria and Greece were actively involved in additional burning of villages and re-arrangement of the populace, as a precautionary measure in the wake of possible plebiscite, or census, of the Macedonians by the signers of the Mürzsteg Agreement. Article 7 of the same Agreement states that the Macedonians who lost their properties were to be exempted from tax payments in 1903. And the Turks were pretty good at keeping tax collection data in check. There is a common knowledge in Macedonia that the Turks knew how many people were living in every village, so there was data in place to show how many Macedonians were expelled from their residences, in terms that the Turks knew how much tax they were missing.

There are many stories told by Macedonians, passed down by their forefathers, of burned villages and expelled and killed Macedonians in the aftermath of the Ilinden Uprising. In the chaos of the aftermath, the Macedonians suffered as many atrocities from their neighbors, if not more, as from the Turks. It is evident that most of these activities were carried out in the South and in the East regions of Macedonia. Those regions were under direct influence by Greece and Bulgaria and were depopulated (or ethnically cleansed) in the fear of the eventual resettlement of the Macedonians and the diminishment of their influence as a result of that. The Serbians had the back seat in these events, trying to stay neutral in the eyes of their potential allies against the Ottoman Empire, but at the same time, trying to gain influence over the Macedonians because they did not perform those kinds of atrocities. The lack of Serbian support towards the Macedonians goes to show that the positioning for the evident dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire's holdings in Europe was more important than the living conditions of the Macedonians.

The intervention, after the Mürzsteg Agreement, was introduced in Macedonia in order to alleviate the reprisals of the Ottomans over the Christian population after the unsuccessful Ilinden Uprising of 1903, but very soon they started rearranging the "vilayets" and forgot about the people. The Mürzsteg Agreement should be viewed as an effort of reconciliation between Austria-Hungary and Russia. The reason for its dissolution is that neither Austria-Hungary nor Russia thought that it fulfilled their interest for influence spreading in Macedonia. The Russians were too weak to do anything about it, coming from the Russo-Japanese War, so they decided not to do anything. Austria-Hungary saw itself as a knight in shiny armor and decided to provoke the dissolution of the agreement by annexing Bosnia and Hercegovina and supporting the Bulgarian independence. Macedonia was offered as a reward to the newly appointed King on the Bulgarian throne.

The struggle of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO) was perceived very wrongly. Whenever the activists from IMRO opposed the Serbs they were perceived as influenced by Bulgaria, and whenever those activists were opposing Bulgaria they were perceived as influenced by Serbia. Vemund Aarbakke in his book *Ethnic Rivalry and the Quest for Macedonia* confirms the findings of Lande Akhund²⁵. Aarbakke, in Part IV, goes further in depth by describing the influence of the neighbors and of the major powers, over the population in Macedonia²⁶. The fight for influence between Bulgaria and Greece over Macedonia seems to be explained. According to Aarbakke, the Bulgarians had already set up schools all across Macedonia and were teaching the population in the Bulgarian language, which was Slavic and closer to the Macedonian language in comparison with the Greek language. Therefore, the Bulgarians had the upper hand and opened up their claims of uniting the “Bulgarian speaking” people. On the other hand, the Greeks had an overwhelming authority with the Orthodox clergy and the churches. So the main effort of the Bulgarian was to fight-off the influence what the Greek clergy was spreading in Macedonia. The Turks recognized these efforts by the Bulgarians and effectively blocked the appointment of Bulgarian priests in Macedonia. At the turn of the 19th and 20th century, the Turks saw the advancement of the Bulgarian propaganda, and that, coupled with the rising Bulgarian strength through the support of Austria-Hungary, pushed the Turks on deciding to support the Greek clergy. The Turks made that move in a hope to deepen the conflict between the Greeks and Bulgarians, thus restricting the Bulgarians from fully establishing their influence over Macedonia.

The Serbian influence over Macedonia came much later, and it was not as successful as the Bulgarian, or Greek, propaganda.²⁷ It was focused on the impoverished population, mainly in the northern parts of Macedonia, and was based on the bribery on the regional Turkish leaders to

allow the formation of the Serbian schools and churches. The Serbs were claiming that the Macedonians were more closely related to the Serbians than to the Bulgarians. The language and the customs, they claimed to be closer to Serbia than to Bulgaria. The Serbian efforts to gain a port and an exit on a sea were clearly evident, through the fallaciousness of their claims. But nevertheless, they succeeded in gaining recognition from the Turks on the Serb nationality in Macedonia. The Turks were again pragmatic in this case too, because they were thinking of creating counterweight to the Bulgarian propaganda and their extension movement.

It is common knowledge among Macedonians that in the preparations for the Ilinden Uprising a lot of things depended on the help from Bulgaria. IMRO gathered the needed finance to buy weapons and ammunition from the self-imposed taxation of the Macedonians and from abducting prominent western emissaries. One such case is the highly publicized abduction of the Congregationalist missionary Ms. Ellen M. Stone, on September 3, 1901²⁸. Bulgaria sold unknown quantities of Russian Berdan II rifles, with 10.7mm caliber, and Austrian Mannlicher M1895 rifles, with 8.03mm caliber, but the ammunition that was sold to the IMRO was 7,62mm caliber. That move by the Bulgarians was perceived as a betrayal because they left the Macedonians without sufficient ammo on the eve of the battles of the Ilinden Uprising. The news of the betrayal spread pretty fast amongst the Macedonians, and eventually by the rest of the neighbors. The Serbians, lagging behind with their propaganda, decided to capitalize on the Bulgarian betrayal with an increase of the number of the Serbian schools in the Northern parts of Macedonia, but they failed in doing so, mainly because the Macedonians were becoming increasingly wary of their neighbors' efforts to help them.

All of this goes to show that the main efforts of the lesser powers, and neighbors to Macedonia, were concentrated on securing their control over the territory and the population.

None of them recognized the separate nationality, the separate language, and the different customs of the Macedonians. The existence of Macedonians in Macedonia would have been a major obstacle for them in satisfying their appetite for territorial aggrandizement. The major powers simply followed that trend, because disturbing the lesser powers over the Macedonian question could have meant their exclusion and disobedience.

Steven Sowards, in his book *Austria's Policy of Macedonian Reform* develops the Austria-Hungarian and Russian plan for the international intervention in Macedonia in the period 1903-1908²⁹. He is concentrated in high detail on the Mürzsteg Agreement, starting from 1903, and ending with the dissolution of the reforms in 1908. Despite the disagreements between Russia and Austria-Hungary in the non-Macedonian affairs, they seemed to have reached an agreement and they guarded jealously their privileged positions in the deliberations on the Macedonian question and in the hearth of the Balkan Peninsula³⁰. The Mürzsteg Agreement seemed to offer the right answer, but to the wrong question. There was a better organization and administration in Macedonia, but the Macedonian nationalist movement was still present and active. Solving the Macedonian question seemed to be too difficult both for Russia and for Austria-Hungary. Russia had on its hands the Polish and the Ukrainian question and Austria-Hungary had even more, like the Czech, the Croatian, and the Romanian question.

Ryan Gingeras in his article "The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization: 'Oriental' terrorism, counterinsurgency, and the end of the Ottoman Empire" writes about the revolutionary struggle of the Macedonians and the status of the Macedonian national question prior WWI³¹. He focuses mostly on the actions of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO) as the main effort of the Macedonian armed struggle against the Ottoman Empire. The IMRO was not perceived as the liberation movement but as a terrorist organization,

both by the Ottoman Empire and by the international community present in Macedonia. The IMRO's campaign of violence and terror was aimed towards forming a separate national state of the Macedonians, autonomous, but still a part of the Ottoman Empire. By 1903, the IMRO boasted an infrastructure that mirrored the services and veneer of a legitimate state. Territories that yielded to IMRO influence often possessed locally recruited military units, criminal and civil courts, an internal postal system, weapons factories, and tax collectors. The group remained ideologically committed to the creation of a politically autonomous Macedonia.

Macedonia was considered to be composed of the Ottoman provinces of Thessaloniki, Bitola, Skopje, and Adrianople. Between 1893 and 1903 the IMRO wavered between promoting revolution in favor of the Bulgarian Exarchist Orthodox Christians, and promoting a Pan-Macedonian identity inclusive of the region's many languages or religions. It may be safer to say that the leadership of the IMRO was more concerned with the process of the revolution than the eventual institutionalization of a political order succeeding the Ottoman Empire. In 1895, in Sofia, Bulgaria a rival organization to IMRO was formed. The formation of the Supreme Macedonian Committee (SMC) was the main culprit for the rushed initiation of the armed uprising. Even though the founders of IMRO considered Bulgaria as a legitimate patron of the Orthodox Slavs in Macedonia it was evident that Bulgaria was not yet ready to accept an independent Macedonian state on its western borders.

The three independent states encircling Macedonia were trying to hinder, if not neutralize, the Macedonian efforts to fight and gain autonomy from the Ottoman Empire and subsequently re-affirm their long-lost nationhood. It is evident that Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia needed Macedonia for the realization of their ambitions for territorial aggrandizement.

THE BALKAN STATES

With New Frontiers according to Treaties of London, Constantinople, & Bukharest.



Map 2: The Balkan Peninsula in 1913

International relations and the historical settings leading to the First World War

The international relations in the period preceding the advent of WWI are well documented. Robert Seton-Watson writes his book *Britain in Europe* in the period between the World Wars; thus, he provides a contemporary and first-hand account of the events and the diplomatic relations between the major powers prior to WWI³². The focal point on the continent was the grouping and regrouping of the major powers. One notable effort in the formations of the alliance was the policy of the German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck. Bismarck sought to prevent a Franco-Russian alliance, which could force Germany to fight on both fronts. His secondary goal was to avert any situation in which it might be necessary for Germany to choose between Russia and Austria-Hungary³³. Bismarck succeeded in uniting and securing the whole Centre of the continent, firstly by agreeing with the Dual Alliance, with Austria-Hungary, in October 1879, and ultimately in May 1882 with the formation of the Triple Alliance, with Austria-Hungary and Italy. During that time it seemed to be a wide consensus between the major powers concerning the “gradual dismemberment of Turkey,” in way of seeking arrangements for the postponement of the eventuality, rather than hastening it³⁴. Germany was satisfied because Tunis was presented to France and it was a great distraction from the French interests in Alsace and the Rhine river valley, which in turn meant that would not be an immediate effort to reclaim the lost provinces. Also, their allies gained extra territories: Austria-Hungary gained Bosnia and Italy gained Libya. The British were also satisfied with the gaining of Egypt because they considered the Suez Canal as the backbone of the Empire.

On January 4, 1894, the Franco-Russian military convention came into force³⁵. The Kaiser did not object to the Franco-Russian agreement. In fact in his correspondence with the

Tsar, he welcomed it, with a hope that the Russians could control the French. Besides the best hopes of the Kaiser, the determining factor behind the Franco-Russian agreement was not the Russian sympathy towards the French, but their mutual distrust in the German “theatrical and incalculable” ruler. What should be mentioned is that the Franco-Russian alliance also had the British imperialism in mind. France gained the much-needed backup on the continent and was no longer alone in countering the eventual German attack. The Franco-Russian military convention was the first major warning that Europe was gradually falling into two opposing armed camps. Such a constellation of relations on the continent provided a balance of power, but it also increased the importance of Britain’s attitude. The British adherence to one side or the other would certainly derail the fragile balance.

The period that followed after the signing of the Treaty of Berlin, on July 3, 1878, was characterized by the isolationism of Britain³⁶. The British efforts were concentrated in Asia. One line of effort was for them to counter the spreading Russian influence in Northern Persia and to establish the Afghan buffer-state. A second line of effort was to secure Burma and gain influence on the Chinese market from the South-East Asia. The claims of the Kaiser for world-power based on the German Navy “raised to the same standards of his army”³⁷ and his proclamation of the Berlin-Baghdad railway, both in 1898, only increased the Germano-phobia in Britain. The British imminent antagonism towards the corrupt Sultan in Constantinople ultimately led to the diminished influence of Britain over Turkey, down to a mere negligibility³⁸. The Franco-Russian alliance and the shift of the French fleet to Toulon reinforced the British commitment to Austria-Hungary in defending Constantinople from Russia, thus maintaining the status quo in the eastern Mediterranean. That also provoked a postponement of the solution of the Eastern question in the Balkan Peninsula for the time being, because Britain wanted to further strengthen its position in

Egypt. Germany recognized the lack of British influence over the Ottoman Empire, and began its ascent in the Ottoman Empire, partly through investment and partly through arms sales, resulting in the German predominance over Asia Minor by securing the railway concessions³⁹. The biggest effort was put into expressing commitment to the maintenance of the integrity and sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire, shunning any proposal that might weaken the Sultan's authority.

Prince von Bülow, as a German Foreign Minister, in the German Reichstag, speaking about the growing German prestige and power, rejected the British approaches and stated that "in the coming century the German people will be a hammer or an anvil."⁴⁰ That speech by von Bülow definitely distanced Germany from Britain. In the year that followed he became a German chancellor and on January 21, 1901, Queen Victoria died, thus ending the Victorian Era in Britain. The end of the Victorian Era symbolized the parting of ways between Britain and Germany.

In 1904, two major events happened that concerned the major powers⁴¹. The first was the signing of the Anglo-French Convention on April 8, 1904. The agreement was very important because it was simply aimed towards elimination of all of the points of friction between the two powers. It seemed as the two traditional enemies agreed on everything, including a whole series of border rectifications in Africa. Maybe most importantly, the Convention resolved the issue of Gibraltar. Britain successfully negotiated the security of the Gibraltar Strait by agreeing to the French absorption of Morocco and, even more importantly, the non-fortification of the Mediterranean coast. In turn, France gave up on its influence over Egypt for gaining access to trade in the Yangtze Valley, the most lucrative part of the China Market, where Britain had a monopoly and informal Empire⁴².

The Convention is by no means to be viewed as an alliance. It was an agreement that ironed out the differences and disputes that the two major powers had between each other. The Convention was a bridge over, and a pathway through, the colonial disputes that disturbed the relations between Britain and France. The weak spot in the Convention was the neglected of the international character of the Moroccan question. The Moroccan secession towards France was perceived by Germany as a clear signing for the British move away from Germany and closer to alignment with France and Russia.

The second event of 1904 was the Russo-Japanese war. The main reason for the Russo Japanese War was the Russian pursuit for a warm water port, usable all year round, on the Pacific Ocean. That Intention was countered by the Japanese intentions for territorial expansion on the Korean Peninsula and in mainland China⁴³. Japan was looking for a pre-emptive war because after the completion of the Siberian railway Russia would have been able to concentrate troops in Manchuria – thus hampering, if not canceling, the Japanese interests over the Korean Peninsula and China.

The war, even though far away from Europe had a profound influence over the events that would unfold in the following decade. The immediate effect from the war was the establishment of Japan as a regional power in East Asia, by winning the victory of an established major European power and acquiring sustainable territory and population gains on the Korean Peninsula and in Manchuria. The second effect was that it caused a wide national anger and disgust in Russia that subsequently led to the Russian Revolution of 1905. Only two months after the end of the war, Nicholas II was forced to sign the October Manifesto, transforming Russia from an autocracy to a constitutional monarchy, thus effectively ending the Russian expansionism in East Asia. And ultimately, the third effect was that the Tsar warned Bulgaria not

to start a war with Turkey (or anybody else) over Macedonia because he could not afford a war on two fronts, or another blunder after the Russo-Japanese war.

On August 31, 1907, the Anglo-Russian Convention was a concluded affair⁴⁴. The signing of the Convention enabled Russia to return to European affairs after the fiasco that happened in East Asia. For Britain it was a success also because Russia gave up on its influence over Tibet and the Middle East borders were drawn. Afghanistan was confirmed as an independent buffer-state, while Persia was divided, with the Russians limiting their influence over the Northern Persia. A general atmosphere of satisfaction was in effect because the Convention meant that by eliminating the causes for friction in the Far and Middle East, they could now focus on discussion over the imminent Turkish crisis and the Balkan affairs. The weak point of this Convention was the sinister treatment of Persia. Persia would ultimately maintain its independence mainly because of the distraction produced by the WWI and the emergence of a strong native ruler.

Although there was no formal alliance between Great Britain, Russia, and France until the outbreak of WWI, the Anglo-French and the Anglo-Russian Conventions were successfully blended into the Triple Entente⁴⁵. But, there were still some persisting nuances in the relationships between Russia and Great Britain. The first was the continued struggle between Russia and Great Britain over Persia and Afghanistan and the second was the Russo-Japanese War⁴⁶. Even though the Persian squabble was more persistent, the Russo-Japanese War brought the biggest strain in the relationship. Only skillful diplomacy and good situational awareness prevented the open conflict between the Anglo-Japanese Coalition and the Franco-Russian pairing. Although the advent of the First and the Second Balkan Wars put additional strain on the relations, it may have also solidified the alliance through fire.

That meant the two rival groups of powers were listed. Britain remained relatively free to act on the European diplomatic scene and to apply the same methods for détente she used with France, Japan, and Russia to Germany, but the naval rivalry between Britain and Germany proved to be a fatal obstacle. The approaches by King Edward VII to Emperor Francis Joseph were perceived as an attempt to lure Austria-Hungary away from Germany and therefore were counterproductive in the British efforts for a German détente. Germany was feeling increasingly insecure and encircled.

While the Kaiser was toying with the Pan-Islamic movement, trained the Turkish army, and planned the Berlin-Baghdad Railway, nothing could have stopped the evident Turkish decay on the Balkan Peninsula. First, the Serbian revolution happened and then the Macedonian Ilinden Uprising on August 2, 1903⁴⁷. The Macedonians revolted against the Ottomans, and formed a short-lived Republic in the liberated town of Kruševo. By November 1903, the Macedonian nationalists were crushed after months of violent reprisals by the Ottomans, and the Republic was dissolved. Those violent reprisals over the Christian population in Macedonia served as a pretext for the intervention of the major powers in the Balkan Peninsula. The intervention led to signing of the Müritz Agreement on September 29, 1903⁴⁸. The agreement stipulated that for the next three years there would be an International Inspectorate installed in Macedonia, and an international gendarmerie would be formed to overlook the treatment of the Christian population in Macedonia. The intervention did not succeed in improving the living condition in Macedonia, or averting the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire it only managed to postpone it.

The next main event, that connected the major powers and tested their relations, was Austria-Hungary's annexation of Bosnia on October 6, 1908⁴⁹. The unilateral diplomatic move by Austria-Hungary was planned to coincide with the Bulgarian declaration of independence,

which happened a day earlier, on October 5, 1908. That move was initially considered to be an outstanding diplomatic victory for Austria-Hungary, but time would prove them wrong. The Bosnian crisis permanently damaged relations between Austria-Hungary and the neighboring states of Italy, Serbia, and Russia. The influence from Britain towards Russia to deescalate the situation were successful, but Russia became determined and hastened its military build-up. The Austro-German plan was very skillfully conceived. They knew that Russia could not have rebuilt its military might in the three years following the Russo-Japanese war, and therefore would not risk a military escapade on the Balkan Peninsula. On the other hand, the Germans had the French connected to the unresolved issues over Morocco, and the French had the British connected over the security of Gibraltar. The subdued attitude of France and the British proto-peace-keeping, over the duration of the Bosnian crisis were evident. However, what von Bülow did not succeed in was to push the Triple Entente to the breaking point. The initial success of the Austria-Hungarian diplomacy envenomed the relations between themselves and the South Slavs and the Russians. They gained territory and population, but that was territory and population that only added to the complexity and unsustainability of the Dual Monarchy.

On March 13, 1912, Serbia and Bulgaria signed a secret treaty of alliance, and on May 29, 1912, Bulgaria signed another secret treaty of alliance with Greece⁵⁰. Those treaties formalized the cooperation between the Balkan states and committed themselves in mutual support against Turkey. Serbia recognized Bulgaria's rights over the territories east of the Rhodope Mountains and around the Struma River, and in turn Bulgaria recognized Serbia's rights over the territories north and west from the Šar Mountain. The districts laying within those borders, including the Aegean District and the Lake of Ohrid were to remain autonomous, and if a need for a partition of those territories occurred, the arbitration was supposed to be led by the

Russian Tsar. Those territories roughly translate to the territory of Macedonia. Those territories were inhabited by ethnic Macedonians and were held by the Turks at that time therefore, the population did not have any representative in the decision – making. When war was finally declared and broke out, the major powers were largely inactive, waiting for the Turkish victory, and then to move in after the fact and dictate the settlement. But that was not the case. The actual fact was that the Balkan states achieved decisive victories at the start of the war: (1) the Bulgarians won at Burgas, (2) the Serbs won at Kumanovo and Monastir, and (3) the Greeks succeeded in taking Thessaloniki. The Turkish holdings in Europe were diminished to the three forts in Adrianople, Janina, and Skutari, and the line in Gallipoli. The Balkan balance-of-power was dead. The Serbian victories in Macedonia coincided with the Hungarian repression in Croatia, and they provided a big boost to the movement for the unity of the South Slavs, mounting increasing pressure on Austria-Hungary over its southern provinces, inhabited by Slavs.

The initial successes propelled Serbia, backed by Russia, to move and claim an Adriatic port for itself. The Serbian ambition for aggrandizement were perceived by Austria-Hungary as a threat. Through the Triple Alliance, Austria-Hungary managed to influence Italy to help the Albanians to form their independent states, thus halting the Serbian advance towards the Adriatic and Ionian coasts⁵¹. What followed was the Bulgarian attack on the Serbian and Greek positions on the Bregalnica River on June 29, 1913. The Bulgarians were not satisfied by their territorial gains from the First Balkan War and were therefore committed to the attack in order to fulfil their ambitions of aggrandizement by taking the rest of the Macedonian territory. After the initial successes of the Bulgarian campaign against its former allies, they were stopped and the Serbs and the Greeks were on the counter-offensive. The Bulgarians were forced into the Balkan Peace

Conference in Bucharest and had no other choice than to accept the Bucharest Treaty from August 6, 1913. It remained a decision of the major powers of how the territories were divided.

The Balkan Wars opened a new era in the relations on the Balkan Peninsula⁵². It was decided that the Bulgarians would be deprived from an access to the Aegean Sea. Serbia, enlarged by a third in territory and population and backed by Russia, was becoming a focal point for the unification of the rest of the South Slavs. The Serbians did not managed to gain the much sought after Adriatic port, but they managed to gain the Vardar River valley, the Ohrid Lake, and Bitola. The Greeks also gained vast territorial enlargement. They secured Thessaloniki and the north Aegean coast, mainly through the support of the Kaiser to his sister, Sofia of Prussia, who was Queen consort of the Hellenes.

The Hungarians were dealing increased amounts of pressure over the population in Croatia and Transylvania, thus invoking the hate from the South Slavs. The former allies Serbia and Bulgaria now clearly were on the opposite blocks: Serbia was aligned to and under the influence of Russia, and Bulgaria was backed by Austria-Hungary. Greece became a broken state and was functioning in an uneasy alliance between the pro-German aristocracy and the pro-British commoners.

The Bucharest Treaty, instead of solving the many problems on the Balkan Peninsula, created several more. Macedonia was divided by the neighbors with no consideration whatsoever of the wishes of the population that lived there. The Macedonian question was quickly brushed aside in the efforts of the major powers to deescalate the clashes on the Balkan Peninsula and retain the much-sought-after balance of power in there. What remained after the Balkan Wars was the maneuvering of Austria-Hungary and Russia over the Balkan countries, looking for positions and looking to expand their influence. The fragile balance of power enabled the major

powers to offer Macedonia as a leverage toward the interventions of their satellites in and an advent of a future war.

Austria-Hungary and The Ottoman Empire – failing states

William E. Lingelbach in his edition of Paul Louis Leger's book *The History of Nations: Austria-Hungary*, has the contemporary oversight into the relations between nations and religions within the Dual Empire⁵³. At least twelve different nations were present within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Those nationalities were divided into all of the major religions, so in the Empire there were Roman Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox Christians, Muslims, and Jews. All of the nationalities that were minorities within the Empire claimed certain rights and certain territories, and above of all they had the support of their home country. All of that instability provided the picture of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a failing state. The Slavs within the Empire were a particularly big nuisance because they had Russia backing them. Apart from the divisions through the line of different nationalities, there was also the political unrest within the Dual Monarchy. The constant reforms in the electoral system provided for the instability of the state. Some of the national minorities had their representatives at the central level and had forms of local self-governance, those were the Czechs and the Croats, while some others did not have those, like the Romanians in Transylvania, the Poles, and the Slovenians.

In 1896 and 1897, the Austria-Hungarian policy towards the Near East questions was becoming more evident⁵⁴. That policy was based upon their efforts to maintain the Triple Alliance. While having Germany at their back, they sought after peaceful resolution for the complications that were appearing on the Balkan Peninsula. Austria-Hungary was careful not to change the existing state system and to ensure the long-term promotion of the monarchy's commercial interest. The standing Army and Navy and the robust administrative apparatus required vast amounts of money to be sustained.

Austria-Hungary successfully navigated the differences she had with Britain over the Eastern question by creating opportunities for rapprochement with Russia. Austria-Hungary was resolved that it is best not to do anything, applying the principle of non-intervention concerning the Balkan Peninsula. The Russians were conducting propaganda campaigns in Romania and Bulgaria and were openly trying to refocus on Europe and rekindle the Pan-Slavic movement. After the blunder Russia had in the Far East, Austria Hungary was still aiming to come closer to Russia. The events that enveloped in Macedonia in 1903, gave them a pretext to an even closer cooperation.

The government in Austria-Hungary was also thinking about improving the state's economy⁵⁵. At the beginning of the 20th century, the increasing stream of emigration was a very big problem for Austria-Hungary. While losing the productive force, Austria-Hungary was forced to promote foreign commerce. The national awakening movements within the monarchy were described as disgraceful strife of nationalists. The central government in Austria-Hungary admitted their influence over country explaining that they were delaying the most urgent commitments of the state and also unfavourably influenced the foreign relations of the monarchy. The system survival efforts were so important that Austria-Hungary was constantly trying to negotiate better trade deals with states across the continent.

The aggressive German Weltpolitik swept Austria Hungary along, not as a participant, but more as an accomplice⁵⁶. Count von Aehrenthal's successes in the colonial field were not matched elsewhere. He was successful in manoeuvring the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and was helped, by the accession of Ferdinand I on the Bulgarian throne, in alienating Bulgaria from Russia. But he was unsuccessful in connecting the Danube River to the Adriatic coast via railway. Another failure was his inability to secure the railway through

Kosovo and Sandžak thus putting a definite divide between the two Russian satellites on the Balkans: Serbia and Montenegro. What he was able to do was to further antagonize and infuriate Serbia, even more than before⁵⁷. Even though von Aehrenthal was aiming away from the militarism and towards the economic strengthening of Austria-Hungary, he was unable to succeed in that during the general arms race of the time.

The Dual Monarchy was advertising itself as a unified state, but it had many divisions. The Austrians were handling minorities by incorporating them into the society, and the Hungarians were doing the exact opposite by crushing their national ambitions. The increasing Hungarian pressure over the Croats, the Serbian minority, and the Romanians only increased the probability for successes of the Russian propaganda and the Pan-Slavic movement. Maybe the worst problem about the diverse ethnical composition of Austria-Hungary was that those ethnicities were not groups and massed, but instead were dispersed. So the territory was dotted with ethnographical “islands”, which more often than not, excluded each other. That constellation only added to the difficulty and complexity of the situation in Austria-Hungary.

Robert William Seton-Watson in his book *The Southern Slav Question and the Habsburg Monarchy* examines the influence of the unresolved Southern Slavs questions in Austria-Hungary and on its borders⁵⁸. Seton-Watson explains how the disintegration of the Dual Monarchy was inevitable by saying “There are occasions when the surgeon’s knife is more necessary than the nurse’s bandage.”⁵⁹ Being a contemporary writer, with events unfolding, he states that Austria-Hungary is riddled with problems and the most important and pressing of those problems is the unresolved Southern Slav question.

The Pan-Slavic unification, according to Seton-Watson, is more likely to be achieved outside from Austria-Hungary, in defiance of Austria-Hungary and against their opposition,

rather than within the Dual Monarchy and with its blessing and support⁶⁰. The Serbians with their upstart behavior and aggrandizement tendencies were perceived as a minor threat. But that coupled with the Russian influence and assistance was perceived as a real threat to the existence of the Dual Monarchy. The internal problems prevented the Russian acts on their desire to unify the South Slavs under the scepter of the Tsar. The Russian intolerant behavior over the Poles and the Ukrainians was perceived as a stepping stone towards their efforts of uniting the South Slavs. The Bosnian Crisis of 1908 only confirmed that Russia, coming from the Russo-Japanese War, was still unable to defeat the Austria-Hungarian army, supported by the allied German army. The event showed that the Russians backed away from a direct military confrontation in favor of continuing with their propaganda activities across the Balkan Peninsula, and it also showed that Austria-Hungary was still unable to exit the umbrella of protection provided by Germany. Since the system of alliances across the continent was already set, the only way to realize the Pan-Slavic dream was through a universal war that would require a thorough revision of the map of Europe.

Aykut Kansu in his book *The revolution of 1908 in Turkey* explains how the “Young Turks” revolution from 1908 influence over the relations on the Balkan Peninsula⁶¹. He describes the situation in the Ottoman Empire in great detail. The constant insurgencies, on the western border by the Macedonians in Macedonia, and on the Eastern borders by the Armenians in Armenia caused a lot of commotion, and used up a lot of military units and monetary values to enforce the peace within the Empire. That coupled with the costly war with Russia and the spreading Russian influence in northern Persia, led to popular unrest within the Ottoman Empire. The mounting pressure from the foreign diplomats in Istanbul resulted in the prosecution and exile of several high-ranking officials at the ministerial level. The acceptance of the Foreign

Committee to observe the reforms in Macedonia, honoring the Mürzsteg Agreement, degraded the value of the regime in the eyes of the populace. In Macedonia, in the town Monastir (today the city of Bitola) was where the New Constitution was proclaimed. Finally, the Sultan Abdulhamid II proclaimed that he reinstates the Parliament. That move and the following purges in the high-ranking officials meant a further degradation of the Ottoman's positions in relations with the rest of the major powers and the fledgling nations and states on their borders.

In Turkey, there was a need for thorough remodeling of the system of governance⁶². The widespread corruption caused a decrease in the tax collection. The taxes were collected, but before they reached the Sultan they were dissolved by the all of the corruption from the regional rulers. There was a practice of denying passports to the merchants, thus denying the ability to travel, which in turn had a profound effect on the development of the commerce and the industry. The lack of concern for the agricultural development led to a decrease in the food production. The system of concessions for mining and forestry investments was also corrupt and unsustainable. And maybe most importantly, the vicious reprisals of any national unrest made the populace to look to emigrate to Europe or the United States.

More crucial than the civil revolt was only the military unrest⁶³. The military units were scattered all around the Empire, doing the dangerous work of keeping the Empire together. They were simply discharging themselves from service and were looking for their backed wages. By doing so, they openly threatened to pillage the towns if their demands were not met. These situations were happening on a daily basis over the Third Army Corps, which was based in Macedonia. The Unionists were aware of the plans for reforms in Macedonia; thus Macedonia became the rallying point of the Unionists in their bid to overthrow the rule of the Sultan. The Unionists were aware that the proposed reforms for Macedonia would lead to Macedonian

autonomy and ultimately to the loss of the Macedonian territories and so tried to influence the change of the system as much as they could.

The initial Anglo-Russian plan envisioned establishment of local rule over the Macedonian provinces, which would be paid by the Macedonian budget, which in turn would be independent from the central budget and overlooked by the Europeans. In fact the intentions were to sever the Macedonian ties to the central government and eventually declare these provinces autonomous, and even independent⁶⁴. But that plan was abandoned by both sides as soon as they recognized that there will be a need of actual presence of troops on the terrain to control the situation. The Unionists were scared of the eventual foreign domination over Macedonia, and the Europeans were still not ready for that level of cooperation between the major powers. Therefore, the major powers left Macedonia to work out its own salvation.

Paul W. Schroeder in his article “World War I as Galloping Gertie: A Reply to Joachim Remak”⁶⁵ further explains and adds even more weight to Joachim Remak and his article “1914-The Third Balkan War: Origins Reconsidered”⁶⁶, while both of the articles are concentrated on the causes for WWI which are different from the German attempts to assert its influence as an emerging major power. Schroeder, in his reply to Remak states there is no single cause for the First World War. He recognizes the German bid for world power, but also he states that a reason was the Austro-Hungarian fear of the pending Russian encirclement from the South and via the Pan-Slavic movement. Remak concurs that Germany was not the only guilty party and continues by claiming that Russia could have counseled Serbia to be cautious in relations to Austria-Hungary, instead of providing them with a full support, just as Germany did with Austria-Hungary against Serbia. It seems that both of them agree that, as much as Germany was a

revisionist, looking for world power, Great Britain wanted to retain and secure its colonial assets and its world power.

But the ability of Russia to influence the state of affairs of Austria-Hungary not directly but, in today's terms, a proxy, says enough for the conditions in which Austria-Hungary was placed. Since Austria-Hungary was considered to be a major power and an essential actor it deserves more attention from the historians when discussing the causes for WWI. The German and Russian ability to project their influence outside their borders should be valued as much as the Austria-Hungarian inability to sustain its stability within its borders.

Preparations for the First World War

German dedication to the overt revisionism of the standing continental balance of power and distribution of natural resources from the existing colonies can be traced to the success of the wars for unification. German strife towards domination of the continent through force is an attributing factor towards the ascent of WWI. Their efforts to spread their influence on the continent is evident through their influence over Austria-Hungary. Holger H. Herwig in the first three chapters of his book *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary, 1914-1918* explains how the First World War started⁶⁷. He starts his book with the words from Freidrich Engels from 1887: “And finally, Prussia-Germany can no longer fight any war but a world war; and a world war of hitherto unknown dimensions and ferocity.”⁶⁸ But on the other hand, he claims that, concerning the Schlieffen Plan, the German General-Staff was fully aware of what kind of a war Germany was getting into. The problem with the Schlieffen Plan was that it was becoming established as the truth and nobody was willing to publicly repudiate it.

The Austria-Hungarian armed forces, under the lead of the Chief of the General Staff Conrad von Hötzendorf, contrary to the German counterparts, had a multitude of contingency plans to counter each and every one of the neighbors and the more distant potential foes, and were prepared to deploy them in a whole variety of combinations amongst them⁶⁹. They were obviously prepared for WWI. Therefore, a swift and surgical strike from Austria-Hungarian military might against Belgrade would have been more than sufficient to silence the aggrandizement ambitions of the revisionist Serbia. But, in correlation with the claims from the previous chapter of this work, it seems that nothing was moving swiftly in Austria-Hungarian Empire anymore. It seems that besides all of the war clamoring, the Germans and Austria-

Hungarians were not prepared to accept the war at the first instance. Both Wilhelm II and Franz Joseph were clinging to the diplomatic efforts to the last possible moment. But when WWI finally unraveled, Germany accepted it as a much-needed conformation for Germany's major power status, and Austria-Hungary accepted it as a question of survival.

Herwig than goes into explaining that there was a very strange and horrible synthesis of the German actions in 1914. He even concludes that the German General Staff knew how the protracted conflict would result, thus showing an almost criminal lack of responsibility.

Sir Martin Gilbert in the first four Chapters of his book *The First World War: a complete history* explains the prelude to WWI⁷⁰. Gilbert starts his book by stating that in the period 1914-1918, two separate wars were fought. One was fought in the trenches and the other was fought in the Cabinets. Nobody really understood that a European war was a completely different affair from any colonial venture. The British were basically scared by the widening of the Kiel Canal in 1914 it suddenly opened up prospects of sudden deployment of German capital ships in the North Sea. They soon realized that there should be a conscription in place, instead of relying on the small professional army.

On the continent, the Austrian half of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was constantly irritating the Hungarian half of the Empire by insisting on balancing its many minorities without ever changing anything. Even with that reluctance to change they were feeling threatened by the ever growing Serbian State in the South. Britain, France, and Russia formed the famous Triple Entente, which in order increased the fear of encirclement by the Central Powers. And Kaiser Wilhelm II was dreaming of making Germany respected, feared, and admired⁷¹. Nicholas II from Russia had his own aspiration, especially connected to the Pan-Slavic movement and being a champion of Serbia. The existence of Serbia, on the southern borders of the Empire, meant that

there would be a unification of all of the Slav provinces, and that would be costly to the Empire, demoting it to a “small power”. In 1911, Germany added 15,000 new personnel to the Navy. Germany rejected the suggestion of Sir Winston Churchill to mutually pause the naval expansion. On December 8, 1912, the Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral von Müller recorded in his diary that the Kaiser ordered Austria to react vigorously against the foreign Slavs (Serbians). If Russia would interfere in the war, it would be inevitable for them and then the Navy would have to face war with Britain⁷². Gilbert continues with the fact that in the spring of 1913 the strength of the German army rose to 661,000. Therefore, Moltke was conspiring on an early and pre-empted strike on Russia because Germany “could not compete with Russia on masses.”⁷³ Colonel House, President Wilson’s emissary, made maybe the best prediction by writing to the President from Berlin: “England does not want Germany wholly crushed, for she would then have to reckon alone with her ancient enemy, Russia; but Germany insists upon an ever-increasing Navy, then England will have no choice.”⁷⁴

Richard F. Hamilton and Holger H. Herwig in their book *War planning 1914* analyze the war plans of the major powers and how they made their decisions to enter the war⁷⁵. The way they are describing that plans is as the plans we either faulty right from the beginning of the war, or they were poorly executed. For example, France knew about the Schlieffen Plan, and the French knew that the Germans would attack through Belgium, but nevertheless, they decided to place their troops in the East, hoping for an offensive and failing to realize it. The Russians were relying on a modified mobilization plan as a “war plan”. Their first strike into Galicia came too early, and they made a costly error by splitting the forces upon entering Eastern Prussia⁷⁶. This only goes to show that neither of the warring states was prepared for the long war of attrition

ahead. One could say that they knew the risks of fighting this war, but somehow they were overconfident of out-maneuvering and out-smarting the enemy.

That overconfidence about the speedy resolution could have been based on the fact that everyone was expecting clashes on the Balkan Peninsula, where the unresolved territorial questions were.

Conclusion

The diagnosis that the Ottoman Empire was the “sick man of Europe” holds ground, but also it should be applied to Austria-Hungary. Both states were appalling in the way they handled the minorities and nationalist movement within their borders. The disinterest of the major powers to solve the issues unraveling in Macedonia led to the clashes over the territory in the vacuum that was created during the decay of the Ottoman Empire in Europe. The major powers made Macedonia a focal point for focus of the lesser powers. They managed to keep the lesser powers interested in that territory, the Ottoman Empire was looking to maintain its territorial integrity in Europe, and the rest were looking for territorial aggrandizement. Macedonia was of vital significance to the belligerents in the WWI because it was left unresolved and to fester. The selfish and imperialist aims of the major powers left Macedonia open and available for distribution to the lesser powers for their allegiance and intervention.

After exploring the international relations among the major powers preceding the WWI a conclusion appears that the explanations that WWI happened by a simple and uncontrollable slide towards war is not true. Also, the wider sociological movements such as nationalism, militarism, territorial aggrandizement, and social Darwinism played a part, but were not a decisive factor. The complexity of the emerging notion for national interest did not allow the singling out of one decisive factor. Also, to understand the reasons one should be look at the decision makers within the belligerents in the war. The national “coteries” as described by Hamilton and Herwig, are carriers of the emerging national interest, and are to be blamed for the war⁷⁷. Going into WWI was not a decision by a single person, or a ruler, but also was not a decision brought on with a larger national consensus. Those coteries conducted their nations’

diplomacies to fulfil the selfish and imperialistic interest of the major powers. The smaller nations and states were used as mere pawns in the grand game of strategy. It is as if the coteries could not have perceived the consequences that were produced by them playing strategy and with their efforts to manage the world.

There are many resources that are concentrated on exploring the causes leading to WWI. Those sources write on the major powers and their interests and states of preparedness for the start of the WWI, and on the influence of the unresolved national questions of the nations on the Balkan Peninsula. The emergence of the nationalist movements of the South Slavs and their desires to form national states put additional weight and disturbed the already fragile balance between the major powers of the day. The unresolved Macedonian national question created a vacuum in the central part of the Balkan Peninsula, and as such it tempted the major powers and was used by them to motivate the lesser powers. The treaty of San Stefano, from 1878, proposed a large principality, an autonomous Great Bulgaria. This land stretched from the Black Sea almost to the Adriatic coast and from Danube to the Aegean coast. Those were the conditions made by Russia to the Ottoman Empire, but then came the determined opposition by the rest of the major powers, especially Great Britain and Austria-Hungary, and of the lesser powers, Greece and Serbia⁷⁸.

The subsequent Treaty of Berlin revised and replaced the San Stefano Treaty. It deprived Bulgaria from its major territorial aggrandizement to the west, but did not solved the Macedonian question. Macedonia remained under the Ottoman rule. Consequently, Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece were creating their own justifications for their claims on the territory that connected Central Europe to the Mediterranean, on Macedonia⁷⁹. The lesser powers were propagating historical, ethno-religious, and ethno-linguistic causes in order to justify their

territorial aggrandizement visions. Long time before the age of nationalism, Macedonia, at one time or another, was a part of various dynastical empires that were not national states. The Bulgarians were calling on their Tsar Simeon's Bulgarian Empire from the 10th century; the Greeks were calling on the Byzantium Empire from the 11th and 12th centuries; finally, the Serbians were calling on their Tsar Stefan Dušan's Serbian Empire from the 14th century⁸⁰. What was lacking, from the contemporary nationalist of the day, was the admittance that the above mentioned Empires, at the same time, controlled each other's land as well. But nevertheless, the competition between Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia for influence over Macedonia and the Macedonians meant that the unresolved Macedonian question left room for maneuver of the major powers over the lesser powers by offering them Macedonia.

The Macedonian question is mentioned almost in every source on the causes for the WWI, but what was lacking was the comparison of the interests and influence of the major powers and the lesser powers on Macedonia. It is as if nobody wanted to admit the importance of Macedonia in the advent of WWI.

The words of the Chancellor of Germany Otto von Bismarck: "One day the great European War will come out of some damned foolish thing in the Balkans⁸¹" summarize the volatility of the Balkan Peninsula. The strategic position of the Balkan Peninsula and the central position of Macedonia on it, was bound to cause disturbance and attract attention. The proposed Berlin-Baghdad railway by the Germans and the much sought after control of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles Straits by the British, required control over the Vardar River valley. In the mix of nationalities and religion that were present on the Balkan Peninsula, the only open and unresolved question was the Macedonian question. The predicament caused by evidential decay and dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire in the late 19th century, formed the Eastern question.

Within the Eastern question the only unresolved issue was Macedonia, a piece of the geostrategic puzzle that was important to all, but as it seems nobody was able to admit it.

The difference between the cause and the reason for the WWI needs to be distinguished. When looking on the advent of the WWI and its connections to the Balkan Peninsula, everybody is lining up with Bosnia, and Sarajevo, and the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, on June 28, 1914. That was an event and should be looked at as the immediate reason for the Austria-Hungarian ultimatum over Serbia. The cause for the WWI, on the other hand, is a much broader question. Macedonia should be looked at as a significant part of the causes that lead to the WWI. A deeper and much more detailed investigation on the Macedonian question is in order.

The lesser powers on the Balkan Peninsula, by acting in their intentions for territorial aggrandizement over Macedonia, compelled the major powers into intervention. By not resolving the Macedonian question the major powers created a vacuum in the middle of the system of autonomous states they supported (if not created). Instead of solidifying their influence over their satellites, the major powers, via Macedonia, introduced another set of “Clausewitzian” trinitities which proved impossible to control, or managed. Metaphorically speaking, the major powers, by not solving the Macedonian question, added a fatal intricacy in the already complex system and helped create the situation where “the tail wagged the dog”.

Therefore, the Macedonian question needs to be exemplified and studied even more. It provides valuable lessons of how major power can be pulled into a major conflict over a question that they could resolve more pragmatically and peacefully. Also, the armed struggle of the Macedonians for national independence and for forming a national state can be looked upon as a form of an armed insurgency. The Macedonian revolutionaries from IMRO can also be viewed

as the forgotten forefathers of the Irish Re-Unification fighters and the Palestinian Intifadas fighters.

Annex A

October 1903 Agreement between Russia and Austria-Hungary on reforms in Macedonia⁸²

(The Mürzsteg Agreement)

Direction: International relations

Document type: Government and regulatory acts

State: Russian Empire

Date: 1903.10

Tags: Foreign policy

Source: Compendium of agreements Russia with other States (1856-1917) State publishing house of political literature, 1952, pp. 329-332.

Archive: "Reforms in the Macedonia. 1903-1905 yy." St. Petersburg, 1906 page. 1-2, 15-19.

(The Ministry of foreign Affairs, Diplomatic service correspondence).

№ 54

Agreement between Russia and Austria-Hungary on reforms in Macedonia^{1*}

I. Telegram text Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Lamsdorf to the Ambassador in Constantinople to Zinoviev

St. Petersburg, September 20/October 3 1903

"In the last time you have been authorized to make a statement that Russia and Austria-Hungary has steadily continued the work of appeasement undertaken by them, adhering to the

program developed at the beginning of the year, despite the difficulties encountered in its implementation.

Indeed, while, on the one hand, the revolutionary committees stirred up unrest and prevented the Christian population of the three vilayets from contributing to the implementation of reforms, on the other - organs of the Sublime Port charged with implementing such measures did not show the desired zeal in this case at all, and did not understand the true goals underlying these measures.

In order to demonstrate their firm determination to insist on the full implementation of the aforementioned reforms adopted by Norton and aimed at ensuring common security, both governments agreed on more effective methods of control and supervision. You will receive precise instructions on this subject without delay.

If, on the one hand, both governments fully recognize the right and the obligation of the Sublime Port. If we suppress the riots caused by the malicious agitation of the committees, then on the other hand, they cannot but regret that this suppression was accompanied by violence and brutality, from which the civilian population suffered. They therefore consider it imperative to come to the aid of the victims of these deplorable events, and the above-mentioned instructions will show you in detail how to help the destitute residents to facilitate their return to their places and attend to the restoration of those burned villages, churches, and schools.

Governments of Russia and Austria-Hungary have a firm hope that their continued efforts will achieve the intended goal of lasting peace in the regions affected by the troubles, and are convinced that their completely impartial advice will be accepted by all concerned."

"Reforms in Macedonia. 1903-1905 yy.», St. Petersburg. 1900, page. 1—2 (Ministry of foreign Affairs, Diplomatic correspondence).

II. Government communication

October 10/23 1903

At the behest of their August Monarchs, State Secretary Mr. Lamsdorff and Mr. Golukhovsky sent the following identical instructions to the Russian and Austro-Hungarian ambassadors in Constantinople, according to which Mr. Zinoviev and Baron Calice did an appropriate performance for the Sublime Port on the 9th of this October.

Text of an identical instruction

1. For establishment control activity local Turkish authorities bringing execution reforms to appoint with Hilmi Pasha special civil agents from Russia and Austria-Hungary, who will require to accompany the chief Inspector everywhere, to turn his attention to the needs of the Christian population, indicate abuse local authorities, pass corresponding presentation to ambassadors in Constantinople, and to report to their governments all events in the country.

These agents could be assisted by: secretaries and translators who will be assigned to carry out their orders and given permission to travel around the districts to interview residents of Christian villages, monitor the activities of local authorities, etc.

Since the task of civilian agents will be to monitor the implementation of reforms and pacification of the population, their powers will cease two years after their appointment.

The Sublime Port should instruct local authorities to make it easier for these agents to perform their assigned tasks.

2. Since the reorganization of the Turkish gendarmerie and police is one of the most significant measures for the pacification of the province, the Porte should immediately be required to implement this reform.

Taking into account, however, that several Swedish and other foreign officers who had already been invited for this purpose, owing to their lack of knowledge of the language and local conditions, could not be of sufficient use, it is advisable to make some changes and additions to the original draft. :

a) The task of reorganizing the gendarmerie in the three vilayets will be assigned to a General of foreign nationality in the service of the Imperial Ottoman government, to which the military ranks of the great powers could be attached; they will be assigned to separate areas, where they will act as supervisors, instructors and organizers. Thus, they will also be able to observe the way the troops act in relation to the population.

(b) These officers may, if they deem it necessary, request that a certain number of foreign officers and non-commissioned officers be seconded to them.

3. As soon as the pacification of the country is established, immediately demand that the Turkish government change the territorial division of administrative units in the form of a more correct grouping of individual nationalities.

4. At the same time, make a demand for the transformation of administrative and judicial institutions, which it would be desirable to open access to local Christians, while promoting the development of local self-government.

5. Immediately establish mixed commissions in the main centers of the vilayets, composed of Christian and Muslim delegates in equal numbers, to deal with cases of political and other crimes committed during the troubles.

These commissions should be attended by consular representatives Russia and Austria-Hungary.

6. Require the Turkish government to allocate special amounts:

a) For the re-establishment in the places of their former residence of Christian families who have taken refuge in Bulgaria and in other localities;

b) For granting allowances to Christians who have lost their homes and property;

c) For the restoration of homes, temples and schools destroyed by the Turks during the uprising.

Commissions composed of prominent representatives of the Christian population will manage the distribution of these amounts. Consuls of Russia and Austria-Hungary will monitor their spending.

7. In Christian villages burned down by Turkish regular and auxiliary troops, the residents who have been settled are exempt from paying any taxes during the year.

8. The Ottoman government will renew its commitment to implement without delay all the reforms mentioned in the draft drawn up in February of this year, as well as those whose urgency will be indicated later.

9. Since most of the violence and cruelties were committed by the irregular and the auxiliary troops, it is imperative that the former be disbanded and that formation of auxiliary gangs to be absolutely prevented.

NOTE:

* On 22nd September 1903, a government report was published in St. Petersburg stating that, at the behest of his monarchs, the Minister of foreign Affairs of Russia Golukhovsky and Minister of foreign Affairs of Austria-Hungary Lamsdorff sent a telegram of identical content to the ambassadors of Russia and Austria-Hungary in Constantinople on September 20th. In this collection under No. 54 (II) the text of the telegram is reproduced by Zinoviev, Russian Ambassador to Constantinople.

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