



ANDRZEJ KRZAK & DARIUSZ GREGORCZYK

# THE ART OF WAR IN THE BALKANS



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[THE IMAGE OF THE BATTLE OF BELGRADE, 1789, INCLUDED IN THE  
MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF BELGRADE, WAS USED]

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## Veljko Blagojević

### Balkans and Europe before Assassination in Sarajevo 1914 - The Origin of Balkans as a Strategic Crossroads

#### Introduction

The American and French Revolution has influenced many segments of social life and developments in the situation in Europe at the beginning of XIX century<sup>1</sup>. The first economic revolution, together with the enlightenment ideas, created the basis for profound social changes, which had a specific reflection in the Balkans. The power of the Ottoman Empire began to decline after the second unsuccessful military campaign to Vienna in 1683. After the victory of Christians, with the mediation of the Pope Innocent XI, the Holy League was established between the Habsburg Monarchy, the Venetian Republic and the Polish-Lithuanian Union, as organizations in charge of the further struggle against the Ottoman Empire. After that battle, the Great Turkish War (1683-1699) began, which will be marked by weakness and numerous defeats of the Ottoman Empire and the successful military campaigns of Prince Eugene of Savoy. The war finally ended with the signing of peace treaty in Sremski Karlovci in 1699 and the spread of the borders of the Monarchy. Turkey retained control over the most of territory of Banat, and the Monarchy spread to Dalmatia, Slavonia and Sylvania.

The newly formed bourgeois elites of the Balkan nations had to carry out simultaneously the liberation and social or bourgeois-democratic revolution<sup>2</sup>. Being border area between the Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire, the Serbia was able to initiate the process of emancipation from the Turkish authorities. In addition to the idea of national liberation, the First Serbian Uprising was in many segments led by the revolutionary ideas of Napoleon, which in 1805 defeated the Austrian-Russian coalition at Austerlitz. To a large extent, this historical coincidence reflected the identical, negative, outcome of the Napoleonic war effort and the Serbian revolution led by Đorđe Petrović - Karađorđe. Other Balkan nations also try to liberate themselves from Ottoman rule, mostly in border territories to Russia and Habsburg Monarchy.

<sup>1</sup> J. Baylis and S. Smith, *The Globalization and World Politics*, New York, 2008, pp. 46-47; Č. Popov, D. Živojinović i S. Marković, *Dva veka moderne srpske diplomatije*, Beograd 2013.

<sup>2</sup> V. Čubrilović, *Odabrani istorijski radovi*, Beograd, 1983, pp. 65-72 i R. Marković, *Vojska i naoružanje Srbije Kneza Miloša*, Beograd, 1957, p. 3.

### The Struggle of the Balkan Nations against the Ottoman Empire

Serbs, even before the First Serbian Uprising, raised armed uprisings against the Ottoman authorities, which were usually initiated in accordance with the interests of Austria or Russia. The Habsburg Monarchy had a significant influence on the South Slavs and their struggle against the Ottoman Empire, as well as Hungarian kings<sup>3</sup>, who also gladly received Serbs as settlers in border areas, devastated by the Ottoman army's war operations. Thus, the Military Frontier was created, in which the Serbs had privileges, but also the obligation to defend the Monarchy. After the Holy League troops captured Belgrade, the Serbs joined them and managed to liberate almost whole territory of Serbia. Some 20,000 Serbian rebels assist the Austrian army to liberate the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, and then the Skopje region. Then Austria was attacked by France, and it pulls its military forces into the national territory. As a consequence the Serbs suppressed by the Ottomans moved to the south Hungary under the leadership of Archbishop Arsenije III Čarnojević in 1690. The continuation of the „Great War” with the Ottomans brings parts of Croatia and Hungary under Austrian rule, but the north of Serbia and Belgrade were lost. In that war, the Serbs helped the Austrian army and, after all, were forced again to move northwards the Sava and Danube Rivers together with the nobility and under Archbishop Arsenije IV Jovanović Šakabenta. This event was recorded by the historians as the Second Migration of the Serbs, what made their number in the border regions of the Habsburg monarchy considerably larger<sup>4</sup>. The Serbs paid a high price for the wrong strategic assessment that resulted in the support of the Vienna Monarchy, and long after these events were exposed to Turkish revenge and the abolition of the privileges they previously had. At the same time, French diplomacy has encouraged uprisings of Balkan nations, with the aim to weaken the Habsburg dynasty<sup>5</sup>.

The efforts of the Ottoman authorities to control the Pashaluk of Belgrade<sup>6</sup>, after the takeover of Belgrade in 1791, were jeopardized by the action of the rebelled Janissary (Turkish *Yeniçeri*)<sup>7</sup>, who took power in Belgrade at the end of the conflict. The fear of spreading the influence of Russia in the Balkans, the offensive of Napoleon's forces in Egypt and the appearance of French troops on the shores of the Adriatic Sea, as well as the execution of Greek patriot Rigas Feras in Belgrade, who was the leader

<sup>3</sup> The Hungarian kings gave the hereditary titles of the despot to the Serbian leaders in order to secure the loyalty of their subjects. Thus, the grandson of Đurađ Branković, Vuk Grgurević, was awarded the old Serbian title inherited by his sons' Đorđe and Jovan, N. Deretić, *Nacionalna istorija države i prava*, Beograd, 2008, pp. 118-119.

<sup>4</sup> N. Deretić, *Nacionalna istorija države i prava*, Beograd 2008, pp. 118-121; Č. Antić, *Srpska istorija*, Beograd 2013, pp. 115-126;

<sup>5</sup> D. Janković i M. Mirković, *Državnopravna istorije Jugoslavije*, Beograd 1987, pp. 97-100.

<sup>6</sup> The Sanjak of Smederevo (serb. *Smederevski sandžak*), also known as the Pashaluk of Belgrade, was an Ottoman administrative unit (sandak), that existed between the XV and the outset of the XIX centuries. It was located in the territory of present Central Serbia.

<sup>7</sup> They are members of an elite corps in the standing army of the Ottoman Empire from the late 14th century to 1826. Highly respected for their military prowess in the 15th and 16th centuries, the Janissaries became a powerful political force within the Ottoman state. The Janissary corps was originally staffed by Christian youths from the Balkan provinces who were converted to Islām on being drafted into the Ottoman service.

of the Christian uprising in the Balkans, led to an increase of distrust of the authorities toward the Serbs in the Pashaluk of Belgrade. All of these factors led to the First Serbian Uprising<sup>8</sup>.

The Serbian people, after the executions of the Serbian local leaders in February 1804<sup>9</sup>, became determined to fight for their rights under the leadership of Karađorđe. As he has explained concisely to the Turkish leaders: „Eater the Serbs will get rid of your government, or will disappear once and for all”<sup>10</sup>. The military operations of the Serbian rebels were very successful, and since 1806, there were no Turkish forces in Pashaluk until the autumn of 1813<sup>11</sup>.

Local military leaders, although they were not trained for the military profession, and often illiterate, they had a solid combat experience in fighting against rebel Janissary during the last decade of the XVIII century or in the Austrian Army formations. The winnings were certainly contributed by the fact that they knew the terrain, the habits of the Turkish troops and that they had the opportunity to choose the time and place of the attack<sup>12</sup>.

Since the beginning of the uprising, the Serbs have sought to establish foreign-political relations with Austrian and Russian officials, which were done by Karađorđe, personally, with senior military leaders of Austria and Matija Nenadović with Russians<sup>13</sup>. The foreign policy of the rebel leaders was initially under the influence of the Serbs from the Habsburg Monarchy. They had knowledge of the situation in Europe and advised the insurrection leaders not to stop the communication with officials in Istanbul. It is clear that Austria did not want to see the independence of the Slave state in the Balkans at that time, and the rebels turned to Russia, with which in 1807 entered into an alliance. Russia, as the imperial power of that era, wanted to use rebel movement for its own interests, but its position towards Serbia's independence was similar to that of Austria and other European powers. Recognizing such a position of Russia, the Serbian leaders were trying to gain support in the West for the independence in 1809. However, the newly appointed Austrian Chancellor Metternich refused support with suggestion that Serbs should not ruin relations with Istanbul and Moscow. Napoleon did the same<sup>14</sup>, and it can be said that international circumstances did not favor Serbia's

<sup>8</sup> M. Milićević, *Kneževina Srbija*, Knjiga prva, Beograd 1876, pp. 69-71; Č. Antić, *Srpska istorija*, Beograd 2013, pp. 123-126; N. Deretić, *Nacionalna istorija države i prava*, Beograd, 2008, pp. 121-131; N. Rakočević, *Ratni planovi Srbije protiv Turske od vožda Karađorđa do kralja Petra*, Beograd 1933, pp. 17-21.

<sup>9</sup> Turks killed most prominent Serbian leaders, who have distinguished themselves in battles against them during the conflicts of the late XVIII century.

<sup>10</sup> This time, it was about goals that had the character of national liberation, which certainly does not mean that the rebels ignored international circumstances, R. Marković: *Vojska i naoružanje ...*, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> M. Milićević, *Kneževina...*, p. 71.

<sup>12</sup> N. Stevanović, *Ratna lukavstva Srpske vojske 1804-1815*, Beograd 2002.

<sup>13</sup> Č. Popov, *Međunarodni položaj, spoljna politika i diplomatija Srbije 1804-1878*, [in:], *Dva veka moderne srpske diplomatije*, Č. Popov, D. Živojinović i S. Marković (ed.) Beograd, 2013, pp. 27-28.

<sup>14</sup> After defeating Austria, Napoleon troops occupied Dalmatia and makes France to appear as a direct participant in events in the region. He offered Serbian insurrections to join Austria in 1809, but he was not for Serbia's independence. Otherwise, a great French military leader had a high opinion of Karađorđe and the Serbs.

independence. The Bucharest peace treaty between Russia and the Ottoman Empire in 1812<sup>15</sup>, is only formalized the will of European great powers that Serbs do not get independence. However, Article 8 of Agreement provides a certain degree of autonomy of Serbs within the Ottoman Empire, which, in addition to technical details, also implied long-term privileges. This primarily referred to the obligations of Istanbul to recognize the Serb-controlled territory as autonomy with the right to elect its own authorities, with unchangeable borders and no right to move the Muslim population there<sup>16</sup>.

After Napoleon was defeated, European diplomatic elites gathered in Vienna, at the end of 1814, to shape relations in Europe after the wars. Serbian deputy Matija Nenadović tried unsuccessfully to meet the Russian and Austrian Emperor in Vienna and drew their attention to the painful state of the Serbs under Ottoman rule<sup>17</sup>. Since the Ottoman representative did not attend the Vienna Congress and that European powers were preoccupied with key European problems, there was no political will to consider the "Serb question". The return of Napoleon from exile and his definitive defeat at Waterloo in 1815, led to the foundation of the "Holy Alliance", which represented the alliance of leading European monarchies in the defense of the status quo and balance of power in Europe<sup>18</sup>.

In April 1815 Miloš Obrenović pronounced the famous sentence at the assembly in Takovo: "Here I am, here you are, let's fight with the Turks". In this way, the Serbian Revolution which began in 1804 was renewed. The rebels had a significant experience in the management, organization of the armed forces and, perhaps most importantly, the knowledge that diplomacy and military power must be combined as means of achievement independence from the Ottoman authorities. In this way, a "Turkish-Serbian dual authority" was established in the Pashaluk of Belgrade.

The Greeks raise an uprising against the Turkish authorities in 1821. In southern Macedonia, the Turks succeed to suppress the uprising in the beginning, but in other parts of the Greek uprising rapidly and efficiently developed into an armed rebellion. The massive violence against the Greeks in Turkey resulted in the support of the liberal world, while dynastic elite condemned the uprising in accordance with the basic principles of the "Holy Alliance". After they realized that Russia would not wage war, Turks withdrew forces from the Danube and launched offensive actions to suppress the Greek insurgency. In the years to come, battles are taking place on the land and islands between the Turkish army and the rebels. Austria supported Istanbul in their stubborn efforts not to allow the great powers to intervene in dispute with its subjects. However, Sultan Muhammad II had to give up, after the allied British-French-Russian fleet action

in the Aegean Sea which almost destroyed the Ottoman Naval Forces in just four hours. The Allies agreed on the borders of Greece, and obligation that Greece paid tribute to Istanbul by signing the Protocol in London on 22 March 1829. After Russia's victory in the war against Turkey, in October of that year, Greece was given full independence and the Otto I from the Bavarian ruling house was placed on the throne<sup>19</sup>.

Istanbul confirms all privileges to Christians in the Ottoman Empire in 1853, under the pressure of Great Britain. A special envoy of the Sultan, Ibrahim Edhem Pasha, come to Belgrade with an official document, which confirms all the privileges given to Serbia, Vlach and Moldova, and that they are considered permanent. This is one of the reasons why Serbia was neutral in the Crimean War, but nevertheless they seriously prepared for the eventual war against Austria<sup>20</sup>. The Crimean War was finished in 1856 by the Paris Peace Treaty, which contains important provisions relating to international position of Serbia.<sup>21</sup>

The use of military force and skillful and persistent diplomacy, founded by Miloš Obrenović, forced the Ottoman authorities to withdraw their military units from the garrisons Belgrade, Šabac, Smederevo and Kladovo in 1867. Although there were different assessments of the combat capability of the Serbian army regarding poor equipment and training, mere fact of existence and its impressive manpower given Serbia the potential to become the leader of the future Balkan Alliance. The Serbia were sign agreements with Montenegro in 1866, the Croatian People's Party and the Bulgarian Committee, Greece in 1867, and the next year with Romania, and creating the First Balkan Alliance<sup>22</sup>. Although parties in this Alliance were parties and vassal governments, it is important to stress the significance of these agreements that represents the beginning of a regional association of Balkan nations<sup>23</sup>.

The Constitution of 1869 provided that every Serb must be engaged in the Army in case of need, except for civil servants and some other professions. Amendments to the Law on the Organization of the Army followed, according to which it was introduced the obligation for compulsory examinations for proving the ability for promotion officers in rank. Total number of standing Army was 5,000 soldiers, of which only 123 were officers<sup>24</sup>. In the following years, Serbia was trying to carry out procurement of weapons

<sup>15</sup> P. Tomac, *Ratovi i armije XIX veka*, Beograd 1968, pp. 155-166.

<sup>20</sup> At the border with the Principality of Serbia, at that time, Austria had 50,000 troops deployed. Serbia activated its military potentials against this imminent threat, which included registration in military records of all men aged 18 to 45 years. It is estimated that Serbia has mobilized between 80,000 and 110,000 soldiers in the national army of that time, Ž. Đorđević, *Srpska narodna vojska 1861-1864*, Beograd, 1984, pp. 14-15.

<sup>21</sup> According to Article 27, Serbia continues to depend on Istanbul, but its protection takes on all the powers that the Treaty. Until then, Russia acted as the only protector of Serbia towards Turkey, referring to bilateral agreements with Istanbul. Paris Peace Treaty is terminated exclusively tutoring Russia over Serbia, whose autonomy gets an international guarantee. An important provision of the peace agreement is that foreign troops, including Turkey, can not enter Serbia or transit through its territory without authorization, M. Kisovec, *Diplomatski predstavnici*, Beograd 1939, pp. 64-65.

<sup>22</sup> R. Ljušić, *Istorija srpske državnosti, Srbija i Crna Gora – novovekovne srpske države*, Knjiga II, Novi Sad 2001, pp. 138-139.

<sup>23</sup> Ж. Ђорђевић, *Српска народна војска...*, pp. 53-56.

<sup>24</sup> At that time, the total number of officers in the Serbian army was 360, which was insufficient for the

<sup>15</sup> Napoleon's military campaign to Russia made strategic conditions that represented an introduction to the collapse of the Serbian rebel army and, thus, the aspiration for independence.

<sup>16</sup> R. Popović, *Ideal nezavisnosti i nužnost autonomije – nastanak srpske novovekovne države 1788/1804 – 1833. godine*, [in:] *Dva veka moderne srpske diplomatije*, eds. Č. Popov, D. Živojinović i S. Marković, Beograd, 2013, pp. 71-87.

<sup>17</sup> Č. Popov, *Međunarodni položaj...*, p. 31.

<sup>18</sup> M. Stojković: *Istorija diplomatije - izbor tekstova*, Beograd 1983, pp. 101-107; V. Blagojević, *Defense Diplomacy - Concept, Legal Basis, Organization*, Germany, 2017, p. 27.

and military equipment and organizational preparations of the Army. It was realized three-month courses for training officers, increased production of weapon in factory in Kragujevac, written regulations for war service, as well as medical, artillery and logistic services, procurement of military equipment and ammunition and fortification of the position on Morava River, especially Aleksinac and Deligrad. In the spring of 1876, War Council was formed with the jurisdiction for planning and coordination of preparation for war. In June of that year, a standing army was disbanded and its units transferred to Militia battalions. Officers from General staff were transfer to other commands. Serbia and Montenegro declared war to Ottoman Empire. Serbia carried out the mobilization of 123,000 soldiers and formed: Moravska, Ibarska, Timočka and Drinska Militia Corps<sup>25</sup>.

Serbia paid a high price for a wrong strategic assessment that the declaration of war on Ottoman Empire be a sign for a general uprising of all Balkan nations<sup>26</sup>. Army was not prepared, and the war was not properly prepared even on a diplomatic level, because the main geopolitical players in the region, Austro-Hungarian and Russia, were against the war. Serbia and Montenegro did not have a joint plan of engagement, they didn't have coordination in the operational level, and the outcome of the war was the defeat. Complete disaster of Christians was prevented by the intervention of Russia and the Austro-Hungarian in the beginning of 1877. Peace treaty was signed according to the *status quo* principle, with mutual amnesty. The Serbian Army was demobilized. The reorganization of the Serbian Army began immediately after that. At the end of the year, the Army was reorganized and the Principality of Serbia declared the war on Ottoman Empire.

This time, Serbia was powerful allayed with Russia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Montenegro. At the beginning of the war Russian Emperor Alexander II advised Serbia to be passive<sup>27</sup>, but after Russian army unsuccessfully tried to conquer Plevna, he suggests Serbs to start offensive operations against Ottoman Army. Serbia was deeply aware that its army is not ready for new war against Ottoman Empire, having a negative experience from the previous war, but also the problems caused by the military uprising in Topola on November 25 to 29 1877. This time Serbian army units were commanded by Serbian officers and they won the war together with they allies. Serbia had the same

number of soldiers. That's why 718 Russian officers are hired, including General Chernyayev, the commanding in chief of the Serbian army.

<sup>25</sup> S. Ratković-Kostić, *Evropeizacija srpske vojske 1878-1903*, Beograd, 2007, pp. 30-32.

<sup>26</sup> Herzegovinian uprising in July 1875 began the so-called Eastern crisis that has spread to parts of Bosnia, Bulgaria and other parts of the Balkan Peninsula. In the following years, the crisis spread to Greece, Serbia, Montenegro and other areas under Turkish rule, V. Stojančević and others: *Istorija srpskog naroda*, Beograd, 1994, p. 369.

<sup>27</sup> Russia declared war on Turkey on 12 April 1877. Although in January in the same year Russia pledged to Austria-Hungary not to expand military operations to Serbia, they intended to transfer their forces through the Serbian territory near Kladovo to the territory of present-day Bulgaria. Similar to the Crimean War, Vienna threatened to occupy Serbia. Since the Russian forces did not enter the Serb territory, this treat was postponed, but not completely eliminated, S. Jovanović, *Vlada Milana Obrenovića*, Knjiga Druga, Beograd, 1934, pp. 129- 158.

goals in the Second war against Ottomans, the liberation of the Serbian people and territorial expansion in the south<sup>28</sup>.

The successfully offensive operations of the Serbian Army in 1877, Russia discredited, in a certain way, by the attempt of creation of the so-called Great Bulgaria according to Treaty of San-Stefano. Thus, the Serbian elite and public opinion was. For a short time, their attitude towards Russia changed from a great ally and protector to a huge disappointment to the Saint Petersburg state policy. Serbia had no understanding for centuries of Russia's efforts to put under control of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, and the concessions that Russia has done to the interests of the Ottoman Empire to preserve territorial connection with Bosnia through the corridor "Priština, Kosovska Mitrovica and Novi Pazar". Using disappointment with Russian pro-Bulgarian politic, Vienna has managed to change Serbia's foreign policy orientation to its favor. Austro-Hungary, Germany, Italy and Great Britain didn't want a large Slave state in the Balkans, nevertheless called Serbia or Bulgaria, because of the fear of Russia's domination in the region. The Congress in Berlin in 1878 was organized, which reviewed the Treaty of San-Stefano in accordance with the common interests of the great powers, with the exception of Russia<sup>29</sup>. Serbia and Montenegro was recognized as independent states and Serbia gained territory of Niš, Pirot, Vranje and Toplica regions.

Serbia has conquered territory in combat operation, but they were able to established their rule in those regions only after signing two international agreements and engagement of key subject of international politics, which is a key directed by Chancellor Bismarck<sup>30</sup>. On the other hand, Serbia had to "swallow a bitter pile" with the agreement of great powers that provide the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina<sup>31</sup>, and a Garrison Novi Pazar. In this way, the Austro-Hungarian Empire tried to prevent the unification of Serbia and Montenegro, but also to direct the territorial expansion of Serbia to the south. That was the "price" that Serbia had to pay for recognition of independence, as well as the promise not to act against the interests of the Habsburg Monarchy in the Balkan<sup>32</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> V. Stojančević, *Istorija srpskog...*, pp. 369-404; S. Ratković-Kostić, *Evropeizacija srpske vojske*, pp. 33-34; V. Potemkin, *Istorija diplomatije, Sveska druga - diplomatija novog doba 1872-1919*, Beograd 1949, pp. 29-32 i 34; Č. Popov, *Međunarodni položaj...*, pp. 50-59; M. Stojković, *Istorija diplomatije - izbor tekstova*, Beograd 1984, pp. 268-313.

<sup>29</sup> Head of the Russian delegation to the Congress of Berlin in a report to the Emperor pointed out that it was the darkest spot in his diplomatic career, to which the Emperor Alexander added, "as well as mine", M. Stojković: *Istorija diplomatije...*, p. 299.

<sup>30</sup> The famous Bismarck during the Berlin Congress openly showed contempt for representatives of Turkey and the Balkan nations. He openly told Turkish diplomatic officials that he was "indifferent to the future of Turkey" and that he waste time in Congress only to prevent the clashes of great powers, and not to decide who would rule the "stinking disturbances" in the Balkans, such as Larissa and other cities.

<sup>31</sup> It is a secret Reichstag Agreement of July 8, 1876, between Russia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which recognized the right of Vienna to occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Agreement remained secret until the beginning of the XX century, V. Čubrilović, *Odabrani istorijski radovi*, Beograd 1983, pp. 237-249.

<sup>32</sup> V. Popović, *Istočno pitanje...*, pp. 187-196; R. Ljušić, *Istorija srpske državnosti...*, pp. 141-151; V. Potemkin, *Istorija diplomatije...*, pp. 42-43; R. Raspopović, *Diplomatija Crne Gore 1711-1918*, Podgo-

Map n. 3: Balkan at the Beginning of XX Century<sup>33</sup>.

Bulgarians overthrew the Turkish governor and appointed Bulgarian Prince Alexander Joseph von Battenberg on 18 September 1885. He immediately proclaimed the unification of Bulgaria with Eastern Rumelia. Serbia reacted for this, obvious violation of the Berlin Treaty, because considered that the balance of power was threatened. Serbia start the war although she was not ready and suffered defeat. The reason for Serbian defeat was, among other things, due to the fact that the war against the Slav nation and recent allies was not popular either in public or among the political elite. The Treaty of Bucharest in 1886 was concluded the peace between the two countries and that only the Bulgarian prince could be a governor of Eastern Rumelia<sup>34</sup>.

The Greek Army occupied Crete, after Greeks from Crete rebelled because of the ending of guaranteed political rights by Ottoman Empire in 1897. European great powers did not approve the occupation, especially Germany. Berlin was planning that the cooperation with Turkey used as an opportunity to project their interests to the Middle East<sup>35</sup>. Therefore, they proclaimed autonomy of Crete under the sovereignty of

rica-Beograd, 1996, pp. 269-286; V. Stojančević, *Istorija srpskog naroda...*, pp. 407-421; V. Čubrilović, *Odabrani istorijski radovi...*, pp. 251-268; V. Blagojević i S. Stojanović, *Zašto rat, a ne međunarodna konferencija 1914. godine? – neuspeh diplomatije i uloga Srbije u događajima koji su prethodili Velikom ratu*, „Vojno delo”, 2015, br. 3, pp. 328-329.

<sup>33</sup> S. Draškić, *Evropa i albansko pitanje 1830-1921*, Beograd, 2000, p. 49.

<sup>34</sup> P. Tomac, *Ratovi i armije...*, pp. 734-741.

<sup>35</sup> Turkish forces have made much progress since 1878, under the influence of the German military mission, which had the mandate to reform the Turkish army.

Turkey. The war was taking place in the hinterland of Thessalonica, because the Greek battle fleet was much more advanced than Turkish. After the Turkish Army defeated the Greeks, the great powers intervened to stop the hostility. Turkey received huge war reparations. But, the great powers, with exception of Germany, forced Turkey to approve the appointment of a son of the Greek King, Prince George for the governor of Crete under the sovereignty of Turkey. In this way Turkey lost the control of Island of Crete.

### Balkan Wars

Attempts to reform the Turkish state institutions in the Balkans have proved to be unsuccessful at the beginning of the XX Century. Already emancipated Balkan nations, Serbs and Greeks, as well as Bulgarians, have fought each other for influence on the territory of today's Macedonia, using the inefficiency of the Turkish Army and Police. A foreign armed intervention on the Turkish Empire's territory made stronger the Young Turk Movement and army officers began to approach them. Young Turks launched an insurgency in Macedonia on July 1908 against the absolutism of the Sultan Hamid II, who was overthrown during next year. Soon it turned out that the Young Turks were imperialist, but also more dangerous for the national interests of the Balkan nations, because they were much more efficient than the old Turkish rule. The Bulgarians end the vassal position towards Turkey in October 1908 and few days later the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina<sup>36</sup>.

All these events contribute that among the Balkan nations was increasing an idea that their interest was not mutual struggle, but the solidarity in campaign against Turkey. Russia actively supported the creation of the Balkan Alliance, after unsuccessful attempts to negotiate with Turkey the issue on Bosphorus and Dardanelles in 1911. The Balkan Alliance was comprised by bilateral agreements that were concluded among: Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro and Greece. Beside the Austro-Hungarian and Russia, Italy also wanted to insure influence on the Balkan. The beginning of XX Century brought an increasing polarization among the great powers in Europe, but also the continuation of the struggle of the Balkan nations to liberate the territory from Turkish rule. The Albanians revolt against Turkish efforts to impose a duty of serving a regular Turkish Army in 1901, not irregular forces (Turkish *Başibozuk*), as it was before<sup>37</sup>.

The First Balkan War started when Montenegro declared the war on Turkey on October 8, 1912. The Serbian Army won two important victories in the battles of Kumanovo and Bitola, and liberated the territory of Macedonia. In less than two months, Turkey lost its territory in almost whole area of the European continent. Cease-fire was established on December 4, 1912, with all opponents with the exception of Greece. But, the war continued after the coup d'état in Istanbul in January 1913 and the Turkey's rejection of the cease-fire agreement. Turkey lost fortresses Jeddena, Janjina and Skadar, as well as the dominance on sea from the Greek Navy. Peace was

<sup>36</sup> V. Popović, *Istočno pitanje...*, pp. 213-224.

<sup>37</sup> Đ. Borozan, *Velika Albanija, poreklo – ideje – praksa*, Beograd, 1995, pp. 39-60.

established with mediation of great powers (Austro-Hungarian, German, French, Great Britain and Italy), with the London Treaty on May 30, 1913. Turkey surrendered all the Balkan territories west of the Enos-Midium line (the Aegean Sea coast - the Black Sea coast) and the islands in the Aegean Sea, including the Crete<sup>38</sup>.

In the Balkan Wars 1912/1913, The Albanians mostly held neutral, expecting the Christian population to carry out their emancipation from the Turks. Such assessments proved to be correct, but Serb, Montenegrin and Greek forces seriously threatened with occupation of all Albanian territories during the war against Turkey. These events resulted with the support of Vienna and other European powers for the creation of an independent Albanian state. It can be said that Albania, among other things, gained independence also thanks to the fear of Dual Monarchy and Italy, from the territorial extensions of Serbia and Montenegro. They treat that as a better position for Russia interests in the Balkan. The result of the First Balkan War was creation of Albania as an independent state, with the support and insistence of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, at the expense of the winning countries Greece, Serbia and Montenegro<sup>39</sup>.

Bulgarian dissatisfaction with the distribution of the conquered territories that was ruled by the Turks for centuries led to the Second Balkan War (June 29 - August 10, 1913). A Bulgarian military unit, on 29 June 1913, by the orders of General Kočev attacked Serbian forces on the River Bregalnica (known as Battle of Bregalnica), and Greek forces in the area of Thessaloniki on 30 June. The Greek Army, under the command of King Constantine, defeated the Bulgarian forces in the Battle of Kilkis-Lahanas where both sides suffered heavy losses.



Map n. 4 Territories that were conquered by allied troops in the 1912 war.

<sup>38</sup> V. Popović, *Istočno pitanje...*, pp. 219-224.

<sup>39</sup> Ibidem, pp. 197-206; S. Draškić, *Evropa i albansko pitanje...*, pp. 85-89; D. Borozan, *Velika Albanija...*, pp. 39-60.

Although the Bulgarian government tried to challenge the war operations against Serbia and Greece, they declared the war on Bulgaria on July 8, 1913. Soon, they were joined by Montenegro and Romania, as well as Turkey with the desire to regain areas that lost during the First Balkan War. Because of the superiority of allies, Bulgaria was defeated and forced to sign the Peace Treaty in Bucharest on 10 August 1913. Bulgaria had to give up from some territories conquered in the First Balkan War. Some territories were granted to Romania, while the disputed regions of Macedonia were divided between Greece and Serbia<sup>40</sup>.

### Ideas on the Creation of the Balkan Federation

The newly established national states in the Balkan, instead of the perspective of democratic multicultural coexistence, have adopted strategies of expanding their own territories. In the political life of the Balkans in the XIX century, the concept of "nation" was seen as an ethnic community that must reassemble in one state. Thus Greece should become "Great Greece", Bulgaria "Great Bulgaria", and Serbia "Great Serbia". Such policy has often resulted in the oppression of national minorities and related to something similar to ethnic cleansing, in a modern vocabulary. Immanent cosmopolitan intellectuals, mostly socialist by political orientations, have raised a voice against that future of the Balkans<sup>41</sup>.

The idea of the Balkan Federation developed during the XIX century within the social democratic movement of the Balkan societies, as an alternative to the national expansion of the newly formed states. The pioneers of this idea were Hristo Botev in Bulgaria and Svetozar Marković in Serbia<sup>42</sup>. "Radical" Balkan intellectuals, committed to the ideals of the French Revolution, established the "Oriental Democratic Federation" in Belgrade in 1865. They proposed and advocated the creation of a federation from the Alps to Cyprus on the basis of political freedom and social equality. One of the first supporters of the Balkan Federation, Svetozar Marković, warned that the Serbian people live together with other Balkan nations, without clearly defined geographical and ethnographic borders, and therefore would have to "take the role of conquerors" towards their neighbors if it seeks to create a large nation state.

At the initiative of Greek intellectuals and a number of Balkan politicians who advocated bourgeois federalism, accepting a mixture of democratic politics and moderate nationalism, established an "Oriental Federation" in Athens in 1884. Contrary to them, Balkan socialist organizations have adopted a consistent federalist orientation and an internationalist perspective. Establishment of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (Macedonian *VMRO*) is also connected with the Balkan Federation. The founders of the VMRO in Thessalonica in 1893 highlighted the goals of the organization, which included the liberation and unification of the Macedonian

<sup>40</sup> P. Tomac, *Ratovi i armije...*, pp. 775-784.

<sup>41</sup> V. Koutalis, *Internationalism as an Alternative Political Strategy in the Modern History of Balkans*, [http://www.okde.org/keimena/vag\\_kout\\_balkan\\_inter\\_0603\\_en.htm](http://www.okde.org/keimena/vag_kout_balkan_inter_0603_en.htm), [access: 28.11. 2017].

<sup>42</sup> V. Stojančević, *Istorija srpskog naroda...*, pp. 320-327.

territories, that means the Aegean, the Pirin and the Vardar Macedonia, which would form an integral part of the future Balkan Federation. Shortly after that was constituted "League for the Balkan Confederation" in France, with the participation of Greek, Bulgarian, Serbian, Romanian and Armenian socialists. They promoted Macedonian autonomy within the Balkan Federation as the only possible solution to dispute among Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria on the Macedonian issue<sup>43</sup>.

A large number of social-democratic, but also peasant parties in the Balkans accept ideas for the creation of the Balkan Federation, which makes this idea massively accepted among the population. National political parties began to unite on a political basis in the regional level. The "Socialist Workers' Federation of Ottoman Workers" was formed by parties from the Thessaloniki district and two Bulgarian parties in Thessaloniki in 1909. This was the first international organization in the territory of Turkish Empire, which remained active until 1913 and the Turkish collapse. The first congress of the Social-Democratic parties of the Balkans was held in Belgrade, at the beginning of 1910, with delegates from: Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, Montenegro, Macedonia and the Slavs from Austrian-Hungarian Empire. The participants agreed that the realization of the common coexistence of various cultures and nations had a premise to elimination the violently outlined boundaries. They defined so-called national question as the democratic right of every nation to achieve its political and national unity. It was considered the only possible solution of national issues of the Balkan nations in a common federal state, because of the highly ethnically and religiously mixed regions of the Balkan Peninsula<sup>44</sup>.

The events that followed, on the one hand, represented the affirmation of unity between the Balkan nations when it comes to the common enemy embodied in old-fashion and feudal Turkey. However, Balkan nations political elites did not resist the temptation to dividing the territories they plan to liberate /conquer/ in the war, in the manner of realpolitik. It was not enough, but they started the Second Balkan War, which jeopardize Bulgaria, as one of the Allied State.

The Balkan Federation Initiative revived once more after the Second World War, when considering the possibility of unifying the people of Yugoslavia with the Bulgarian people. The crisis between the Stalin's Comintern and Yugoslavia broke up this initiative, which was subsequently lost on importance.

### Concluding Remarks

The Balkans was the scene of many wars and violence, both during history and, unfortunately, in modern times. Often, in certain circles in Europe, the term of the Balkans implies political immaturity, "wild" nationalism and politically motivated

violence. The violent breakup of the former Yugoslavia somewhat gives right such a way of thinking, but the question is how the Balkans nations came to this situation to choose the political elite that run them in different extremisms and, ultimately, wars with neighboring nations with whom they share the same territory for centuries. We offer the historical facts and conditions that characterized international relations that led to such a state of the Balkan nations and region as hole.

Those who advocate the theory that politically immature and insufficiently civilized nations live in the Balkans often refer to the assassination of the Crown Prince of Austro-Hungary, Franz Ferdinand, which sparked the First World War and the huge suffering it brought to Europe and the entire World. However, the events that preceded this act indicate that long before that there was a real frustration of the Balkan nations with Turkish rule, on the one hand, and the efforts of the great powers to prevent the emergence of new states in the Balkans at the expense of the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, most of the great powers sought to gain the benefit of their own interests or provide the balance of power in Europe.

During this period, Balkans nations missed a historic opportunity to come into contact with the ideas and practices of modern societies of that time. Instead, they have built their national culture on the basis of Ottoman mixture of despotism, lack of elementary human rights, corruption, low educational standards, and sheer incompetence, which characterized Turkish rule throughout the nineteenth century.

During this period, there are "young" autonomy on territory of the Ottoman Empire, such as Serbia and Greece in the Balkans and Palestine in the Middle East. It is clear that in both regions there are still major problems that are the result of wrong strategic assessments and decisions of the people living there, as well as the actions of the great powers that have often solved the problems by drawing the borders among "new" states were often drawn up with little regards for national, economic, social and cultural realities on the ground. In both cases, the outcome has been political instability and intermittent warfare of both the intra-and interstate kind. One of the examples for that practice we shown on the map "Balkan at the Beginning of XX Century".

On the other hand, the political and intellectual elites of the Balkan nations did not have enough experience and maturity to reach an agreement on a joint act toward Ottoman Empire and great powers. Efforts to create the so-called Balkan Federation failed to gain support in the "young societies" that had been occupied by the Turks for centuries. This is perhaps the biggest shortcoming in the strategic culture of the Balkan nations, which has been held to present days. Namely, even today states in the Balkan region more often cooperate through the structures of the European Union in Brussels than in the capital of the countries in the region. It seems that the doom of the "Balkans as a Strategic Crossroad" is still on power.

<sup>43</sup> Z. Petakov, *Balkanska federacija: istorija jedne ideje*, <http://www.csi-platforma.org/sites/csi-platforma.org/files/tekstovi/Balkanska%20federacija.pdf>, [access: 28.11.2017].

<sup>44</sup> *Savez balkanskih naroda – Balkanska federacija, jedino rješenje protiv ropstva EU?!*, <http://www.novi-svjetski-poredak.com/2015/06/29/savez-balkanskih-naroda-balkanska-federacija-jedino-rjesenje-protiv-ropstva-eu/>, [access: 28.11.2017].

### Balkans and Europe before Assassination in Sarajevo 1914 - The Origin of Balkans as a Strategic Crossroads

**Summary:** This paper deals with key activities and efforts of the Balkan nations from the very beginning of national emancipation, to their mutual relations, as well as the action of the Turkish authorities and the European powers till the assassination in Sarajevo in 1914. The basic hypothesis of the article is that the Balkan nations at the beginning of the XIX century were at a low educational and cultural level due to the long lasting Ottoman rule. During the Balkan nations straggle for independency, the great powers sought to suppress the cooperation among them and artificially maintained Turkish rule. They were often suppressing the efforts of the South Slavs and other Balkan nations to constitute common political and cultural institutions. Strategic decisions made by the Balkan nations at that time were often adopt in the centers of power outside of national institutions. It often happened that they were waging wars for the interests of Great Powers. They did not have the opportunity to decide independently and when they tried to act in accordance with their own goals, their war and political efforts were unsuccessful because of political will of great powers. The aim of this paper is not to excuse the Balkan nations for their strategic decisions that gave them the current image in international relations, but to analyze the key strategic scenarios for the conditions that have determined the character of the „young nations” in the Balkans during XIX and the beginning of XX century.

**Key words:** nation building, war, international relations, long-term national interests, strategy

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