

## GEOPOLITICAL ASPECTS OF ALLIANCE POLITICS OF POWERS IN THE BALKANS 1878-1913 <sup>1</sup>

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This study analyzes the diplomatic affairs on the Balkan Peninsula from geopolitical aspects between 1878-1913 focusing on their strategic and economic importance. Within this 35 years alliances changed many times and this instability is worth further examination. Applying Mackinder's and Spykman's theory to a smaller territory,<sup>2</sup> the two representatives of the Heartland, Russia and Austria-Hungary were competing with each other and later with the small states either to secure their predominance or to secure their economic interests and to reach the Rimland. Both Powers tried to create barriers to the opponents and buffers zones for themselves for safety reasons. From this aspect the Balkan peninsula can be regarded as a collision/buffer zone between Heartland and Rimland. Sometimes the aspirations of small states coincided with the pretensions of Powers, these resulted short-term cooperations, but this multi-player situation ended in creating almost every possible combinations (see **FIG. 6**) and unstable relations. The pretensions of small states were also overlapping, they had their own geopolitical goals, and this did not promote the stabilization of situation. This overlap of zones can be derived from the competition over key points of the peninsula. Among the major hot-spots was the line between the Otranto Strait (Vlora), Saloniki and the Dardanelles, corresponding to the old Via Egnatia (**FIG. 1**).<sup>3</sup> (Other areas, like Dobruja were of local importance lacking the pretensions of any Power). The states of the Rimland: England, Italy, Greece and Turkey holding these positions tried to hinder the two powers of the Heartland from changing irreversibly the current situation, that enabled them to control the main trading routes of the Mediterranean. Not to mention the rivalry among these states, the interference of Rimland Powers into affairs on the Balkans also complicated the situation. Buffer states of the Balkans had many geopolitical advantages and disadvantages that either

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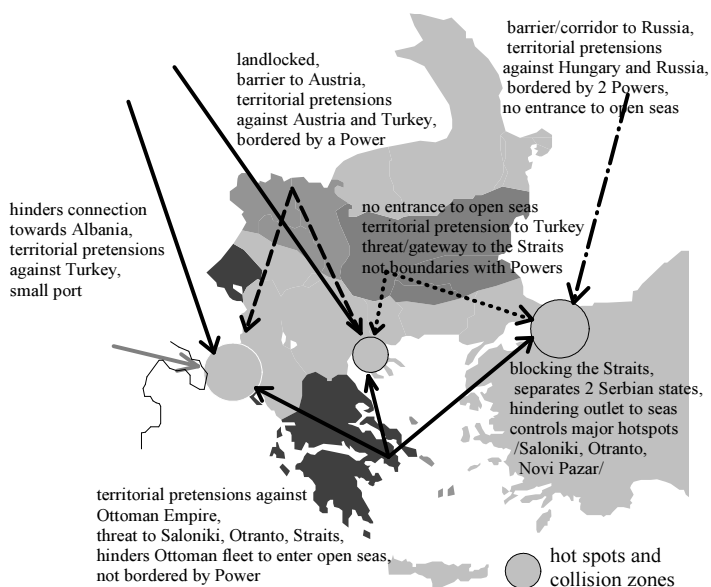
<sup>1</sup> This study is supported by the János Bolyai Research Fund of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

<sup>2</sup> Mackinder, H.J. "The geographical pivot of history". *The Geographical Journal*, 1904, 23, pp. 421–37. Available online as Mackinder, H.J. "The Geographical Pivot of History", in [Democratic Ideals and Reality](#), Washington, DC: National Defence University Press, 1996, pp. 175–194. Spykman, N.: *The Geography of the Peace*, New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company (1944), Spykman, N.: Geography and Foreign Policy, I, *The American Political Science Review* 1938, issue 1

<sup>3</sup> Controlling Via Egnatia was another reason for Greek aspirations beyond the orthodox religion of inhabitant in Southern Albania, Ohrid, Bitola.

could promote or hinder the presence of Powers on the peninsula. These features are enumerated on **FIG. 1**.

The pretensions of Powers can be marked with and limited by the geographical conditions, i.e. main natural routes of trade and transport. For example Austria-Hungary had 2 'natural' ways to reach the Rimland. One along the seashore through the Strait of Otranto,<sup>4</sup> and the other along the Morava-Vardar rivers to Saloniki. The first version needed the creation of Albania (from 1913), the second needed balanced and harmonised relations with Serbia (1878-1903). Two artificial routes were added to these owing to the changes of diplomatic situation, but these often included geographical barriers: one was the stripe of Novi Pazar up to 1908,<sup>5</sup> the other was through a Romanian-Bulgarian alliance to Kavala (1913).<sup>6</sup> By the time the railway in the Vardar had been constructed, Austria lost the benevolence of Serbia, and Novi Pazar was given back to Turkey in order to promote the realization of the seashore project. The fourth version was hindered by the Bulgarian-Romanian dispute over territorial compensations in 1913.



<sup>4</sup> *ÖHHSIA* PA I. Kt. 493. Balkankonflagration, Liasse XLV/4. Nr. 14. fol. 152-163. Politische und wirtschaftliche Erwägungen zur Balkankrise. A Handelspolitisches Aktionsprogram; and *ÖHHSIA* PA I. 493. Balkankonflagration, Liasse XLV/4. fol. 182-188. Übersicht der bei den Verhandlungen mit Serbien und Montenegro vom Standpunkte der politischen und wirtschaftlichen Interessen.

<sup>5</sup> For the Novi Pazar project see: *May, A. J.*: The Novibazar Railway Project. *Journal of Modern History*. Vol 10. No. 4. 1938. dec. pp. 496-527.

<sup>6</sup> See the plan of Teodor Teodorov, Minister of Finance, preparing Bulgaria for a war to acquire an outlet to the Aegean Sea in 1911-1912: *Hermenegild, W.*, With the victorious Bulgarians. London, Constable, 1913. pp. 25-26. and 95-96.

**Fig. 1.** Major collision zones and hot-spots. Only those zones are marked where the interests of Heartland and Rimland Powers and local states collided. The Balkan between River Danube and Via Egnatia is considered a multi-player buffer zone between maritime and landlocked Powers. Geopolitical advantages and disadvantages are also shown for each buffer state.

Nevertheless this geopolitical concept, including the '*Drang nach Salonika*' or the '*Drang nach warmen Meeren*' has been contested by many authors, their main argument was that Heartland Powers lacked efficient capital to benefit from such outcomes of the events. But political geographers of *that era* prior to World War I advertised the idea of expansion reasoned by economic needs of the future.<sup>7</sup> Another argument against expansion fuelled by economic needs was that many ideas of different cliques were competing each other, and the realization of these plans in foreign policy was influenced by the position fight in internal policy.<sup>8</sup> Due to this rivalry the consequent realisation of foreign political ideas were often hindered, making foreign policy sometimes unpredictable for contemplators. This enhanced distrust. Beside economic reasons two more theories can be mentioned: the need for legitimation of diplomats could force a Power with many internal problems to externalize them. This may enhance cohesion, but can ruin as well (i.e. in a war). The second reason is the mutual threat or mutual distrust, that encouraged both Russia and Austria-Hungary to response with a counterstep to every step of the other Power.<sup>9</sup> The main routes, railroads created up to 1913 mirror the geopolitical concept of the powers and not of the small states'. Putting the two maps next to each other clearly reveals the similarities. Therefore we appreciate the views of those, who consider economic factors as main driving forces of the competition over the Balkan Peninsula.<sup>10</sup>

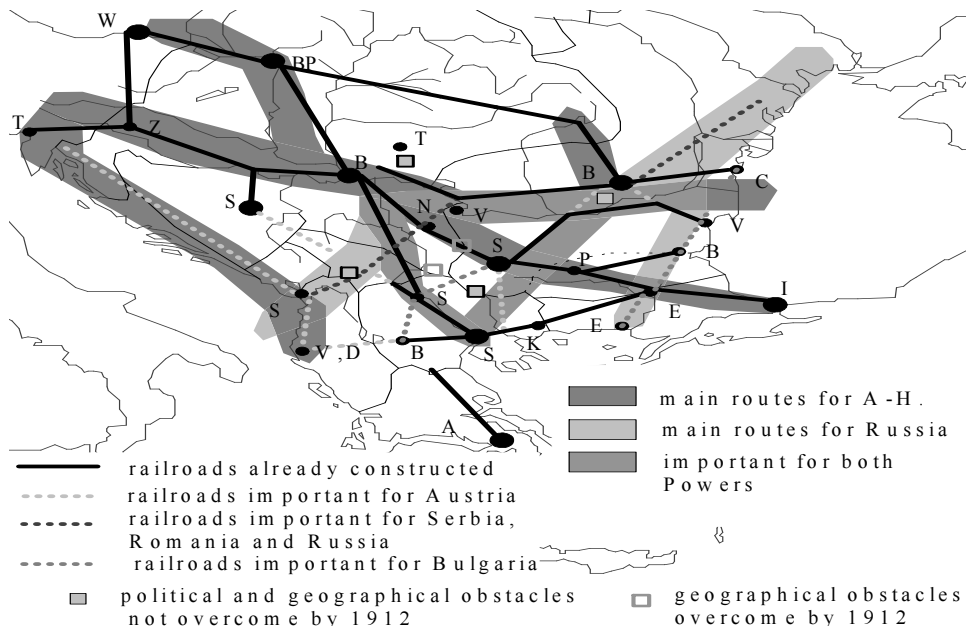
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<sup>7</sup> See the Mitteleuropa Plan of Naumann, Fr.: Mitteleuropa. Georg Reimer Verlag, 1915.

<sup>8</sup> See: Demeter, G.: The Balkan policy of Baron István Burián and Count István Tisza during the Balkan Wars (1912-1913): interests and concepts of a Hungarian political pressure group. (lecture given at the conference organised by IRCICA in Istanbul, 2012, in press).

<sup>9</sup> This concept appears in Demeter G.: The aspirations of Small States and the interests of Powers during the Balkan Wars 1912-1913. Budapest, Hungarovox, 2007. (in Hungarian)

<sup>10</sup> *Löding, D.*: Deutschlands und Österreich-Ungarns Balkanpolitik von 1912-14. unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Ihrer Wirtschaftinteresse. Hamburg, 1969. (Phil. Diss.)



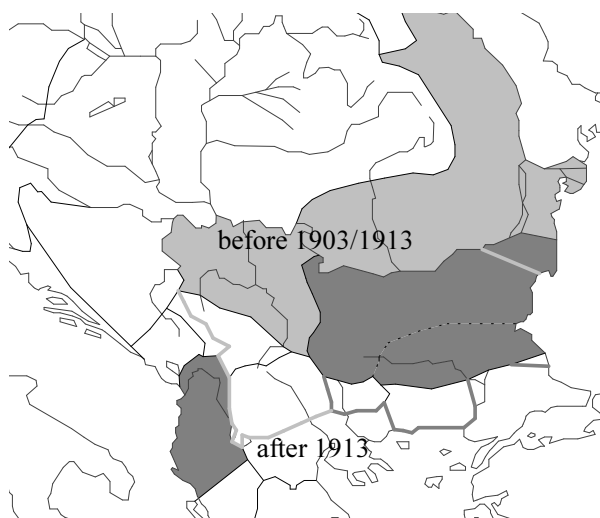
**Fig. 2.** Existing and planned (dots) main transportation lines (rivers, railroads). The penetration of the two Heartland Powers had many natural ways combined with railways resulting an overlapping comb-shaped zone of interference with capital cities in major nodes. The existence of the intersections and routes important for both Powers also explain the oscillating foreign policy of small states.

From the point of view of Austria-Hungary these 35 years ended with failure. While between 1878-1903 Austria-Hungary was surrounded by friendly buffer states along its southern border, that also acted as a barrier for the Russian influence over the peninsula blocking the way to the Straits, by 1913, this buffer zone drifted southwards creating an uncontinuous zone interrupted by the Serb advance towards Macedonia (**FIG 3**). Nevertheless, Serbia could be checked by the recently created Albania by hindering its outlet to the sea, and Bulgaria was able to counterweight both Serbia and Romania. After 1913 a smaller Bulgaria with dreams unrealised, which made her hostile towards a Serb-Russian cooperation, was much more useful for Austria, than a strong Greater Bulgaria, that does not need Austrian help and can turn towards Russia whenever it wants to.<sup>11</sup> But the situation was somewhat different. First, the Greek-Serbian cooperation was a serious blow to the interests of the Dual State, as it created a leakage in the buffer zone

<sup>11</sup> *Österreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik*. Eds.: *Bittner-Srbik-Pribram-Übersberger*, Wien, 1930. *Ö-U.A.* VI. Nr. 7133. See also See: *Löding, D.: Deutschlands und Österreich-Ungarns Balkanpolitik ...* p. 83.

See: *Löding, D.: Deutschlands und Österreich-Ungarns Balkanpolitik von 1912-14 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Ihrer Wirtschaftsinteresse*. Hamburg, 1969. Phil. Diss. p. 83.

(through the Serb-Greek agreement on the free usage of Saloniki). No wonder, that Germany wanted to convince Greece so much to join the Triple Alliance, since its geopolitical significance increased after 1913. Secondly, although the buffer zone was still able to hinder Russian penetration deep into the peninsula towards the Straits, but was unable to secure the borders of Austria-Hungary any more: using Serbia and Romania, the former Austrian allies, Russia could also check the Austro-Hungarian activity in the peninsula whenever it wanted. On the following pages the short history of these alliance combinations resulting the above mentioned situation are analyzed focusing on geopolitical and economic considerations.



**Fig. 3.** The worsening of the geopolitical situation of Austria-Hungary: friendly buffer zone located along its border drifted southwards, neighboring countries became hostile and under Russian influence by 1913.

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The Treaty of Berlin in 1878 implicitly divided the Balkans into spheres of influence between Austria-Hungary and Russia, both representing the Heartland, while the Rimland (England and France) was compensated in the Mediterranean (Cyprus). As Russia was unable to defend Serbia from the defeat of 1876-1877 (due to the hesitation of Austrian diplomacy), Bulgaria began to substitute Serbia as Russia's ally, while Serbia, that reached its territorial aggrandisement with the aid of Count Andrassy in Berlin (Niš, Pirot) was attached politically and economically to the sphere of interest of Austria. Serbia had to construct railways serving Austrian interests at her own costs (the state was resourceless, therefore needed loans, and became indebted, later economically totally subjected to the Austrian trade policy). By 1881 Austria promised not to oppose the aggrandisement of Serbia towards the Vardar valley, to compensate the state loosing its economic

independence (and this movement towards the Vardar could also serve Austrian economic interests).<sup>12</sup> Romania, that was promoting Russian interests when it declared war on the Ottoman Empire remained unsatisfied with its territorial enlargement, and turned towards Austria, thus blocking Russia's way to Bulgaria and to the Straits. In this respect Romania had a crucial role prior to 1914. 1878 was a decisive geopolitical victory of Austria-Hungary especially compared to 1856. (The deepest point was the unification of the Romanian principalities and the coronation of Cuza in 1866 in the year of the Austrian defeat at Sadowa-Königgratz. Therefore it is worth mentioning that European power policy always influenced the situation in the Balkans).



**Fig. 4.** Negotiation between Andrassy and Ignatiev on the borders of Bulgaria. Bulgaria had to resign from the Vardar valley.

Small states along the southern borders of Austria-Hungary became friendly buffer states, compared to the previous years when they were under Russian influence. Andrassy even hoped for acquiring Macedonia (see **FIG.**

<sup>12</sup> See: *Palotás E.*: Az Osztrák-Magyar Monarchia balkáni politikája a berlini kongresszus után 1878-1881. (The Balkan Policy of Austria-Hungary after the Congress of Berlin), Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1982. and *Palotás, E.*: A Balkán-kérdés az osztrák-magyar és az orosz diplomáciában a XIX. század végén (1895-1897). (The Balkan Question in the Austro-Hungarian and Russian diplomacy 1895-1897). Bp., Akadémiai Kiadó, 1972. *Wertheimer E.*: Békekongresszusok és békeszerződések a XIX. és XX. században. (Peace Congresses and Peace Treaties in the 19-20th c.) Bp. Athenaeum, 1918.

4.). His political goals became the etalon of Austrian policy for 30 years, up to 1908/1912. Andrassy's main goal was to avoid the creation of a Greater Slavic State (whether it be Serbia or Bulgaria) as these may easily turn towards Russia, while blocking the way of the economic outlet to the sea.<sup>13</sup> Enhancing rivalry between Serbia and Bulgaria over Macedonia seemed to be a good instrument (it re-appeared in 1913). Contrary to Kállay, who was originally sent to Belgrade (prior to 1876) to give Bosnia to Serbia, Andrassy was on the opinion, that the incompetence of Turks and the agitation of Russians against Turkey made it necessary to occupy Bosnia.<sup>14</sup> But it was not the original goal, therefore he hesitated. Maintaining Turkey, thus status quo was another priority.<sup>15</sup> The second goal – keeping Serbia off the Adriatic – came from the first – avoiding the aggrandisement of Serbia. A Serbian outlet to the sea was hindered not because it would have created an economically viable state, but rather because it could have hindered not only the direct outlet to Saloniki via Macedonia, but it could have also destroyed the Austrian outlet to the Strait of Otranto through the Albanian seashore. Andrassy urged for an alliance with England, but what was evident in 1878, occurred never more.

The situation on the Balkans remained fragile and alliances unstable (**FIG. 6**) contrary to Austrian hopes. First the pendulum swing to favour Austria when Russian-Bulgarian tensions started to grow. After the unification of the 2 Bulgarian principalities (1885), Russians committed serious diplomatic mistakes, that pushed the small states into the hands of Austria. Serbia, being a natural ally of Austria that time was saved from humiliation in the Serbo-Bulgarian war of 1885 by Austrian intervention, therefore its relations with the Dual State were tighter than ever. Russian policy of revenge against Bulgaria after the invitation of Ferdinand to the Bulgarian throne and the rise of Stambolov, who pursued a peaceful and moderate policy towards the Ottoman Empire created a barrier for Russian aspirations and divided the peninsula into 2 parts along the Budapest-Belgrade-Sofia-Istanbul axis (**FIG 2**). This time Romania was also attached to this conglomerate through the Triple Alliance. Nevertheless, this cooperation was not a stable alliance system, as it was composed of separate agreements, lacking strong connection between member states, which were

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<sup>13</sup> *Diószegi, I.*: Ausztria-Magyarország és Bulgária a San Stefanó-i béke után (1878-1879). (Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria after the Peace Treaty of San Stefano, 1878-79) *Értekezések a történelmi tudományok köréből. Új sorozat.* 23. Bp., Akadémiai Kiadó, 1961.

<sup>14</sup> In that case Bulgaria could have acquired Macedonia. But, as Austria-Hungary occupied Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia was recompensated by Niš.

<sup>15</sup> *Diószegi, I.*: Ausztria-Magyarország és Bulgária a San Stefanó-i béke után (1878-1879). and *Diószegi, I.*: *Klasszikus diplomácia, modern hatalmi politika.* (Classical diplomacy, modern Power policy) Bp. Gondolat, 1967.

were linked to Austria, serving Austrian interests based on separate bilateral agreements. The relation between Serbia and Bulgaria or between Serbia and Turkey was not the best, therefore this cooperation remained unstable, lacking real cohesive force in the long run. The assassination of the Russian Tsar, Alexander, then the visit of Emperor Wilhelm in the Ottoman Empire, marked a high-tide in the influence of the Triple Alliance and a retreat of Russia. The idea of the Bagdadbahn was based on these circumstances. In 1889 even the Italian Prime Minister recognised the favourable situation of the Triplice: Crispi advised Kálnoky to promote a Romanian-Serbian-Bulgarian military alliance against Russia, but this was refused, as Austria wanted to maintain the status quo, and divert Russia from the peninsula, not to strengthen small states.

After the fall of Stambolov, Bulgarian political elite was ready to appease with Russia. Although the Goluchowski-Muraviev pact brought relief in the Austrian-Russian diplomatic relations, that deteriorated after 1878 and 1885, the year 1897 also created unrest due to the question of Crete and the Greek-Turkish war. The small states also wanted to benefit from the weakening of Turkey using Russian support, therefore an agreement between Serbia and Bulgaria, and between Bulgaria and Greece was articulated. This alliance plan was partly directed to block Austrian influence in the peninsula partly to exert pressure on Turkey, partly to improve their positions in Macedonia. But the intervention of these states was hindered, because Russia did not support an armed conflict, and because Turkey was able to give compensations in return of their neutrality. Serbia's links with Austria were still strong, and for the latter the status quo and the maintenance of Turkey was of vital importance. Serbia was also worrying, as in a war against Turkey, Austria-Hungary might have occupied Macedonia (through the Sanjak of Novi Pazar), and thus Serbia would have been surrounded completely. Bulgaria did not want a war with Austria-Hungary, therefore the alliance of 1897 collapsed easily – Greece lost the war alone.

The fears of Serbia were not without any reason: the so-called Hohenlohe (German chancellor) plan on the dismemberment of Turkey (1895) also contained the possible Austrian incorporation of Macedonia. The secret plan of Calice (ambassador in Istanbul) from 1896 was more sophisticated:<sup>16</sup> it created an Austrian zone of influence from Macedonia, Albania and Serbia, while Bulgaria together with Thrace was considered

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<sup>16</sup> *Palotás, E.*: A Balkán-kérdés az osztrák-magyar és az orosz diplomáciában a XIX. század végén (1895-1897). Bp. Akadémiai Kiadó, 1972. See also: *Walters, E.*: Unpublished documents. Austrian – Russian Relations under Goluchowski 1895-1906. I. The Slavonic and East European Review. (SEER). Vol. 31. No. 76. 1952. Dec. pp. 212-232. and *Walters, E.*: Unpublished documents. Austrian – Russian Relations under Goluchowski 1895-1906. II. The Slavonic and East European Review. Vol. 31. No. 77. pp. 503-528.



Russian. This plan on the encirclement of Serbia by an united Albanian-Macedonian buffer state, securing economic outlet to Saloniki and to Otranto for the Dual State was repeated by Beck, chief-of-staff, in 1897.<sup>17</sup> But the cautiousness of Austrian decision-makers hindered the realisation of the plan (**FIG 5.**). Not to mention the disapproval of Goluchowski, who, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, supported the creation of a Greater Bulgaria, unifying Sofia with Central-Macedonia.<sup>18</sup> This means that the „Drang nach Salonika” was a possibility (a desirable one), but not a necessary for Austria-Hungary, as it was rumoured by the entente parallel with the German „Drang nach Osten”. While Aehrenthal (Foreign Minister from 1906) wanted to reach the Aegean Sea, his predecessor, Goluchowski rather focused on creating a viable Albania (which came up once again after the death Aehrenthal in 1911).<sup>19</sup> The economic goals of Austria-Hungary could have been realized by a Greater Serbia acquiring Macedonia (but not Bosnia) within Austrian alliance (this was a forlorn hope); a way along the Adriatic could have been secured by the creation of Albania (see 1912), or through a Romanian-Bulgarian alliance after a Bulgarian victory over Turkey. In that case, as the Bulgarian Minister, Teodor Teodorov pointed out later on the eve of the Balkan War (in 1911), a railway connection between Romania and Bulgaria through the Danube to the port of Kavala would secure Austrian interests as well Bulgarian goals (see **FIG 2**).

Austria-Hungary was still able to keep its buffer states along the southern border, but after the customs war with Romania in the 1890's, the Dual State lost its direct contact and peaceful conditions with the neighboring state, although the remained allies within the frame of the Triplice. Conservative Romanian politicians remained loyal to Austria-Hungary due to the fears of Russia – when liberals came into power the situation has changed. The marriage between Elena of Montenegro and Victor Emmanuel heir apparent (later III) in 1896 brought closer Italy (Rimland) to the Balkan peninsula (**FIG 3**).

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<sup>17</sup> Demeter G.: A Balkán felosztására vonatkozó elképzelések a XIX. század második felétől 1913-ig. (Ideas of dismembering the Balkans from the middle of the 19th century to 1913) 111-144. pp. In: *Árvay V. - Bodnár E. - Demeter G.* (szerk.): A Balkán és a keleti kérdés a nagyhatalmi politikában. Bp., Hungarovox, 2005. pp. 111-144.

<sup>18</sup> Southern Macedonia with Salonika was promised to Greece, Southern Dobruja to Romania, Kosovo, the Sanjak of Novi Pazar and Skopje to Serbia, Skutari to Montenegro. It was very similar to the situation created by the events of 1911-1913.

<sup>19</sup> Bécs; Nr 132. Document cited by *Walters, E.*: Unpublished documents. Austrian – Russian Relations under Goluchowski 1895-1906. III. The Slavonic and East European Review. 1953. dec. vol 32. No. 78. pp. 188. és 208-211. Original: *W.S.A. Geheim XXXII. /481.*(f) 02.03.1899.



Fig. 5. The dismemberment of the Balkans according to Calice, 1896 (see text).

One year later in 1898 the Serbian-Bulgarian debate over Macedonia resulted an alienation between the two states. The plans of the Njegoš-dynasty to acquire the throne of Serbia backed by Russia caused an upsurge against Montenegro in Serbia. Serbia - being isolated - tried to improve its relation with the Ottoman Empire. By the end of the year the Russian influence over the peninsula gained space: Romania became disappointed from the policy of Austria-Hungary (such as Serbia, but the Obrenović-dynasty insisted on this asymmetric alliance as to maintain its power) (**FIG 6**). Bulgaria was an ally of Greece between 1895-1901, and the Montenegrin-Bulgarian alliance of 1898 created an anti-Serb League.

Russia tried to gain more space, therefore a military convention was signed between Bulgaria and Russia in 1902. Bulgaria wanted to secure its back from a Romanian attack in case of an eventual war with Turkey, while Russia wanted an ally that could check Romania and support Russia in case of a war with Austria. Romania had territorial aspirations towards Bessarabia, and remained officially the ally of the Triple Alliance. The power of the Triple alliance has overwhelmingly increased once again by 1901: the so-called 'Abbasian Entente' unified Greece, Romania (led by conservatives of Sturdza, while the liberals of Bratianu were against Austria-Hungary) and Turkey in an alliance with Austria-Hungary. That was the second peak of Austrian influence. Serbia remained more or less neutral up to 1903, Russia could only count on Bulgaria on the peninsula.

But soon the year 1903 brought significant changes. The removal of the Obrenović-dynasty resulted an anti-Austrian turn in Serbia bringing soon the radicals of Pašić into power, while the Ilinden revolt in Macedonia

devaluated the alliance with Turkey. Although Austria never more got so close to Ottoman Empire as earlier, since it did not want to tie her hands to an agonising state, the Mürzsteg convention together with Russia meant a consolidation between the two powers and a forceless reform movement in Turkey. Serbia soon (in 1904) signed a treaty with Bulgaria which repeated the clauses of the treaty of 1897. The treaty was against the Ottoman rule in Macedonia – it was mainly the interest of Bulgaria, Serbia thought it was better to take part in the dismemberment of Macedonia, than to skip – and proposed a customs union among the 2 states. Serbian dreams regarding Bosnia also witnessed a revival. This political and economic turn of Serbia alerted Austria-Hungary. Since Russia engaged war with the Japanese in the Far East and was seriously defeated in 1904-1905, and therefore small states could not be counted on Russian influence, Austria-Hungary managed to crush the Serbian-Bulgarian customs union, by threatening the Serbs by excluding Serbian livestock from the Austrian markets. By 1905 not only the Abbazian entente, but the Russian-Bulgarian-Serbian triangle was annihilated. But Serbia never returned to follow the political and economic interests of Austria-Hungary. One of the buffer states changed side.

Another alerting event was the intervention of Powers in Macedonia. Due to the growing rivalry among Russia and Austria-Hungary and the incompetence of Turkey to tackle the Macedonian question all the Powers became involved in the reform movement. Nevertheless, this excited Austrian diplomatists, not because they did not wish to solve the humanitarian problem in Macedonia, but because they considered the Balkans as their own sphere of influence. For one thing Austria-Hungary greeted the escalation of intervention: England was also among the intervening Powers, and since the era of Andrassy all politicians thought, that those Austrian measures that were carried out by the approval of England could not be challenged by any of the Powers (including Russia). An Austro-Hungarian – English cooperation should be enough to deter Russia from active policy.

But two reasons forced Austria-Hungary to change its relatively peaceful policy. First, the behaviour of Serbia and Romania became more and more hostile towards Austria. None of the Powers could let hostile buffer states along its border, it is a geopolitical nonsense. Up to 1903 the southern borders of Austria-Hungary were protected by friendly states. By 1913 this buffer zone drifted southwards, composing of Bulgaria and the recently created Albania. This Albanian-Bulgarian-Turkish block became isolated: the Romanian-Serbian-Greek block cut it through by reaching the sea. Nevertheless, this was still able to hinder Russian penetration deep into the peninsula towards the Straits, but Russia could also check Austro-Hungarian activity in the peninsula. This situation was even worse, than the proposal of

Beck regarding the E-W division of the peninsula, and was even worse than Goluchowski ever imagined, when he wanted to give Skopje to Serbia.

Realizing the geopolitical threat, Austria wanted to turn back time, and blackmailed Serbia, that Austria would not import Serbian products unless Serbia returned to the old fashion. This was the beginning of the so-called 'pig war' in 1906. 80% of the Serbian exports were consumed in Austria-Hungary, therefore a boycott could have been a serious blow on Serbian incomes. But Serbia was able to find new economic partners – even the Germans raised their consumption of Serbian products – and French, Belgians also appeared in the markets of the Balkan peninsula. The Austrian concept failed: Serbia became independent not only politically, but economically as well, and the Austrian step attracted new Powers into the Peninsula, which was a nightmare came true.

The second reason was the failure of the international gendarmerie to maintain peace in and reorganise Christian provinces. The Young Turk revolution alerted Austria-Hungary: frustrated by the violation of its economic interest, it tried to settle the question and enhance its economic and geopolitical positions through the construction of railway lines. Since the inner political turn in Serbia, Austria had no hope for using the Belgrade-Saloniki line, and had to come up with another plan. This second plan proposed a railway line along the Sanjak of Novi Pazar, and the construction of this railroad necessitated the annexation of Bosnia. The railway projects were not welcomed either by Powers or Balkan states. Not only Russia, but Italy also opposed Austria-Hungary in this question, as the railway constructions offered Austria a way to by-pass the Otranto Strait. Since the Sanjak of Novi Pazar or Kosovo had a crucial location, where Serbian (Russian) and Austrian interests collided, Austria initiated a third plan: a railway parallel to the seashore, from Dalmatia to Albania. But this needed an agreement between Austria-Hungary and Italy, and the creation of Albania. Beyond counterbalancing the loss of Serbia, this was the main reason of creating the Albanian nation by Austrian support. Another attempt to create a Bosnian nation over religious differences – to hinder the unification of the Serbian provinces – ended in a failure, while the creation of Albania was successful. Without going deeper into the question, why the result was different, when the circumstances were nearly the same (one language, 3 different religions), I would emphasize the fact, that in case of Bosnia entities outside the province borders with well-developed historical traditions and statehood also existed, and could exert influence on the entities of Bosnia. In the case of Albanian provinces no such circumstances existed.

The Austrian railway projects initiated a counterplan:<sup>20</sup> the Danube-Adriatic railroad through Romania and Serbia would improve the positions of Russia and Serbia, offering an economic outlet to the sea. Italy accepted this plan, because it feared of the economic dominance of Austria, worsening Italy's positions. This concept would mutilate Albania and created a collision zone in Novi Pazar or in Kosovo, where the proposed tracks were crossing each other. Austria-Hungary recognised, that either the Sanjak-railway project, or the seashore project was to be realized, a safe hinterland is needed, that was *de iure* the part of Austria-Hungary, not only a *de facto* property. This brought up the idea of the annexation of Bosnia (and later the compensation of Italy by Tripoli). The activity of the Young Turks urged Austria-Hungary to step forth as it feared of the strengthening of the Ottoman Empire. Therefore a rapprochement between Bulgaria and Hungary began, as both states wanted to benefit from the internal changes of the Empire. Austria needed somebody to cover its back against Serbia supported by Russia, Bulgaria needed a Power that immediately recognised its declaration of independence. Refraining from the Sanjak of Novi Pazar was then not surprising, first, as it could separate Montenegro and Serbia in the future even if given back to Turkey, secondly, the seashore railway project made its possession unnecessary. Serbia and Russia on the one side, Austria and Bulgaria on the other – this could have been a stalemate, but the activities of Turkey and Italy made the situation more crucial. Iswolsky being disillusioned by the behavior of Austria-Hungary, that refrained from supporting Russia in the Straits Question, from that moment tried to create an anti-Austrian alliance on the Balkans.

The calamities around 1906-1909 resulted the following. A Serbian-Turkish and Serbian-Russian block was formed (while the relations between Turkey and Russia remained cold), supported by Italy. Romania was hesitating, for a short period Bulgaria supported Austria-Hungary against Turkey, but when Austria refused to promise Macedonian territories, Bulgaria was easily alienated and in 1910 turned again to Russia and negotiations were initiated regarding the renewal of the military alliance against Romania. Russia counted on Bulgarian support if Russia was attacked by either Austria or Romania, but Bulgaria could not count on Russian support in case of a war against Turkey, only if two opponents declared war against Bulgaria. While these fruitless negotiations were going on, Romania drifted towards Turkey encouraged by Austria-Hungary. The Bulgarian-Russian negotiation created once again an appeasement between Austria and Romania.

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<sup>20</sup> See: *Carlgren, W. M.*: Iswolsky und Aehrenthal vor der bosnischen Annexionskrise. Uppsala, Almquist & Wiksells B. 1955.

Finally a Balkan League composed of bilateral agreements between Serbia and Bulgaria, Greece and Bulgaria, Montenegro and Bulgaria was created in 1912. For Russia it was an instrument to halt Austrian penetration into the peninsula, for Serbia it provided security in case of an Austrian attack through the Bulgarian military obligations, for Bulgaria it was an instrument, that finally recognised its demands on Macedonia and supported the war against Turkey. Italy attacked Tripoli in 1911, Austria had to remain silent to compensate his ally after the annexation crisis. Small states grabbed the opportunity and attacked Turkey (They've been preparing for this for years by increasing budget, initiating military reforms, acquiring foreign loans, etc.). The security, that Austria enjoyed after 1878 has slowly vanished by 1908. Either a new policy on the Balkans had to be formulated – abandoning the principles of Andrassy and formally accepting the principle of nationality –, or new methods had to be chosen to secure Andrassy's goals after the defeat of Turkey. And this was the dilemma for the diplomats in 1912 too. At first Austria-Hungary was expecting the victory of Ottoman weapons, not only because the Hungarian public opinion influenced by the press was pro-Turkish (or anti-Russian), but also because an Ottoman victory would have been more convenient – in this case the policy of Austria-Hungary shouldn't have been modified. (Of course, this status quo also implied, that in case of defeat, Balkan states are not allowed to be mutilated or humiliated by Turkey).

This concept was far away from the policy of desinteressement, urged by western powers in favour of Russia. Austria-Hungary was indeed interested in the outcome of events. Turkey was such a stable point in the Austrian diplomacy, that even the plans of Tsar Ferdinand on creating a viable Albania to keep Serbia off the Adriatic were rejected several times prior to 1913 (see the negotiations after the Bulgarian declaration of independence 1909),<sup>21</sup> although later the creation of an independent Albanian state became inevitable to secure the interest of the Dual State. Bulgaria in turn wanted to get Macedonia, and was searching for allies against Turkey at that time. But Turkey (better to say: peace) was so important to the dual state, that it did not accept the plan, however, this meant a Bulgarian-Serbia rapprochement – which Austria-Hungary wanted to avoid.

After the Turkish defeat in the first Balkan War the creation of an independent Albanian state became crucial – and this geopolitical demand of Austria-Hungary (keeping off Serbia from the Adriatic, securing the seashore) could be veiled easily with the term „the Balkans to the Balkan people” (principle of nationality). Being unable to hold back or influence either Bulgaria or Serbia, Austria-Hungary wanted to benefit from the idea of

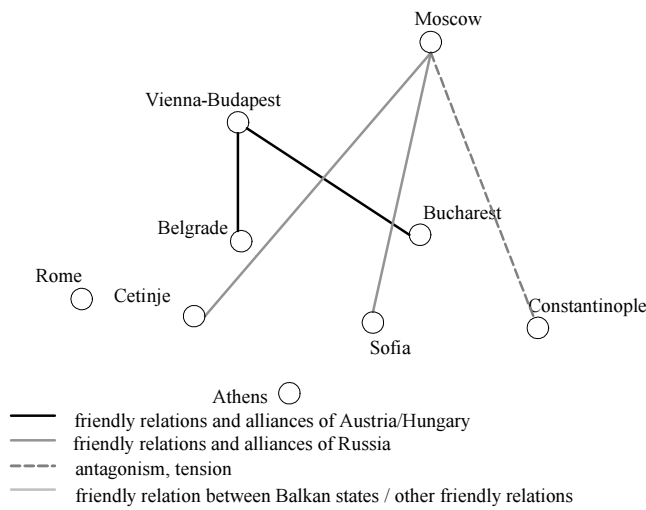
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<sup>21</sup> Österreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik. Bd. I. Nr. 893 and Nr. 895.

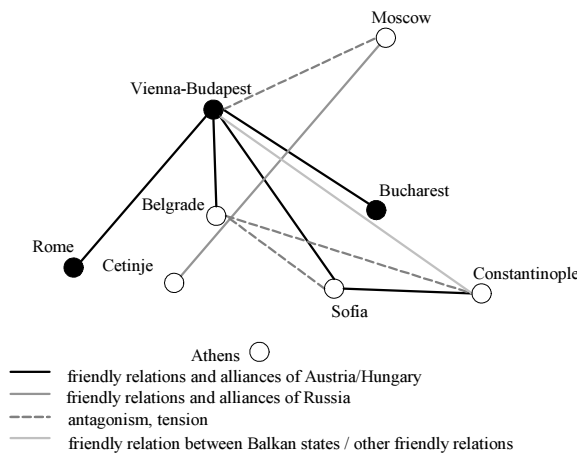
creating nation states. That is the pure reason behind the sudden change of Austrian politics (from supporting the status quo to accepting the principle of nationality) – no one should think that Austria-Hungary was so generous to accept the territorial aggradation of Balkan states in 1912 or act willingly as the artisan of nationalism.

Berchtold the new Foreign Minister was unable to appease Bulgaria and Romania, thus the outlet of Austria-Hungary to the Aegean (Kavala) could not be realised, Albania fell into anarchy and Germany could not be convinced to support Austrian Balkan-policy.

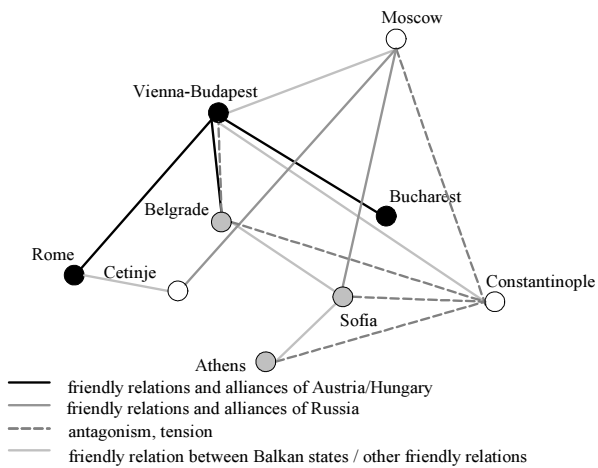
**Fig 6.** Sketch of diplomatic relations on the Balkan peninsula from 1881 to 1913.



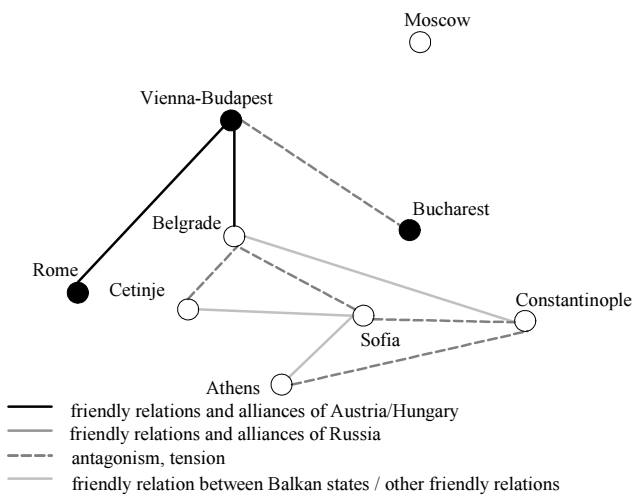
**1881**



**1889**

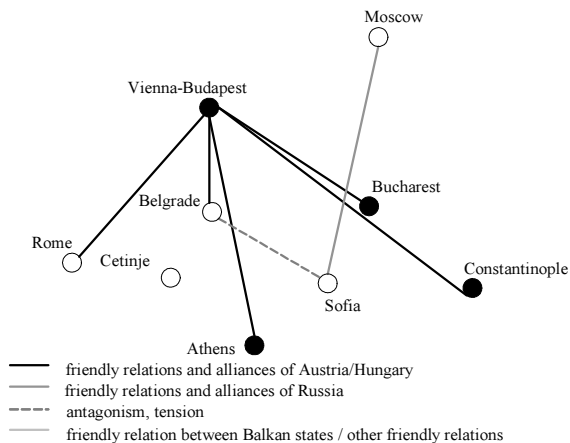


**1897**

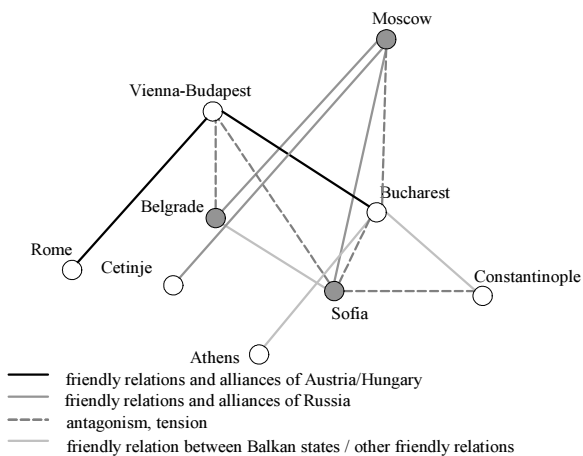


**1898**

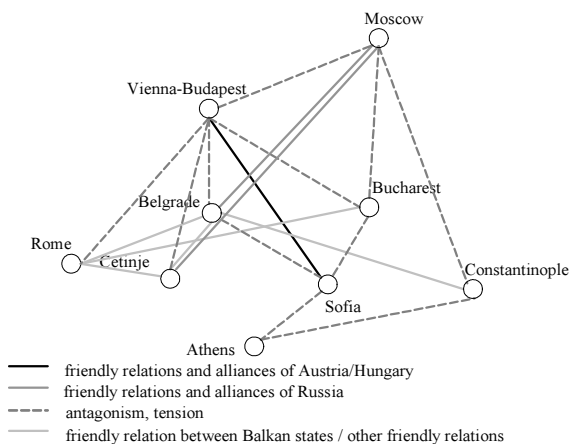




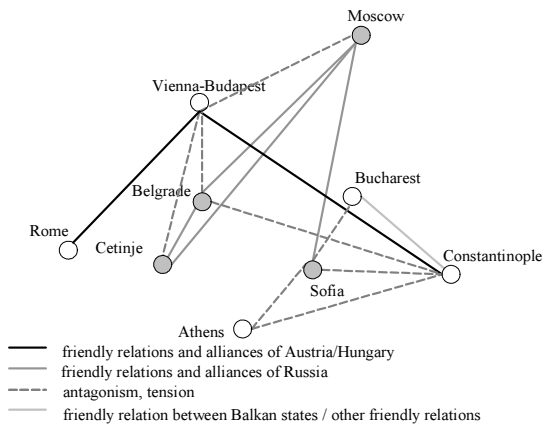
**1902**



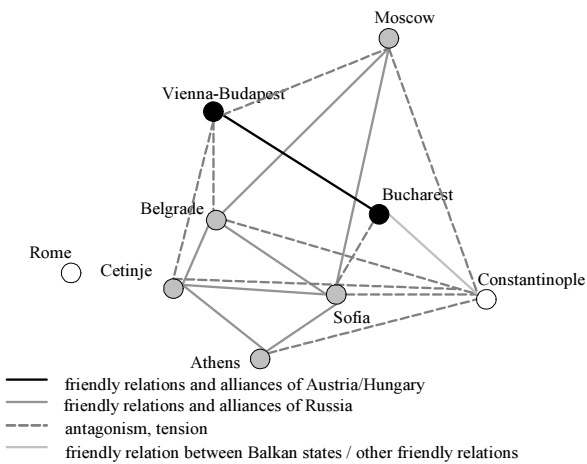
**1904/05**



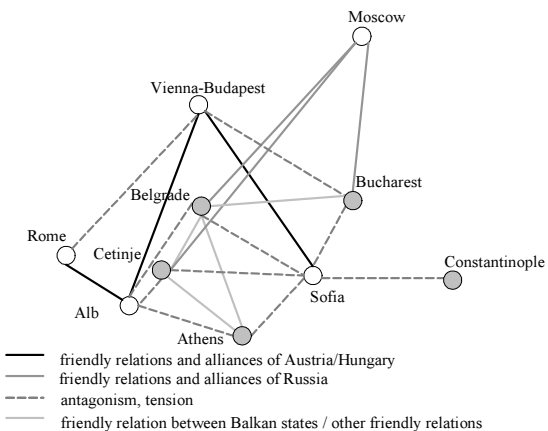
**1908/09**



### 1911



### 1912



### 1913