

**'Grasping the Nettle': British-Serbian Relations During the Great War, 1914-1916.**

Alexandre Benjamin Pijade Chiaramonte

Submitted in accordance with the requirement for the degree of  
Masters by Research

The University of Leeds, School of History

February 2023

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my supervisors Holger Afflerbach and Alexia Moncreiff for their guidance over the course of my research. I'd also like to thank my family for supporting me and always being there for me.

## Abstract

Although a number of monographs examining Britain's diplomatic relations with its allies during the Great War have been published, to date, there has been no research on British-Serbian relations. As a result, this thesis makes an original contribution to the political, military and diplomatic history of the First World War by undertaking an analysis of British-Serbian relations from 1914 to 1916. It focuses on highlighting the struggle faced by British policy-makers in their efforts to balance their commitment to securing British interests, with the need to support Serbia. This contradictory struggle arose out of the decision of policy-makers to vaguely declare that one of Britain's war aims was the support of the rights of small nations, giving the Serbian government grounds to consistently frame its struggle against Austria and the creation of a Yugoslav state as being aligned with British interests. However, while British policy-makers acknowledged the need to support Serbia, in some capacity, they were never willing to sacrifice British interests for Serbia's. This stance was compounded by the underlying prejudice of British policy-makers towards Serbia, leading them to oversimplify the difficulties being experienced by the Serbian government during the war. As a result, British policy-makers had no qualms in sacrificing Serbia's territorial interests in Macedonia, Dalmatia and the Banat, as well as abandoning Serbia to the Central Powers following the collapse of the Britain's efforts to force the Dardanelles. In summary, this thesis shows how, in spite of Britain's rhetorical support for Serbia, Britain's decision to prioritise its interests over Serbia's and the influence of prejudicial attitudes in the making of this choice was the prevailing motif that shaped Britain's relations with Serbia between 1914 and 1916.

## Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Table of Contents.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Chapter One: The Tentative Beginnings of British-Serbian Relations .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Chapter Two: Serbia, Britain, and the Near Eastern Theatre of War.....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Chapter Three: Britain and the ‘Serbian Tragedy’ .....</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>124</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>132</b>

### List of Maps:

- Figure 1: Balkans after the Second Balkan War.....	27
- Figure 2: Macedonia and uncontested zone.....	48
- Figure 3: Territory assigned to Italy in the Treaty of London.....	57
- Figure 4: Greater Serbia.....	79
- Figure 5: Invasion of Serbia and the lines of retreat of the Serbian army.....	102
- Figure 6: Evacuation and supply of Serbian Army in Montenegro and Albania.....	116

## Introduction

In his introduction to Andrej Mitrović's book *Serbia's Great War 1914-1918*, Mark Cornwall observed that the Serbian experience during the First World War had 'a particular resonance' with British history because of the role Britain played in 'aiding or propagating or even betraying the Serbian cause' during the war.<sup>1</sup> Yet, in spite of Cornwall's assertion, Britain's relationship with Serbia remains unexplored in English historiography on the First World War. That the position of Serbia in British historiography has been neglected is surprising, given the historiographical move away from a compartmentalized and Anglocentric approach to the study of the First World War, to one that portrays the war as a global event with a number of interlocking perspectives.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, with this historiographical approach in mind, the core aim of this thesis is to examine the strategic considerations of British policy-makers that predominantly shaped Britain's diplomatic relations with Serbia. I argue that it was extremely difficult for a large state, such as Britain, to be accommodating towards a smaller state, like Serbia, given Britain's extensive European and Imperial obligations. Although Britain cloaked its decision to go to war in humanitarian language, there is general agreement, among historians, with Hew Strachan's assertion that 'the war in which Britain thought it was about to engage was above all, a war for British interests.'<sup>3</sup> As David French argues, between 1914 and 1916, British policy-makers had three goals that became the underlying focus of British strategic

---

<sup>1</sup> Mark Cornwall, 'Introduction', in, Andrej Mitrovic, *Serbia's Great War 1914-1918* (London: Hurst and Company, 2007),

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Boff, 'Sir Hew Strachan and the Study of the First World War', *War in History*, Vol. 27, No. 5 (2020), p. 608; Hew Strachan, 'The Real War: Liddell Hart, Cruttwell, and Falls', in, Brian Bond (ed.), *The First World War and British Military History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> Hew Strachan, *The First World War Volume I: To Arms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 97.

thinking. These goals were to 'hold the Entente alliance together', 'to vanquish the Central Powers...especially Germany' and to ensure that, when the time for peace arrived, Britain would be in a position to 'impose its terms on enemies and allies alike.'<sup>4</sup> Therefore, because of Britain's commitment to its strategic imperatives, which were the means through which it sought to secure its long-term interests, the parameters under which the Foreign Office could conduct diplomatic relations with Serbia was severely constrained.

A more definitive factor that shaped British-Serbian relations was that Britain had no formal alliance structure with Serbia that could serve as a baseline for Britain's wartime relationship with it. Although Britain was by no means on good terms with France and Russia upon the outbreak of war, the three states remained bound to each other through the London Pact of September 1914, which formalised their commitment to fight the war collectively, and necessitated that they take some consideration of each other's interests.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, Serbia was only Britain's ally through association. Without the restraining influence of a formal treaty to provide a common understanding, the circumstances in which Britain conducted its relations became fraught with difficulty.

This difficulty was characterised by the different perspectives that Britain and Serbia had towards their war aims. Unlike the Imperial powers, who could embellish their decision to go to war with a universalising rhetoric, creating a superficial sense of unity in war aims, the

---

<sup>4</sup> David French, *British Strategy and War Aims 1914-1918* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986), pp. xii-xiii.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 35-36. For more information on Britain's alliances with Russia and France see, Keith Neilson, *Strategy and Supply: The Anglo-Russian Alliance 1914-1917* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1984); Elizabeth Greenhalgh, *Victory Through Coalition: Britain and France During the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

smaller states were much more explicit in using the conflict to secure narrow geo-political interests. This has led Hew Strachan to describe the First World War as an 'aggregation of regional conflicts.'<sup>6</sup> For Serbia, the First World War was a means to finally achieve true independence in the Balkans, no longer under the shadow of Austrian imperialism, through its territorial expansion and the creation of a large South Slav state to ensure its security. The resoluteness of the Serbian government to pursue its own national policy, making the most of its lack of formal ties with Britain, proved to be the bugbear of Britain's wartime relationship with Serbia.

This thesis will focus on the course of British-Serbian relations from the outbreak of war in August 1914, to the arrival of the Serbian government on Corfu in February/March 1916.

This is because from 1916 onwards, the Serbian government found its ability to conduct an independent foreign policy curbed by the fact that it had gone into exile (following the invasion of Serbia), and wholly dependent on the Allies for its continued existence. In contrast, during the early years of the war, the Serbian government was less reliant on the Allies for support and more resolved to pursue its national policy which created the circumstances for a number of disagreements between Britain and Serbia.

I will argue that, when Serbia's regional conflict against Austria was absorbed into the nexus of Britain's strategic imperatives, Serbia's struggles were relegated to a status of secondary importance in the eyes of British policy-makers. Thus, the overarching challenge for British policy-makers was how to pursue a strategy that would secure British interests, while

---

<sup>6</sup> Hew Strachan, 'The First World War as a Global War', *First World War Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2010), pp. 10-11. For information on the role of 'ideas' in the formulation of war aims see, *Ibid*, *The First World War Volume I: To Arms*, pp. 1114-1139.



simultaneously providing for the needs of its Serbian ally, in some capacity. In essence, the study of British-Serbian relations serves as a useful case study in understanding how differing national perspectives influence and shape the circumstances in which two states conduct diplomatic relations.

Furthermore, because Serbia had been a relatively unknown quantity in British foreign policy before the outbreak of war, there was a general lack of understanding of Serbia and what motivated its foreign policy at the Foreign Office. This is important because, in the absence of any real knowledge of Serbia, British policy-makers fell back on, as identified by James Joll, a 'wide range of assumptions about the behaviour of individuals and governments.'<sup>7</sup> Joll argues that these 'unspoken assumptions' were formulated 'within a specific institutional and social framework.'<sup>8</sup>

The role played by assumptions and frameworks in shaping the political and military decisions of British policy-makers strengthens the evidence that prejudicial views regarding the Balkans permeated into their discussions over Serbia. This prejudicial discourse was coined as Balkanism by Maria Todorova, in her pioneering study *Imagining the Balkans*, which argued that British perceptions towards the Balkans were shaped by a 'distinct political and class bias' that perceived the Balkans as a violent and semi-oriental backwater.<sup>9</sup> This thesis will show that, during the war, in the absence of any real diplomatic experience with Serbia, the Foreign Office often fell back on Balkanist assumptions to inform its

---

<sup>7</sup> James Joll, *The Origins of the First World War* (New York: Longman, 1984), p. 204.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 117-120; Ibid, 'The Balkans from Discovery to Invention', *Slavic Review*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (1994), p. 469.

diplomacy. In addition it will also assess the extent to which Balkanism influenced Britain's wider strategic decisions, as they pertained to Serbia.

Finally, to highlight the extent to which Britain's political and strategic considerations conflicted with Serbia's, effort will be spent articulating the motivations behind Serbia's wartime foreign policy. This will be done with sensitivity because, as Čedomir Antić argues, when assessing the development of Serbian foreign policy, it is crucial to avoid reinforcing negative 'contemporary stereotypes about Serbia and the Serbs', which has been a persistent problem in the English historiography on Serbia.<sup>10</sup> Rather than simply portray Serbia's foreign policy and the Yugoslav programme as the product of, what John Zametica calls, an irrational 'nationalist mythology', the thesis portrays the actions of the Serbian government as being driven by the same endemic push and pull of domestic and international factors that afflicted how all states articulated and conducted their national policies during the war.<sup>11</sup> By incorporating this approach the thesis will show how the Serbian government's position was shaped by genuine political and military considerations. As a result, the difference in perceptions held by Britain and Serbia towards the war will be better understood by showing that, like Britain, Serbia's national policy was anchored in more objective factors than an obstinate and irrational nationalism

---

<sup>10</sup> Čedomir Antić, 'The Alleged Responsibility of the Kingdom of Serbia for the Outbreak of the First World War', in Dragoljub R. Živojinović (ed.), *The Serbs and the First World War* (Serbian Academy of Science and Arts: Belgrade, 2015), pp. 447-458.

<sup>11</sup> John Zametica, 'The Elusive Balkan Spark: 28 June 1914, Again and Always', *Tokovi Istorije*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (2021), pp. 297-300; Siniša Malešević, 'The Mirage of Balkan Piedmont: State Formation and Serbian Nationalism in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (2017), pp. 129-150.

To summarise, this thesis make an original contribution to the historiography of the First World War by presenting for the first time a general narrative of Britain's diplomatic relations with Serbia from 1914 to 1916. It adopts a contrapuntal analysis contextualising the motivations behind British and Serbian foreign policy, and how domestic and international forces shaped the circumstances of their wartime relationship. Overall, a combination of the need for the Foreign Office to factor in Britain's strategic imperatives when devising a policy for its relations with Serbia, and its simplistic and prejudicial perception of Serbia and the Balkans, which led it to adopt a contradictory policy inimical to Serbian interests, created the circumstances for a series of misunderstandings between Britain and Serbia from 1914 to 1916.

The thesis is underpinned by analysis on Foreign and War Office documents held at the National Archives in London.<sup>12</sup> While these sources are not unique in works of British diplomatic history, they have been underutilised in the context of British-Serbian relations. A more unique source used by the thesis will be the diary of Sir Charles des Graz, the British Minister in Serbia.<sup>13</sup> Although des Graz was not the most detailed diarist, he provides occasional, and useful, insights into the state of feeling in Serbia during the course of the war.

In terms of secondary literature on British wartime strategy and politics, this thesis will build upon and synthesise a number of existing themes in the literature. It will firstly adopt and

---

<sup>12</sup> Foreign Office: General Correspondence from Political and Other Departments, and, War Office: General Record of War Office and Predecessors and Successor, The National Archives, London (Hereafter TNA).

<sup>13</sup> Charles des Graz, *Diary*, Cambridge University Library, Cambridge (Hereafter CUL), MSS 9988/21-22, and, MSS 7450/49.

elaborate on the notion, most strongly argued by David French, Hew Strachan and David Stevenson, that a state's strategy is formulated upon a complex relationship between domestic, political, military and cultural factors.<sup>14</sup> The ideas outlined by Keith Robbins, C. J. Lowe and Lynn Curtright in their works on the relationship between Britain's strategic considerations and Balkan diplomacy during the First World War will be developed and expanded with specific reference to Serbia.<sup>15</sup> Works by James Evans and Kenneth Calder, assessing Britain's role in the creation of Yugoslavia, have also been incorporated.<sup>16</sup> Finally, the thesis will be enriched by the use of a number of works by Serbian historians, such as Alex Dragnich, Dusan Batakovic and Andrej Mitrović, by allowing the Serbian perspective to be integrated into the narrative and putting Britain's military and diplomatic decisions into a wider context.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> David French, *British Strategy and War Aims 1914-1918* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986); Hew Strachan, *The First World War Volume I: To Arms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Hew Strachan, 'Military Operations and National Policy, 1914-1918', in Holger Afflerbach (ed.), *The Purpose of the First World War: War Aims and Military Strategies* (Munich: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2015), pp. 7-28; David Stevenson, *Cataclysm: The First World War as a Political Tragedy* (New York: Basic Books, 2004); David Stevenson, *The First World War and International Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>15</sup> K. G. Robbins, 'British Diplomacy and Bulgaria 1914-1915', *Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 49, No. 117 (1971), pp. 560-585; C. J. Lowe, 'The Failure of British Diplomacy in the Balkans 1914-1916', *Canada Journal of History*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1969), pp. 73-100; Lynn H. Curtright, *Muddle Indecision and Setback: British Policy and the Balkan States, August 1914 to the Inception of the Dardanelles Campaign* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1986).

<sup>16</sup> James Evans, *Great Britain and the Creation of Yugoslavia: Negotiating Balkan Nationality and Identity* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2008); Kenneth J. Calder, *Britain and the Origins of New Europe 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

<sup>17</sup> Alex N. Dragnich, *Serbia, Nikola Pašić, and Yugoslavia* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1974); Alex N. Dragnich, 'The Serbian Government, the Army, and the Unification of Yugoslavs', in Dimitrije Djordjevic (ed.), *The Creation of Yugoslavia 1914-1918* (Santa Barbara: Clio Press, 1980), pp. 37-50; Dušan T. Bataković, 'Serbian War Aims and Military Strategy, 1914-1918', in Holger Afflerbach (ed.), *The Purpose of the First World War: War Aims and Military Strategies* (Munich: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2015), pp. 79-94; Dušan T. Bataković, 'Serbia 1914-1918: War Imposed, Martyrdom, Resurrection', in Dragan Purešić (ed.), *Serbia in the Great War: Anglo-Saxon Testimonies and Historical Analysis* (Belgrade: National Library of Serbia, 2014), pp. 9-36; Andrej Mitrović, *Serbia's Great War 1914-1918* (London: Hurst and Company, 2007).

Chapter One will present the initial state of British-Serbian relations from August 1914 to early-1915, and how the differing attitudes held by British and Serbian officials about the war shaped the parameters in which British-Serbian relations were conducted. It will also highlight how Britain, due to strategic considerations rather than sentiment, eventually adopted a point of view that was more inclusive of Serbia and its interests. It was this pivot that led to a number of contradictions in Britain's attitude towards Serbia, and which would subsequently blight British-Serbian relations.

Chapter Two will show how, from February to September 1915, Britain's decision to focus on a strategy that revolved around gaining ascendancy in the Near East led to Britain becoming increasingly tangled in Serbian affairs. However, due to a number of circumstances, Britain's greater involvement in the Balkans had a purely negative effect on Serbia and its attempts to achieve its own war aims. Here Britain's need to secure the services of the neutral states, so as to better strengthen its military position in the Near East, clashed with Serbia's reluctance to make the territorial concessions required to secure these neutrals.

Finally, Chapter Three will examine the breakdown in British-Serbian relations from September 1915 to February/March 1916, and how the failure of Britain's Near Eastern strategy, in part, facilitated the conditions for the Central Powers to invade Serbia. A change in Britain's strategic approach to the war, which led it to decide to scale back on its commitment to military operations in the Near East, meant that it had to effectively abandon Serbia to the Central Powers. As a result, Britain struggled to maintain a cordial relationship with Serbia. From December 1915 onwards, it was left to Britain to try and

rebuild its relations with Serbia, following the invasion of the Central Powers and the Serbian retreat into Montenegro and Albania.

## Chapter One: The Tentative Beginnings of British-Serbian Relations

Upon the outbreak of the First World War there appeared to be little reason for Britain to involve itself in the affairs of Serbia, given the lack of political and cultural affinity between the two states. However, as the war progressed, Britain began to be drawn towards Serbia, with the Balkans gradually becoming an area of relevance to British interests. This chapter will assess the underlying strategic imperatives that initially drew Britain, despite its reticence, into pursuing a strategy that brought Serbia closer to Britain. Secondly, it will demonstrate how these closer ties did not necessarily mean that Britain became more effusive in its support of Serbia's historical struggle against Austria. Overall it will show how, guided at the outset by these two factors, Britain's relationship with Serbia became riddled with contradictions, and how these circumstances shaped British-Serbian relations from 1914 to 1916.

From its outset, Britain's relationship with Serbia would be marred by an underlying Balkanist discourse which pigeonholed Serbia as an semi-oriental country full of violence and intrigue.<sup>18</sup> This commonly held perception was conditioned by the 1903 May Coup in Serbia, which saw a group of army officers violently dispose of King Alexander I Obrenović.<sup>19</sup> Upon hearing the news of the assassination *The Times* somewhat snidely declared that 'a Central Asian khanate, not a European city, would have been a fitting theatre for such a ruthless and accurately planned regicide.'<sup>20</sup> In fact, the British public reacted with such

---

<sup>18</sup> Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, p. 118.

<sup>19</sup> John Zamecica, *Folly and Malice: The Hapsburg Empire, the Balkans and the Start of World War One* (London: Shephard and Walwyn, 2017), pp. 132-177; Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers* (London: Allen Lane, 2012), pp. 3-12.

<sup>20</sup> *The Times*, 12 June 1903, cited in, Slobodan G. Markovich, *British Perceptions of Serbia and the Balkans, 1903-1906* (Paris: Dialogue, 2000), p. 98.

opprobrium to the May Coup that the Foreign Office found it prudent to break off relations with the new Serbian government from 1903 to 1906.<sup>21</sup> Overall, the prevailing perception in Britain that characterised Serbia as a violent oriental country meant that, following the assassination of Franz Ferdinand on 28 June 1914, the greater part of editorial opinion in the British press was inclined to condemn Serbia rather than empathise with it.<sup>22</sup>

Although his observation was made in reference to Britain's attitude towards Russia, Keith Neilson has made clear that although it is now 'unfashionable to speak of things like national characteristics...in 1914 it was not', and British officials were at times implicitly influenced by their prejudices.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the argument that the personnel at the Foreign Office were also influenced by a Balkanist discourse is eminently plausible. According to D. C. Watt, following the May Coup, there remained a general 'dislike for the Serbian monarchy and system' amongst most official circles in Britain.<sup>24</sup> Sir Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, certainly held some prejudices in his dealings with smaller states, bemoaning how the 'worst' part of his work at the Foreign Office was that 'you are always having to deal with hopeless people.'<sup>25</sup> The attitude of Ralph Paget, the British Minister in Belgrade from 1910-1913, may also have been tinged with an element of bias when he described Serbia's struggle against Austria as 'a sort of mania', and the Serbian government as 'utterly

---

<sup>21</sup> For more information on the British reaction to 1903 May Coup see, Frances A. Radovich, 'The British Court and Relations with Serbia 1903-1906', *East European Quarterly*, Vol. XIV, No. 4 (1980), pp. 461-468; Markovich, *British Perceptions of Serbia and the Balkans*, pp. 63-85.

<sup>22</sup> Anthony J. Morris, *Radicalism Against War 1906-1914: The Advocacy for Peace and Retrenchment* (London: Longman, 1972), p. 405.

<sup>23</sup> Neilson, *Strategy and Supply*, p. 318.

<sup>24</sup> D. C. Watt, 'The British Reactions to the Assassination at Sarajevo', *European Studies Review*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (1971), p. 237.

<sup>25</sup> Lucy Masterman, *C. F. G. Masterman: A Biography* (London: Nicholson and Watson, 1939), p. 269.



obstinate and unreasonable' in its pursuit of this struggle.<sup>26</sup> However, as much as the Foreign Office may have judged the Serbian government on its alleged oriental characteristics, which led them to be seen as a difficult people to deal with, this belief was not the key determinant of British policy towards Serbia.

A more important factor that shaped Britain's diplomatic attitude towards Serbia upon the outbreak of war, was Serbia's relevance to Britain's long-term national policy. Historically, Serbia had never featured strongly in the diplomatic calculations of the Foreign Office given that, out of all the great powers, Britain had both the weakest economic and political ties with Serbia.<sup>27</sup> The Foreign Office was only willing to involve itself in Serbian affairs when the matter touched upon British interests. For example, the key motivator for Grey to re-open diplomatic relations with Serbia in 1906 was his realisation that Britain's diplomatic absence from Belgrade was detrimental for Britain, because it gave the Austrians and Germans a free hand to consolidate their power in the Near East.<sup>28</sup> Thus, as R. J. Crampton argues, in spite of Grey's decision in 1906 to re-open diplomatic relations with Serbia, 'abstention' remained Grey's preferred diplomatic approach to the Balkans, and he 'made little effort to strengthen' Britain's 'loose relations' with Serbia, prior to the outbreak of war.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Paget to Grey, 30 November 1912, in, G.P Gooch and Harold Temperley (eds.), *British Documents on the Origins of War 1898-1914: Volume IX* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1934), p. 234.

<sup>27</sup> Mika Suonpää, 'Financial Speculation, Political Risks, and Legal Complications: British Commercial Diplomacy in the Balkans, 1906-1914', *Historical Journal*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (2012) p. 98; Čedomir Antić, 'Crisis and Armament: Economic Relations Between Great Britain and Serbia 1910-1912', *Balkanica*, XXXVI (2005), p. 154; *Ibid*, *Ralph Paget: A Diplomat in Serbia* (Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies, 2006), pp. 65-66.

<sup>28</sup> Markovich, *British Perceptions of Serbia and the Balkans*, p. 83; Zametica, *Folly and Malice*, p. 194.

<sup>29</sup> R. J. Crampton, 'The Balkans, 1909-1914', in, F. H., Hinsley (ed.), *British Foreign Policy Under Sir Edward Grey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 257-258.

Given the pre-eminence of British interests in shaping its relations with Serbia, during the July Crisis, Grey saw the Austro-Serb quarrel as 'irrelevant' in comparison to his efforts to quell domestic opposition against the war in Britain and in maintaining solidarity with Russia and France.<sup>30</sup> In fact, the extent to which Britain was preoccupied with its own interests, to Serbia's detriment, can be seen by Grey's willingness to contemplate an Austrian occupation of northern Serbia to try and localise the conflict, and ensure that the Austro-Serb crisis did not escalate into a general war.<sup>31</sup>

When Grey's efforts at localising the conflict failed and Britain found itself drawn into supporting France and Russia, because to not do so would be fatal for British interests, Serbia still remained far from the thoughts of British policy-makers. As David French makes clear, Britain fought the war to 'preserve its country's independence and status as a great power by preventing Britain and its empire from falling under the domination of the Central Powers.'<sup>32</sup> Thus, despite finding themselves fighting on the same side as Serbia, it appeared unlikely that Britain would take consideration of Serbia, given most British policy-makers were of the implacable opinion that the war could only be won, and British interests secured, not by supporting Serbia against the Austrians but by defeating Germany on the Western Front.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Zara S. Steiner, and, Keith Neilson, *Britain and the Origins of the First World War, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), pp. 258-259; Morris, p. 385; For more information on the events of the July Crisis see, T. G. Otte, *July Crisis: The World's Descent into War, Summer 1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>31</sup> Miloš Ković, 'The Peace Initiative of Sir Edward Grey and his Proposal for Austro-Hungarian Occupation of Belgrade (29-31 July 1914)', in, Dragoljub R., Živojinović (ed.), *The Serbs and the First World War* (Serbian Academy of Science and Arts: Belgrade, 2015), pp. 299-300.

<sup>32</sup> French, *British Strategy and War Aims*, p. ix.

<sup>33</sup> Ian Beckett and others, *The British Army and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 182.

However, the Liberal Party's tradition of having 'to impregnate politics with morality', meant Britain had to embellish its war aims with a rhetoric that implicitly drew Britain closer to Serbia's struggle against the Austrians.<sup>34</sup> During the July Crisis, a strong, radical and non-interventionist train of thought within the Liberal Party meant that presenting the war as one of solidarity, with the Entente against the Central Powers, would have been 'a hard sell' for the liberal imperialists in the Cabinet.<sup>35</sup> However, Germany's violation of Belgium's neutrality presented Britain with an opportunity to link its long-term foreign policy goal, of maintaining the balance of power in Europe, with the higher moral purpose of defending the rights of small nations against aggressive expansionism.<sup>36</sup> Thus, despite the main factor in Britain's decision to go to war being based on realpolitik, Herbert Asquith, British Prime Minister, could publicly declare that Britain had gone to war against Germany 'to assert and to enforce the independence of free States...against encroachment...by the strong.'<sup>37</sup>

Hence, through these public pronouncements, the Serbian government could have inferred that, like Belgium, Serbia's struggle to preserve its independence and increase its strength against the aggressive foreign policy of the Hapsburg Empire would be supported in Britain.<sup>38</sup> As Wilfried Fest argues, the moral rhetoric of British officials and public figures on the subject of the plight of small nations 'energised' Serbia, leading it to believe that Britain was a true champion of its cause.<sup>39</sup> This notion is supported by Charles des Graz, the British

---

<sup>34</sup> Michael Bentley, *The Liberal Mind 1914-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 14-15.

<sup>35</sup> Douglas Newton, *The Darkest Days: The Truth Behind Britain's Rush to War, 1914* (London: Verso, 2014), p. 306.

<sup>36</sup> Keith Jeffery, 'British Strategy and War Aims in the First World War', in, Holger Afflerbach (ed.), *The Purpose of the First World War: War Aims and Military Strategies* (Munich: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2015), pp. 49-50.

<sup>37</sup> Herbert H. Asquith, 'The War of Civilization: A Speech by the Prime Minister In Edinburgh', 18 September 1914', (London: Methuen and Co., 1914), pp. 2-3.

<sup>38</sup> Andrej Mitrović, *Serbia's Great War 1914-1918* (London: Hurst and Company, 2007), p. 61.

<sup>39</sup> Wilfried Fest, *Peace or Partition: The Hapsburg Monarchy and British Policy, 1914-1918* (London: George Prior, 1978), p. 21.

Minister in Niš, who reported that an article in *Samourprava*, the semi-official newspaper of Serbian Prime Minister Nikola Pašić, outlined the Serbian belief they had ‘won the sympathies and friendship of the proud British nation’ despite Britain’s historical ‘indifference’ to Serbia’s ‘legitimate vital interests’.<sup>40</sup> According to des Graz, these views had been expressed to him ‘on more than one occasion’, and he believed them to be ‘as sincere as they are general amongst the Serbians who have cognizance of these articles.’<sup>41</sup> Overall, as Harry Hanak has argued, because Britain’s rhetoric surrounding its support for the rights of small nations was ‘deliberately vague’, it lent itself to ‘varied interpretations.’<sup>42</sup>

The vagueness of Britain’s publicly stated war aims meant a gulf emerged in the assumptions of both British and Serbian policy-makers, over the degree to which Britain would be receptive to Serbia’s war aims. For Serbia, Austria’s declaration of war was seen as an opportunity for Serbia to achieve a ‘final settlement’ of the recurring Austro-Serb conflict, by removing the perennial threat of Austrian encroachment, through expanding Serbia’s national borders.<sup>43</sup> Although Serbian national expansion had, during the Balkan Wars, been predominantly directed toward the Serb-inhabited lands in the Ottoman Empire, the outbreak of war created the conditions for Serbia to opportunistically undertake a more comprehensive program of national expansion; one that saw the Serbian annexation of all Hapsburg territory inhabited by South Slavs.<sup>44</sup> This policy became known

---

<sup>40</sup> No 158, des Graz to Grey, 9 November 1914, TNA, FO 371/2245-329.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Harry Hanak, *Great Britain and Austria-Hungary During the First World War: A Story in the Formation of Public Opinion* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 58; Ibid, ‘The Government, The Foreign Office and Austria-Hungary, 1914-1918’, *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 47, No. 108 (1969), p. 161.

<sup>43</sup> Milorad Ekmečić, ‘Serbian War Aims’, in, Dimitrije Djordjevic (ed.), *The Creation of Yugoslavia 1914-1918* (Santa Barbara: Clio Press, 1980), p. 20

<sup>44</sup> Zametica, ‘The Elusive Balkan Spark 28 June 1914, Again and Always’, pp. 304-306.

as the Yugoslav programme, and was proliferated and popularised by a number of Serbian public intellectuals, the most important being Jovan Cvijić.<sup>45</sup> He argued along geographical and ethnic lines, that the South Slavs, made up of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, had all been one race.<sup>46</sup> According to Crown Prince Alexander, Serbia's overriding war aim was their obligation to liberate 'the millions of our brothers...from Bosnia-Herzegovina, from Banat and Bačka, from Croatia, Slavonia and Srem, and from...Dalmatia.'<sup>47</sup> Because of Britain's rhetorical support for the nationality principle, it was assumed, by the Serbian government, that its efforts to liberate the South Slavs from the tyranny of the Austrians would be well received in Britain.

The perception in Serbia that Britain would be sympathetic towards the creation of a Yugoslav state was reinforced by a small, but vocal, clique of British intellectuals and publicists. The British Supporters of Serbia, as they became known, felt that, given Britain's support for the rights of small nations, it was a necessary condition for the British government to also support the Yugoslav programme. Of this group, Robert Seton-Watson was the most ardent supporter of Serbian war aims, and he sought to convince British public opinion of his position through articles, books and propagandistic societies.<sup>48</sup> In October 1914 Seton-Watson presented a memorandum to the Foreign Office which argued that the 'abstract principle' espoused by British officials necessitated 'that in any settlement due regard had to be shown for the principle of nationality'.<sup>49</sup> In other words, Britain had an

---

<sup>45</sup> Ekmečić, p. 21.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Alex N. Dragnich, 'The Serbian Government, the Army, and the Unification of Yugoslavs', in, Dimitrije Djordjevic (ed.), *The Creation of Yugoslavia 1914-1918* (Santa Barbara: Clio Press, 1980), pp. 39-40.

<sup>48</sup> Arthur J. May, 'Seton-Watson and British Anti-Habsburg Sentiment', *The American Slavic and East European Review*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (1961), p. 47.

<sup>49</sup> Seton-Watson, 'Memorandum on the South Slav Question', 1 October 1914, TNA, FO 371/1904-55136.

obligation to support Serbia in solving the South Slav question. As Serbian historians Milorad Ekmečić and Dragan Bakić argue, Serbian officials were strongly influenced by Seton-Watson and, as a result, the Serbian government took for granted that the Foreign Office was of a similar disposition.<sup>50</sup>

In reality, although the Foreign Office considered Seton-Watson a source of valuable information on Serbian affairs, with Sir Arthur Nicolson, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, describing him as ‘one of the very few who comprehends the Southern Slav question’, the Foreign Office remained unwilling to comprehensively support the Yugoslav programme.<sup>51</sup> This was because the dismemberment of the Habsburg monarchy, required for the creation of a Yugoslav state, was not a strategic imperative for Britain. Most of the Foreign Office shared Nicolson’s view, that it was ‘appalling’ to think of the difficulties that would arise from the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy, believing it was ‘too early’ to discuss a ‘remodelling of the whole map of Europe.’<sup>52</sup> This attitude was shaped by the belief in Britain that, because the war had come from German aggression, it necessitated a general strategy that focused on giving priority to military operations on the Western Front, and defeating Germany.<sup>53</sup> Or as George Clerk, head of the War Department at the Foreign Office, affirmed, although Britain desired ‘the war to be ended as far as possible on the basis of nationalities’, they had ‘not set out on a nationality crusade.’<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> Dragan Bakić, ‘The Serbian Minister in London, Mateja Bošković, the Yugoslav Committee, and Serbia’s Yugoslav Policy in the Great War’, *Balkanica*, L (2019), p. 189; Ekmečić, p. 29.

<sup>51</sup> Nicolson, minute, 3 October 1914, TNA, FO 371/1904-55136.

<sup>52</sup> Nicolson to Buchanan, letter, 8 January 1915, TNA, FO 800/377.

<sup>53</sup> William A. Hay, ‘A Problem Postponed: Britain and the Future of Austria-Hungary, 1914-1918’, *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (2002), p. 59.

<sup>54</sup> Clerk, minute, 8 April 1915, TNA, FO 371/2241-41098.

Thus, Britain's relationship with Serbia and the Balkans remained subject to Britain's own interests, despite Britain's rhetorical support for the nationality principle, which superficially linked Britain's war effort with Serbia's struggle against Austria. As a result, it was self-interest, rather than sentiment, that led British policy-makers to begin to consider the Balkans as an area of relevance to the British war effort. This consideration was sparked by the decision of Venizelos, the Greek Prime Minister, to inform the Foreign Office, on 11 August 1914, of the possibility of the Balkan states joining the Allies in a bloc, and subsequently undertaking military operations against the Austrians.<sup>55</sup> Although the Balkans were not initially seen as strategically important, upon receiving Venizelos' proposal, Asquith described the policy of recreating the Balkan league as a 'great scheme.'<sup>56</sup>

The creation of a Balkan league was seen in a favourable light due to the supposed military strength of the Balkan states and the minimal cost, on Britain's behalf, that would be required to facilitate its creation. Following the Balkan Wars, the War Office had become increasingly favourable towards the ability of the Balkan states, and their armies, to act as a powerful counterweight to Austria; and Serbia's unlikely victory against the Austrians at the Battle of Cer in August 1914, had only cemented this perception.<sup>57</sup> It is evident that Britain believed a large-scale military campaign undertaken by a Balkan bloc, against the Central

---

<sup>55</sup> Lynn H. Curtright, *Muddle Indecision and Setback: British Policy and the Balkan States, August 1914 to the Inception of the Dardanelles Campaign* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1986), pp. 19-21; George B. Leon, *Greece and the Great Powers 1914-1917* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1974), pp. 33-40.

<sup>56</sup> Asquith to Venetia Stanley, 11 August 1914, in, Michael and Eleanor Brock (eds.), *H. H. Asquith Letters to Venetia Stanley* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 165-166.

<sup>57</sup> French, *British Strategy and War Aims*, p. 30. For more information British attitudes towards the military capabilities of the Balkan states see, Mika Suonpää, 'Britain, Balkan Conflicts and the Evolving Conceptions of Militarism, 1875-1913', *History (London)*, Vol. 19, No. 337 (2014), pp. 632-646.

Powers, would strengthen the position of the Allies, by forcing the Germans and Austrians to withdraw their troops from the Western and Eastern Fronts.<sup>58</sup>

Additionally, the Balkan league was an alluring prospect for Britain because of Britain's decision to initially try and fight the war under the strategy of 'business as usual'.<sup>59</sup> This necessitated Britain enlist the support of the neutral states to buttress its desire to make a minimal commitment to the war effort in regards to manpower.<sup>60</sup> For example, given Lloyd George's preoccupation, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, with Britain's war expenditure, he was attracted to the idea of a Balkan league because Britain 'could secure over 1 million men for the use against the Central Powers' through loans amounting 'to one week's cost of the war to [the] British and French taxpayer.'<sup>61</sup> Thus, the creation of a Balkan bloc was the perfect policy to complement the strategy of 'business as usual', and the desire to economise Britain's war effort. By 20 August, wooed by the minimal cost and strategic possibilities through enlisting the support of a Balkan bloc, the Cabinet decided that, 'if practicable', it was the 'most desirable' solution for tilting the continental balance of power.<sup>62</sup>

With the decision made to incorporate the creation of a Balkan league into British strategy, it was left to the Foreign Office to find a diplomatic solution that would successfully bring the Balkan states together. Yet, as Keith Robbins argues, Grey's diplomatic experience with

---

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> David French, *British Economic and Strategic Planning 1905-1915* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982), pp. 7-38.

<sup>60</sup> Paul Kennedy, *The Realities Behind Diplomacy: Background Influences on British External Policy, 1865-1980* (London: Fontana, 1981), p. 179-196.

<sup>61</sup> David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of Lloyd George I* (London: Oldham Press Ltd, 1933), pp. 217-218.

<sup>62</sup> Asquith to the King letter, 20 August 1914, TNA, CAB 41/35/44.



the Balkan states, during the Balkan Wars, had left him sceptical of the possibility of forming a Balkan bloc through diplomatic methods.<sup>63</sup> In addition, Grey's prevailing concerns, over the possibility that the Ottoman Empire would join the Central Powers, meant he was reluctant to disturb the equilibrium in the Balkans.<sup>64</sup> Grey was worried that if only one of the Balkan neutrals agreed to join the Allies, it would push the Ottomans towards Germany.<sup>65</sup> He felt that it would only be possible to recreate the Balkan league if all the Balkan neutrals decided to join the Allies together.<sup>66</sup> This led Grey to adopt a policy that focused on convincing, rather than pressuring, the Balkan states to come together in finding a compromise solution to the lingering territorial disputes that had arisen out of the Treaty of Bucharest, following the second Balkan War.<sup>67</sup> Grey's approach was moulded by his experiences during the 1912-13 London Conference, where he had adopted the role of an honest broker.<sup>68</sup> Grey's decision, during the Balkan Wars, to focus on a policy of compromise had re-established his credit in Britain as a shrewd diplomat, and he clearly felt that this approach would continue to have validity upon the outbreak of war.<sup>69</sup>

Yet, in spite of Grey's belief that the 'territorial rearrangements' required to create the Balkan league had to be 'primarily the concern of the Balkan states themselves', it became increasingly clear that this would not be achievable without Serbia shouldering a larger burden of the territorial sacrifices.<sup>70</sup> As Thomas Otte argues, whilst Grey's diplomatic

---

<sup>63</sup> K. G. Robbins, *Sir Edward Grey: A Biography of Lord Grey of Fallodon* (London: Cassell, 1971), p. 304.

<sup>64</sup> C. J. Lowe, 'The Failure of British Diplomacy in the Balkans 1914-1916', *Canada Journal of History*, Vol 4. No. 1 (1969), p. 76.

<sup>65</sup> No 28, Grey to Bax-Ironside, 13 August 1914, TNA, FO 371/1900-33875.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Edward Grey, *Twenty-Five Years 1892-1916 II* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1925), pp. 174-184.

<sup>68</sup> Ernst Christian Helmreich, *The Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars 1912-1913* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1966), pp. 247-251

<sup>69</sup> Morris, pp. 348-356.

<sup>70</sup> No 113, Grey to Bax-Ironside, 2 October 1914, TNA, FO 371/1901-55040.

approach to the Balkans may have worked in peacetime, the exigencies of war meant there was 'little time for deciding matters on their individual merit', which 'made awkward compromise inevitable.'<sup>71</sup> David French is more critical of Grey's faith in a policy of compromise, pointing out that it was 'erroneous' to assume that the national rivalries of the Balkan states 'were soluble by pragmatic compromises...where no such solution could in fact be found.'<sup>72</sup>

The flaw in Britain's theoretical approach towards securing the belligerence of the Balkan states was that, in reality, Bulgaria had a much more important place in Britain's strategic considerations, than either Romania or Greece. According to J. M. Potts, Bulgaria occupied a 'highly strategic position relative to the Turkish Straits' and, were the Central Powers to convince Bulgaria to join them, the Allies' position in the Near East would have been irretrievably damaged.<sup>73</sup> This was because a Bulgaria allied to the Central Powers would allow Germany to make moves to close the Turkish Straits and cut Russia off from the flow of munitions and material that Britain and France were sending it.<sup>74</sup>

Although Bulgaria had remained neutral upon the outbreak of war, it was clear to Britain that the continuance of an ambivalent Bulgarian neutrality would only hamper Britain's ability to facilitate the creation of a Balkan league. During the July Crisis, Grey had been warned by Bax-Ironside, the British Minister at Sofia, that the 'bitterness' in Bulgaria towards the Treaty of Bucharest was so strong, that there was a possibility the Bulgarian

---

<sup>71</sup> T. G. Otte, *Statesman of Europe: A Life of Sir Edward Grey* (London: Allen Lane, 2020), p. 1123.

<sup>72</sup> French, *British Strategy and War Aims*, p. 31.

<sup>73</sup> J. M. Potts, 'The Loss of Bulgaria', in, Alexander Dallin (ed.), *Russian Diplomacy and Eastern Europe 1914-1917* (New York: Kings Crown Press, 1963), p. 194

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

government would ‘throw in their lot openly with Austria.’<sup>75</sup> The ambivalent neutrality, held by the Bulgarian government, led Grey to inform the War Council that ‘there was not much hope that Greece or Romania would co-operate...unless they were assured’ that Bulgaria would not join the Central Powers.<sup>76</sup> As a result, Serbia became implicated in the situation with Bulgaria, because both the Greek and Romanian governments were of the opinion that ‘only Serbia’ could ‘make [territorial] concessions capable of satisfying Bulgaria.’<sup>77</sup> Thus an implicit, but ‘necessary’, condition for Grey’s compromise policy for the creation of the Balkan league was for Serbia to overcome its hostility towards Bulgaria, by offering to Bulgaria a portion of territory in Macedonia.<sup>78</sup>



Figure 1: Map of the Balkans after the Second Balkan War.  
Source: Clark, pp. 254-255.

<sup>75</sup> No 82, Bax-Ironside to Grey, 28 July 1914, TNA, FO 371/1900-42918.

<sup>76</sup> War Council Minutes, 25 November 1914, TNA, CAB 42/1/4.

<sup>77</sup> No 392, Rennell Rodd to Grey, 15 October 1914, TNA, FO 371/1905-59735; Leon, p. 86.

<sup>78</sup> No 28, Grey to Bax-Ironside, 13 August 1914, TNA, FO 371/1900-33875.

On 28 August 1914 Grey sent his first proposal to the Serbian government broaching the idea of creating a Balkan league, and its necessary requisite of placating Bulgaria through the Serbian cession of Macedonia.<sup>79</sup> Grey clearly felt that the Serbian government would see it as in their interest to make 'certain compensations' to Bulgaria, because removing the uncertainty surrounding Bulgaria's neutrality would allow Serbia to better prosecute its war effort against the Austrians, with the support of the Balkan neutrals.<sup>80</sup> This view was buttressed by Grey's personal opinion that Serbia had an 'obligation' to accept his proposal, because 'the very life of Serbia depended on the victory of the Allies.'<sup>81</sup> As Grey explained to Pašić, because Britain was 'bearing the burden of the war', having taken Serbia's side in her struggle for independence against Austria, it was 'warranted in expecting' that the Serbian government would make territorial concessions to Bulgaria.<sup>82</sup> Yet, in spite of Grey's expectation that Serbia would be amenable to his proposal, Grey refused to put pressure on the Serbian government because he continued to be shaped by his personal unwillingness to involve himself more deeply in the Balkans, and so he simply re-affirmed his view 'that such concessions be arranged by the Balkan Powers themselves.'<sup>83</sup>

On 1 September 1914, following Pašić's formal response to Grey's proposal, it became clear that, in contrast to Grey's expectations, the Serbian cession of Macedonia would not be easily reconcilable with the position of the Serbian government. According to des Graz, while Pašić supported the idea of a Balkan bloc and had agreed to 'do his utmost to content Serbia's allies', he had to also remain 'within the limits of his responsibility' with 'regard to

---

<sup>79</sup> No 61, Grey to des Graz, 28 August 1914, TNA, FO 371/1901-43088.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Grey, II, p. 184.

<sup>82</sup> No 61, Grey to des Graz, 28 August 1914, TNA, FO 371/1901-43088.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

the necessity of avoiding internal perturbations in the country.’<sup>84</sup> The perturbations Pašić was referring to was the strong political culture in Serbia, which meant his government was always at the mercy of a vocal public opinion. This situation arose out of the Serbian Constitution of 1903 which had bestowed on the people an array of political liberties, meaning that elections in Serbia became ‘reasonably’ free by the European standards of the time.<sup>85</sup> However the inverse of this freedom was an element of political instability, with elections being a common occurrence in Serbia, due to parliamentary majorities being undermined by the tradition of Serbian politicians voting on conviction rather than party lines.<sup>86</sup> According to Alex Dragnich, such political freedoms led to the formation of numerous private patriotic societies ‘which crystalized public opinion and thereby had a considerable impact on ruling circles.’<sup>87</sup> Or, as des Graz informed Grey, almost every ‘civilian and soldier’ in the Serbian wartime capital of Niš was a ‘politician’, meaning Pašić had to always factor in the views of the public when developing his foreign policy.<sup>88</sup>

The fact that Macedonia was an area of great importance to Serbia, both in terms of history and geopolitics, meant that its cession was bound to be a difficult issue for Pašić to raise with the Serbian public. As Pašić informed the British Minister in 1907, since the 1880s Serbia and Bulgaria had been the two main rival powers over ‘the question of a division of spheres of influence in Macedonia.’<sup>89</sup> According to Barbara Jelavich, the possession of

---

<sup>84</sup> No 102, des Graz to Grey, 30 August 194, TNA, FO 371/1901-44785.

<sup>85</sup> Dušan T. Bataković, ‘On Parliamentary Democracy in Serbia 1903-1914: Political Parties, Elections, Political Freedoms’, *Balkanica*, XLVIII (2017), p. 128.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 132-134.

<sup>87</sup> Alex N. Dragnich, *Serbia, Nikola Pašić, and Yugoslavia* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1974), p. 68.

<sup>88</sup> No 34, des Graz to Grey, 1 February 1915, TNA, FO 371/2242-12352.

<sup>89</sup> Whitehead to Grey, 15 February 1907, in, G.P Gooch and Harold Temperley (eds.), *British Documents on the Origins of War 1898-1914: Volume V* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1934), p. 117.

Macedonia bestowed upon its owner the 'predominant strategic position' in the Balkans and, as a result, it was an area of vast importance within the context of Balkan geopolitics.<sup>90</sup>

Although Serbia and Bulgaria had initially agreed to the partition of Macedonia in the 1912 Serb-Bulgar treaty of alliance, following the Second Balkan War and the signing of the Treaty of Bucharest, Serbia had managed to take possession of the whole of Macedonia.<sup>91</sup> As a result, Serbia found itself the preeminent Balkan power and thus was not inclined to lose its newly attained position of ascendancy in the Balkans, by ceding Macedonia to its long-term rival. The general position of Serbia, articulated by Mateja Bošković, the Serbian Minister in London, was that, following the Balkan Wars, Bulgaria's attitude had 'been anything but friendly to Serbia' and that 'Bulgaria had forfeited any claim whatsoever to concessions under the treaty of 1912 as she herself tore up that treaty which was the cause of the Second Balkan War.'<sup>92</sup> As Pašić explained to des Graz, 'even [a] mere promise of large territorial concessions' to Bulgaria would have 'a depressing effect on [the] spirit...of nation and army', potentially creating a political crisis resulting from a loss of faith in Pašić's government.<sup>93</sup>

Thus, while Pašić appreciated the need to conduct a foreign policy that was in sync with Britain's strategic considerations, his hold on power remained contingent on his ability to satisfy the Serbian public through securing Serbian interests. As a result, Pašić would only be

---

<sup>90</sup> Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans: Twentieth Century II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 90.

<sup>91</sup> For more information on the February/March 1912 Serb-Bulgar Alliance see, Richard C. Hall, *The Balkan Wars 1912-1913: Prelude to the First World War* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 1-21; Helmreich, pp. 36-68.

<sup>92</sup> Nicolson to Hardinge, letter, 10 June 1915, TNA, FO 800/378.

<sup>93</sup> No 104, des Graz to Grey, 1 September 1914, TNA, FO 371//1901-45695; No 151, des Graz to Grey, 8 November 1914, TNA, FO 371/1902-68567.

willing to contemplate the cession of Macedonia, should Serbia's loss of influence in Macedonia be compensated by the Allies guaranteeing Serbia's wider territorial ambitions. According to des Graz, Pašić had made efforts to compel the Serbian parliament to support Grey's proposal by declaring that 'this was not a war in which Serbian interests alone were concerned', and 'that other and immense interests were also involved.'<sup>94</sup> However, despite Pašić's attempts, his explanations were 'not received with any warmth', with the majority of the parliament agreeing that Serbia should not make territorial concessions 'without certain knowledge of territorial compensations which Serbia would herself receive.'<sup>95</sup> Overall, as Pašić explained to Grey, he would only be disposed to consider the cession of Macedonia in return for the promise that Britain would help Serbia 'obtain Serb-Croatian territories' crucial for the creation of a Yugoslav state, and which, Pašić believed, would placate Serbian public opinion.<sup>96</sup>

Although Grey informed Pašić that Britain noted with 'satisfaction' Serbia's willingness 'to make territorial concessions' in return for territorial 'compensations', the Foreign Office never made a follow up communication to the Serbian government.<sup>97</sup> This was due to the decision of the Ottoman Empire, in late-October, to enter the war on the side of the Central Powers.<sup>98</sup> This act briefly sparked the hope that Britain could mitigate the need to formally ask Serbia to cede Macedonia, by instead promising Bulgaria Ottoman territory. Britain felt

---

<sup>94</sup> No 164, des Graz to Grey, 20 November 1914, TNA, FO 371/2241-335.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> No 104, des Graz to Grey, 1 September 1914, TNA, FO 371//1901-45695.

<sup>97</sup> No 80, Grey to des Graz, 5 September, 1914, TNA, FO 371/1901-46896.

<sup>98</sup> For more information on Britain and Ottoman decision to join the Central Powers see, Joseph Heller, *British Policy Towards the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1914* (London: Frank Cass, 1983), pp. 133-157; David Stevenson, *The First World War and International Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 44-47; Strachan, *The First World War Volume I: To Arms*, p. 644-680.

it could convince Bulgaria either to join them or remain neutral, with the promise of Turkish Eastern Thrace up to the Enos-Midia line.<sup>99</sup> This territory had been taken by the Ottomans during the Second Balkan War.<sup>100</sup> However, as Bax-Ironside reported to Grey, the ‘popular feeling’ in Bulgaria was ‘indifferent about Thrace’ in comparison to Serbian-held Macedonia.<sup>101</sup> Des Graz also experienced this attitude firsthand, noting in his diary that the Bulgarian Minister in Niš ‘only talked of Macedonia.’<sup>102</sup> Although the entry of the Ottoman Empire into the war allowed the Foreign Office to temporarily shift its focus to using Ottoman territory to placate Bulgaria, its lack of success only made it more apparent to it that Serbia would have to make concessions of some sort, if Britain were to facilitate a situation favourable to the re-creation of the Balkan bloc.

However, despite it becoming increasingly clear to the Foreign Office that only the cession of Macedonia would satisfy Bulgaria’s aspirations, Britain was prevented from pursuing this option following the commencement of the second Austrian invasion of Serbia in early-November.<sup>103</sup> With Serbia preoccupied with the Austrians, des Graz warned Nicolson that the ‘probable effect’ of Serbia entering into discussions with Bulgaria over Macedonia would be either Serbia or Bulgaria attacking the other ‘without the slightest pretext.’<sup>104</sup> These views were supported by Bax-Ironside who stressed that, with Serbia preoccupied against the Austrians in the north, the Bulgarian government was entertaining the possibility of

---

<sup>99</sup> Bax-Ironside to Grey, 30 November 1914, TNA, CAB 37/123/30.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> No 167, Bax-Ironside to Grey, 17 November 1914, TNA, FO 371/1902-72432.

<sup>102</sup> Charles des Graz, Diary, 22 November 1914, CUL, MSS 9988/21.

<sup>103</sup> For more information on the 1914 Austrian military campaigns in Serbia see, Gunther E. Rothenberg, ‘The Austro-Hungarian Campaign Against Serbia in 1914’, *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (1989), pp. 127-146; James Lyon, *Serbia and the Balkan Front 1914* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 199-232.

<sup>104</sup> Des Graz to Nicolson, letter, 27 November 1914, TNA, FO 800/375.



marching into Macedonia and reclaiming it by force.<sup>105</sup> Due to these developments, des Graz concluded that the Serbian government would consider any efforts to compel Serbia to cede Macedonia a 'stab in the back' by the Allies, and this would lead 'to the absolute weakening if not the disappearance of the continued resistance to the Austrian advance.'<sup>106</sup>

Although the Foreign Office was concerned about the implications of a Serbian defeat on the Allied war effort, there was little it could do to help Serbia. On 1 December, with Austrian troops occupying Belgrade, Nicolson became 'distressed at the probability of Serbia being utterly defeated', because it meant 'two or three Austrian Army Corps' would be 'free to act against the Russians.'<sup>107</sup> Yet, given Britain's reluctance to commit its own military resources to the Balkans, there was nothing more it could do to support Serbia beyond continuing to try to get Greece and Romania to join the Allies, and providing Serbia with military assistance against the Austrians.<sup>108</sup> When the negotiations with Greece and Romania failed, because of the continued insistence of the Greeks and Romanians that Serbia bear the brunt of the territorial concessions, Grey was compelled to inform Bošković that he could not promise Serbia that the Allies would be able to save them from defeat, and that the Serbian government 'must do what they think best strategically for themselves' in light of the desperate situation.<sup>109</sup> Thus, by early-December, under the impression that Serbia was a finished entity, Grey felt that it would be best to defer from undertaking any further diplomatic initiatives in the Balkans until the situation cleared.<sup>110</sup>

---

<sup>105</sup> Bax-Ironside to Nicolson, letter, 24 November 1914, TNA, FO 800/375.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid; No 172, des Graz to Grey, 18 November 1914, TNA, FO 371/1902-72662.

<sup>107</sup> Nicolson to Hardinge, letter, 1 December 1914, TNA, FO 800/375.

<sup>108</sup> Curtright, pp. 55-56.

<sup>109</sup> Grey, minute, 3 December 1914, TNA, FO 371/1902-78906.

<sup>110</sup> No 1226, Grey to Bertie, 13 December 1914, TNA, FO 371/1902-82036.

However, contrary to the expectations of the Foreign Office, the Serbian army emerged victorious against the Austrians at the Battle of Kolubara in December.<sup>111</sup> This success, combined with the decision of the Foreign Office to draw back from its immediate involvement in the Balkans, provided Pašić with the necessary respite he needed to secure his domestic position. This had become increasingly crucial for Pašić, given that he had continued to be dogged by criticism emanating from the dissatisfied elements in the Serbian parliament and public.<sup>112</sup> The problem was exacerbated by a praetorian element in Serbian politics consisting of discontented army officers who were critical of the government.<sup>113</sup> The threat posed by the disruptive elements in the military was driven by their underlying 'hatred' for Pašić, and their view that the best means to achieving territorial expansion was not through Serbia's current parliamentary democracy, but by adopting a more authoritarian political system.<sup>114</sup>

What ultimately made the military's prominence in Serbian politics dangerous, was its willingness to support the parliamentary opposition's criticism of Pašić' as a means to push its own agenda of usurping the current political system. In the back of Pašić's mind was the fact that, in April/May 1914, civil and military agitation had almost coalesced to remove Pašić from power, by joining together to criticise the government following its decision to use civilian rather than military administrators in Macedonia and Kosovo.<sup>115</sup> Faced with a

---

<sup>111</sup> Dusan Babac, *The Serbian Army in the Great War 1914-1918* (Solihull: Helion and Company, 2016), pp. 45-69.

<sup>112</sup> Mitrović, p. 114.

<sup>113</sup> Dragnich, *Serbia, Nikola Pašić, and Yugoslavia*, pp. 76-77. For more information on civil-military relations in Serbia see, Dušan T. Bataković, 'Storm Over Serbia: The Rivalry between Civilian and Military Authorities (1911-1914)', *Balkanica*, XLIV (2013), pp. 307-356.

<sup>114</sup> Zametica, *Folly and Malice*, p. 387-388.

<sup>115</sup> Bataković, 'Storm Over Serbia', pp. 336-345.

potential alignment between the dissatisfied military and the opposition parties in parliament, Pašić attempted to resolve the situation by resigning and calling for new elections in June.<sup>116</sup> With the outbreak of war preventing the Serbian elections from occurring, the spectre of the military and parliamentary opposition joining forces against the government remained present in Serbian politics.

Given this predicament, the only option which Pašić felt could insulate him from these domestic pressures was his foreign policy, and a more vigorous pursuit of the Yugoslav programme. As Andrej Mitrović argues, 'almost everyone in Serbia, regardless of social level, shared the view of their country as a vanguard of South Slav unification'.<sup>117</sup> Even the unruly sections of the military and parliamentary opposition, in spite of their hatred for Pašić, were willing to support him in his pursuit of the Yugoslav programme, given that they all shared the same territorial aspirations.<sup>118</sup> Therefore, through a clear enunciation of his intention to support the Yugoslav programme, Pašić could draw a unifying thread between the government, public and military, who all unanimously supported Serbian national state expansion.

The opportunity for Pašić to do this materialised following the Serbian victory at the battle of Kolubara, which had fostered an outpouring of nationalist jubilation.<sup>119</sup> Taking advantage of the changed political climate, Pašić sought to cement his position by forming a coalition

---

<sup>116</sup> Dušan T. Bataković, 'Serbian War Aims and Military Strategy, 1914-1918', in, Holger Afflerbach (ed.), *The Purpose of the First World War: War Aims and Military Strategies* (Munich: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2015), p. 81.

<sup>117</sup> Mitrović, p. 116.

<sup>118</sup> Zametica, *Folly and Malice*, p. 386.

<sup>119</sup> Lyon, *Serbia and the Balkan Front 1914*, p. 245.

government whose sole objective would be the pursuit of the Yugoslav programme. This was declared by the coalition government in a public statement made on 7 December 1914, and was later known as the Niš Declaration. By publicly announcing Serbia's war aims, the coalition government accepted that its continued support in parliament was contingent on its ability to devote itself 'to the service of the great work of the Serbian state' and 'the liberation and union of all our enslaved brothers, Serbians, Croats and Slovenes.'<sup>120</sup>

Interestingly, the Foreign Office did not appear to consider the Niš Declaration of major importance in regard to its potential effect on Pašić's diplomacy. Despite des Graz making clear that the declaration highlighted the 'eventual aspirations of the Serbian government', his official report on the Niš Declaration was only initialled by Nicolson, and ignored by Grey.<sup>121</sup> It appears that the Foreign Office considered the declaration a purely domestic issue, and did not register the extent of its influence over Serbia's foreign policy. In retrospect, this oversight by the Foreign Office would be costly, given that Serbian historians tend to see the promulgation of the Niš Declaration as the defining moment in the creation of the Yugoslav state.<sup>122</sup> The relevance of the Niš Declaration to British-Serbian relations was that it compelled Pašić to conduct his foreign policy under a specific set of circumstances which would make it difficult for him to acquiesce to Britain's future diplomatic initiatives in the Balkans.

---

<sup>120</sup> 'Declaration Made by the Serbian Government Before the National Assembly on December 7 1914', 1 January 1915, TNA, FO 371/2460-337.

<sup>121</sup> No 166, des Graz to Grey, 1 January 1915, TNA, FO 371/2460-337.

<sup>122</sup> Ekmečić, pp. 31-32.

As Dragoljub Živojinović argues, the decision to publicly declare Serbia's 'ambitious' war aims was a 'catastrophic diplomatic and political mistake' which put Serbia on a collision course with the Allies.<sup>123</sup> The underlying issue that arose out of the Niš Declaration was not that the Serbian government had formally decided to pursue the Yugoslav programme, but rather that it had been made public so as to placate the agitated Serbian army and opposition parties. By making his hold on power contingent on his ability to secure an extensive programme of territorial expansion, Pašić would be compelled to adopt a more intractable position on the Yugoslav programme in any future negotiations with Britain. According to Andrej Mitrović, there was a general awareness in the Serbian government that the Entente were 'waging war for their own interests' and, as a result, they felt they also had a right to 'insist' on securing Serbian interests, in spite of the Allies wishes.<sup>124</sup> Mitrović goes as far as to argue that this assumption 'virtually implied the existence of two battlefronts' for the Serbian government, 'an armed front against the enemy and a diplomatic front against the Allies.'<sup>125</sup> It would be Pašić's continued insistence that the Allies guarantee the Yugoslav programme in its entirety, and Britain's reluctance to adopt this position, that set the tone of British-Serbian diplomatic relations for the rest of Serbia's existence as an independent state during the war.

Yet at the same time, given Serbia's status as a small power with big aspirations, Pašić understood that the patronage of the Allies remained crucial for Serbia to have any chance at creating a Yugoslav state.<sup>126</sup> Pašić clearly sought to use Britain's rhetorical support for the

---

<sup>123</sup> Dragoljub R. Živojinović, 'Serbia and the 1915 Treaty of London', in, Vojislav G. Pavlović (ed.), *Serbia and Italy in the Great War* (Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies, 2019), p. 123.

<sup>124</sup> Mitrović, p. 63.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Dragnich, *Serbia, Nikola Pašić, and Yugoslavia*, p. 113.

nationality principle to try and compel Britain to support the Yugoslav programme. Thus the Niš Declaration made clear that, in pursuing its national expansion, Serbia would 'strive to be a faithful interpreter of this national determination, and loyal to its powerful and heroic Allies.'<sup>127</sup> The expectation of British support for the Niš Declaration was reinforced by the perception, in Serbia, that Britain saw a Yugoslav state as an integral component of the future European balance of power, with a South Slav state acting as a strong obstacle to the Austro-German policy of expanding its influence in the Balkans.<sup>128</sup> According to Milenko Vesnić, the Serbian Minister in Paris, 'the existence of an invigorated Serbia was directly an object of importance' to Britain because, at the end of the war, Germany would continue to have expansionist ambitions which would necessitate a 'barrier between them and the objects of their expansion eastward.'<sup>129</sup>

However, Serbia's military victories and the opportunity to promulgate the Niš Declaration had come at a material cost, and the Serbian army was now totally exhausted in terms of its future fighting capacity.<sup>130</sup> The Serbian army did not have time to recover from the Balkan Wars, and the country was 'unprepared in every regard' for another war in August 1914.<sup>131</sup> Another five months of incessant fighting to repel two Austrian invasions only served to exacerbate these internal problems in Serbia. In terms of battlefield casualties, over the

---

<sup>127</sup> 'Declaration Made by the Serbian Government Before the National Assembly on December 7 1914', 1 January 1915, TNA, FO 371/2460-337.

<sup>128</sup> James Evans, *Great Britain and the Creation of Yugoslavia: Negotiating Balkan Nationality and Identity* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2008), p. 160.

<sup>129</sup> Crewe, memorandum, 28 June 1915, TNA, FO 800/95/43.

<sup>130</sup> Dušan T. Bataković, 'Serbia 1914-1918: War Imposed, Martyrdom, Resurrection', in Dragan Purešić (ed.), *Serbia in the Great War: Anglo-Saxon Testimonies and Historical Analysis* (Belgrade: National Library of Serbia, 2014), p. 26.

<sup>131</sup> James Lyon, "'A Peasant Mob": The Serbian Army on the Eve of the Great War', *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 61, No. 3 (1997), pp. 483-487.

course of 1914 Serbia had lost around 3.5% of its pre-war population.<sup>132</sup> Military expenditure had reached a sum equal to the turnover of the entire Serbian economy over several peacetime years.<sup>133</sup> And finally, according to Colonel Harrison, the British Military Attaché in Serbia, there were no reserves of wheat and flour left in Serbia, meaning the country 'was entirely dependent on imports' to feed its population.<sup>134</sup> Therefore, because of Serbia's extremely reduced economic, material and military capacities, Pašić now sought to adopt a purely defensive strategy, seeking to hold out until the Allies were victorious.<sup>135</sup>

Witnessing the situation in Serbia, des Graz made it clear to Grey that, despite the 'elation' of the Serbian government following their military success, there remained a strong sense of 'apprehension' and a feeling that they had 'done enough', unless 'helped' by Britain and the Allies.<sup>136</sup> The more disconcerting news from Serbia was the current state of the Serbian army, and the fact the new levies of troops being called up were 'said to be the last available.'<sup>137</sup> These gloomy observations became more pertinent given the persistent rumours that the Austrians were massing a force of over 200,000 on Serbia's northern frontier, in anticipation of a renewed offensive.<sup>138</sup> As a result, des Graz concluded that Britain needed to consider the possibility of another successful Austrian advance placing Serbia in 'the same desperate situation', as before its victory in December 1914.<sup>139</sup> This dire situation led the Serbian government to increasingly see their salvation in the despatch of

---

<sup>132</sup> Lyon, *Serbia and the Balkan Front*, p. 235.

<sup>133</sup> Mitrović, p. 107.

<sup>134</sup> No 62, des Graz to Grey, 25 February 1915, TNA, FO 371/2253-22057.

<sup>135</sup> Bataković, 'Serbia 1914-1918: War Imposed, Martyrdom, Resurrection', p. 24; *Ibid*, 'Serbian War Aims and Military Strategy 1914-1918', p. 85.

<sup>136</sup> No 7, des Graz to Grey, 8 January 1915, TNA, FO 371/2249-2975.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>138</sup> No 5, des Graz to Grey, 4 January 1915, TNA, FO 371/2249-1323.

<sup>139</sup> No 8, des Graz to Grey, 8 January 1915, TNA, FO 371/2241-2976.

Allied troops to the Balkans. As Vesnić informed his British counterpart in Paris, Sir Francis Bertie, although Serbia was resolved to do its 'best to defend herself...she ought to have assistance...such as military aid from France and England.'<sup>140</sup>

These sentiments were also supported by the conclusions of Robert Seton-Watson and George Trevelyan, who had been sent by the Foreign Office to the Balkans on an unofficial fact finding mission.<sup>141</sup> Having spent time in Serbia speaking to British and Serbian officials, Trevelyan expressed in a letter that 'everything we have seen and heard in Serbia leads us to suppose that Serbia cannot resist such an attack successfully if unaided.'<sup>142</sup> It was also made clear that Serbia required greater moral and political support from its Allies, to help bolster its resolve against a potential Austrian attack.<sup>143</sup> In a telegram to Grey, Seton-Watson argued that if Serbia was overrun, all of Britain's hopes of securing the services of the other Balkan states would be 'irretrievably ruined.'<sup>144</sup> Serbia's fragile position and its relation to the general geopolitical situation in the Balkans was made clear by Trevelyan, who asserted that the crux of the matter was that Britain 'must save Serbia or lose the whole Near-East.'<sup>145</sup> To prevent the destruction of Serbia and the loss of Britain's influence in the Near East, Trevelyan and Seton-Watson concurred with the views of the Serbian government and 'urged' that 'military action' be taken 'to save Serbia.'<sup>146</sup>

---

<sup>140</sup> No 33, Bertie to Grey, 25 January 1915, TNA, FO 371/2242-9440.

<sup>141</sup> Grey, minute, 9 December 1914, TNA, FO 371/1906-81051.

<sup>142</sup> Trevelyan to Acland, letter, 15 January 1915, TNA, FO 800/112.

<sup>143</sup> Trevelyan to Acland, letter, 4 January 1915, TNA, FO 800/112.

<sup>144</sup> R.W. Seton-Watson and George Trevelyan to Foreign Office, 15 January 1915, in, Hugh and, Christopher Seton-Watson (eds.), *R. W. Seton-Watson and the Yugoslavs, Correspondence 1906-1941: Vol One 1906-1918* (London: British Academy, 1976), p. 195.

<sup>145</sup> Trevelyan to Acland, 15 January 1915, TNA, FO 800/112.

<sup>146</sup> George Trevelyan, *Grey of Fallodon: Life of Sir Edward Grey* (London Longman 1937), p. 280.



Fortunately for Serbia, its request for Allied support in the form of troops was made at a moment when Britain was considering revising its strategy, so as to take a greater consideration of the military situation in the Balkans and Near East. Over late-December/early-January, a combination of disillusionment at the prospect of defeating the Germans on the Western Front and the need to support Russia on the Eastern Front, had drawn Britain to consider the opening of a second front in the Near East.<sup>147</sup> Lloyd George had argued in a memorandum that a military expedition to the Balkans would offer much better prospects than the 'futility' of attrition on the Western Front, while also providing 'a tangible victory' for British arms.<sup>148</sup> He felt that an alternate strategy, for dealing a knock-out blow to the Central Powers, would be to send British troops to the Balkans to conduct an attack on Austria, in conjunction with the Serbians and the other Balkan states.<sup>149</sup> To achieve this he proposed that an advance guard of British troops be sent to Salonica, to initially compel the Balkan neutrals to join the Allies, and then build up Britain's military presence for eventual military operations against Austria.<sup>150</sup> Although his focus on despatching troops to the Balkans was ostensibly to secure British interests, Lloyd George also envisaged the Salonica expedition to be a means to provide Serbia with the military support it desired.

Having reviewed the pessimistic reports on the precarious state of the Serbian army and the looming threat of a renewed Austrian invasion, the War Council found themselves receptive

---

<sup>147</sup> French, *British Strategy and War Aims*, pp. 57-63; Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis II* (London: Thornton, 1923), pp. 17-33; Lloyd George, I, pp. 231-248.

<sup>148</sup> Lloyd George, 'Suggestions of the Military Position', 1 January 1915, TNA, CAB 42/1/8.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

to Lloyd George's proposal in early-January.<sup>151</sup> When the Cabinet discussed the situation in Serbia on 21 January, most of them were 'strongly of [the] opinion that the collapse of Serbian resistance would have a most damaging effect' on the war effort.<sup>152</sup> The desire to provide Serbia with relief appeared to be genuine given that, immediately after the Cabinet meeting, Asquith described how he 'earnestly' began discussing the details of the 'Serbian business' with Grey and Lloyd George.<sup>153</sup> As a result, it appeared that Britain was finally coming round to taking a greater interest in the situation in Serbia, irrespective of its own strategic considerations.

Unfortunately this was not exactly the case. Supporting Serbia, through the despatch of British troops to Salonica, still had to be formulated in relation to Britain's own strategic imperatives. Although Britain was willing to consider the need to provide Serbia with military and moral support, it had not lost sight of its long-term policy of recreating the Balkan league to help compensate for Britain's lack of manpower. Hence, while Asquith felt that it was important 'to do something really effective for Serbia', he remained firm that the despatch of British troops would have to be conditional on the Balkan neutrals agreeing beforehand to join the Allies in a Balkan bloc.<sup>154</sup> These views ultimately led Britain to emphasise that the main strategic factor, for the potential despatch of British troops to Salonica, was the importance of securing the services of the Balkan states, not the provision of military support to Serbia.<sup>155</sup>

---

<sup>151</sup> War Council Meeting Minutes, 8 January 1915 CAB 42/1/12; War Council Meeting Minutes, 13 January 1915, TNA, CAB 42/1/16.

<sup>152</sup> Asquith to the King, letter, 21 January 1915, TNA, CAB 37/123/33.

<sup>153</sup> Asquith to Venetia Stanley, 22 January 1915, in, Brocks, pp. 390-391.

<sup>154</sup> Herbert Asquith, *Memories and Reflections 1852-1927* (London: Cassell and Company Limited, 1928), p. 57; Asquith to Venetia Stanley, 18 January 1915, in, Brocks, p. 386.

<sup>155</sup> Asquith to the King, letter, 21 January 1915, TNA, CAB 37/123/33.

The decision to subordinate the question of military aid for Serbia, in favour of focusing on garnering the support of Balkan neutrals (through the despatch of troops to Salonica), was also shaped by the Cabinet's acceptance, without question, of Kitchener's assertion that there were no troops available for a large-scale military operation in the Balkans to support Serbia against Austria.<sup>156</sup> As Keith Neilson argues, Kitchener's views were predominantly shaped by his emphasis on the 'primacy of the Western Front' within the formulation of British strategy, and he was disposed to see the Salonica expedition within this context.<sup>157</sup> On 28 January 1915, Kitchener, given his commitment to the Western Front, made clear to the War Council that he would only contemplate the despatch of a small contingent of troops to Salonica for the political purpose of a 'diversion...designed to draw the various Balkan states in the war.'<sup>158</sup> According to Kitchener, 'there was no great need for active assistance to Serbia' because the intelligence reports from Serbia, regarding a potential Austrian invasion, had been incorrect.<sup>159</sup> By 9 February, as a result of Kitchener's influence, the War Council concluded that it was more prudent, in terms of strategy, for Britain to send troops to Salonica for political purposes, rather than military, to ensure 'that Greece would be brought into the war...the hostile attitude of Bulgaria would be paralysed...[and]...Romania would be drawn in.'<sup>160</sup>

---

<sup>156</sup> Phillip Magnus, *Kitchener: Portrait of an Imperialist* (London: Jon Murray, 1958), p. 312; Stephen Roskill, *Hankey, Man of Secrets, Vol I 1877-1918* (London: Collins, 1970), pp. 154-155.

<sup>157</sup> Keith Neilson, 'Kitchener: A Reputation Refurbished?', *Canadian Journal of History*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (1980), p. 125.

<sup>158</sup> War Council Meeting Minutes, 6:30pm, 28 January 1915, TNA, CAB 42/1/28.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> War Council Meeting Minutes, 9 February 1915, TNA, CAB 42/1/33.

However, on 17 February, owing to Greece's refusal to grant Britain permission to land troops at Salonica, the 'Serbian demarche' and the Salonica expedition were abandoned.<sup>161</sup> Nonetheless, Britain remained optimistic that it could address Serbia's weak position and convince the Balkan neutrals to join the Allies, through an attempt at forcing the Dardanelles, and taking control of the Turkish Straits.<sup>162</sup> The plans for a Dardanelles expedition had been formulated around the same time as the Salonica expedition, and British policy-makers had no trouble in arguing that a naval attack on the Ottoman Empire would be just as effective as a military operation against the Austrians. In fact, the Dardanelles expedition had always been the more popular of the two schemes because it did not require the despatch of any British troops, and it was a more direct means to defend Britain's imperial interests in Egypt and India.<sup>163</sup> As a result, the War Council decided that 'the most effective way' to now provide help to Serbia 'would be to strike a big blow at the Dardanelles' because, if British ships successfully forced the Turkish Straits, it 'would probably change the attitude of the Balkan' states, leading them to join the Allies.<sup>164</sup> Overall, Britain's commitment to military operations on the Western Front meant a strategy of supporting Serbia that required the minimum amount of expenditure, in regard to Britain's military resources in the Near East, had the greatest appeal.

---

<sup>161</sup> Asquith, p. 63.

<sup>162</sup> For more information on the background to the Dardanelles expedition see, Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis* II, pp. 148-189; George Cassar, *Kitchener: Architect of Victory* (London: William Kimber, 1977), pp. 265-285; David French, 'The Origins of the Dardanelles Campaign Reconsidered', *History*, Vol. 28, No. 223 (1983), pp. 210-234; William J. Philpott, 'Kitchener and the 29<sup>th</sup> Division: A Study in Anglo-French Strategic Relations, 1914-1915', *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (1993), pp. 375-407.

<sup>163</sup> J. M. Bourne, *Britain and the Great War: 1914-1918* (London: Edward and Arnold, 1989), pp. 41-42.

<sup>164</sup> War Council Meeting Minutes, 19 February 1915, TNA, CAB 42/1/36.

Because Britain was optimistic that a military success at the Dardanelles would relieve Serbia from its precarious military position, the Foreign Office also felt it timely to reopen its discussions with Serbia over the cession of Macedonia. According to Clerk, solving the Macedonia question through diplomatic means remained 'the centre of the whole problem' to reconciling the Balkan states.<sup>165</sup> However, given that Pašič had made it clear in September 1914 that Serbia would require some form of territorial compensation in return for the cession Macedonia, the Foreign Office had to find an acceptable formula that satiated both Bulgaria and Serbia, whilst remaining within the parameters of Britain's own diplomatic considerations. The territorial formula that British policy-makers eventually settled on was one that sought to make Serbia's territorial expansion, and the cession of Macedonia to Bulgaria, 'interdependent parts of one policy.'<sup>166</sup>

Embedded in this territorial formula, was the continued emphasis, by the Foreign Office, on a holistic compromise solution to redressing the wrongs of the Treaty of Bucharest.<sup>167</sup> This decision was shaped by the underlying principle, seen as sacrosanct at the Foreign Office, that the 'conventional norms of decency ought to be applied to the conduct of international politics'.<sup>168</sup> As a result, the prevailing assumption of British diplomats was that 'gentlemanly' behaviour and 'fair and straight dealing' were the best means to resolving international disputes.<sup>169</sup> Given this assumption, the Foreign Office was of the firm belief that Serbia should specifically cede to Bulgaria a portion of Macedonia, defined as the uncontested

---

<sup>165</sup> Clerk, minute, 16 January 1915, TNA, FO 371/2241-6110.

<sup>166</sup> Percy, memorandum, 21 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2268-16675.

<sup>167</sup> Evans, p. 162.

<sup>168</sup> Thomas G. Otte, *The Foreign Office Mind: The Making of British Policy 1865-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 396.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

zone, which had been promised to Bulgaria in the 1912 Serb-Bulgar alliance. According to Lord Crewe, this was the fairest way of resolving the Macedonia dispute because Serbia had already agreed 'in principle' to cede the uncontested zone in 1912, and it would be 'unreasonable' for them to contend that they were now being 'victimised'.<sup>170</sup> Hence, Britain felt it was justified, as Clerk argued, in asking Serbia to 'play the game' because Grey's policy was 'a fair and reasonable' one.<sup>171</sup>

The decision as to what territorial compensation Serbia would receive was a bit more difficult for the Foreign Office to formulate, given their prevailing aversion to committing to the destruction of Austria-Hungary. However, as Kenneth Calder has argued, there was an element of strategy embedded in this position.<sup>172</sup> In essence, Britain wanted to maintain a 'flexibility' in its diplomacy by not making unnecessary commitments, and instead chose to wait on events 'until a decision on Eastern Europe was absolutely necessary'.<sup>173</sup> Although Britain did not believe it desirable to see Austria-Hungary partitioned, it remained 'the dispensable object of diplomacy' in its quest to win the war.<sup>174</sup> Thus Serbia and its war aims remained part of a broader strategic and political purview, in which the Yugoslav programme could potentially be accommodated by Britain, should it coalesce with the latter's own long-term interests.

---

<sup>170</sup> No 184, Crewe to des Graz, 4 June 1915, TNA, FO 371/2261-72176.

<sup>171</sup> Clerk, minute, 21 September 1914, TNA, FO 371/1901-51616.

<sup>172</sup> Kenneth J. Calder, *Britain and the Origins of New Europe 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 9.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> Hanak, 'The Government, The Foreign Office and Austria-Hungary, 1914-1918', p. 163.

Thus, although Grey was unwilling to accede to Pašić's request that the Allies guarantee Serbia's acquisition of 'Serb-Croatian' territory, he did accept that he would have to support Serbia's territorial expansion in some capacity. As Clerk argued, although the time had 'not yet come for detailed considerations' of the Yugoslav question, elements of it could still be used as 'the justification for the cession [of Macedonia] to Bulgaria.'<sup>175</sup> The extent of territory Grey was willing to guarantee Serbia, was for the creation of a 'Greater Serbia' which he defined as Bosnia-Herzegovina and 'wide access' to the Adriatic.'<sup>176</sup> Overall, as James Evans highlights, the resulting territory Britain offered to secure for Serbia, was conceived purely as a 'reward for services to the Allied cause', rather than 'as rightfully' Serbia's 'on ethnic grounds', which ran counter to Serbia's perception of the Yugoslav programme as congruent with the nationality principle.<sup>177</sup>

The Foreign Office was confident that their territorial offer was more than a fair exchange, because it promised to fulfill Serbia's wider territorial aspirations for the mere return to the status quo in Macedonia. There had been a general assumption at the Foreign Office that Serbia had only been compelled to hold onto the uncontested zone because they had been forced by the Austrians to relinquish the Albanian port of Durazzo (their only form of access to the Adriatic), during the First Balkan War.<sup>178</sup> Unlike the Yugoslav question, with its far reaching ramifications on the status of Austria-Hungary, the question of Serbian access to

---

<sup>175</sup> Clerk, minute, 8 January 1915, TNA, FO 371/2241-4404.

<sup>176</sup> No 25, Grey to des Graz, 23 January 1915, TNA, FO 371/2242-8487; No 113, Buchanan to Grey, 29 January 1915, TNA, FO 371/2242-10958. For more information on the differences between Greater Serbia and Yugoslavia see, Nikola B. Popović, 'The Triple Entente and the Idea of "Greater Serbia" During the First World War, in, Dragoljub R., Živojinović, (ed.), *The Serbs and the First World War* (Serbian Academy of Science and Arts: Belgrade, 2015), pp. 129-139

<sup>177</sup> Evans, p. 163.

<sup>178</sup> Percy, memorandum, 24 June 1915, TNA, FO 371/2261-83042.

the Adriatic had always been a matter of indifference to British policymakers.<sup>179</sup> The Foreign Office felt confident that its territorial scheme would redeem Serbia's loss of an outlet to the sea, by ensuring that Serbia would 'receive all, and far more than all, that she dreamt of in 1912 on the Adriatic.'<sup>180</sup> Thus, the Foreign Office expected the Serbian government to accept this offer, in appreciation of how far Britain had 'travelled towards the acceptance of Serbian aspirations which before [the war] had been hardly considered outside Serbia.'<sup>181</sup>



Figure 2: Map of Macedonia and the contested zone (shaded) and uncontested zone (unshaded). Source: Jelavich, p. 98.

<sup>179</sup> Keith M. Wilson, *The Policy of the Entente* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 93.

<sup>180</sup> Percy, memorandum, 21 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2268-16675.

<sup>181</sup> Percy, memorandum, 24 June 1915, TNA, FO 371/2261-83042.



Despite the perception at the Foreign Office that their territorial offer to Serbia was a fair one, it failed to take into consideration, as Seton-Watson had argued, that Pašić had 'nailed his colours to the mast' of the Yugoslav programme through the promulgation of the Niš Declaration.<sup>182</sup> According to Seton-Watson, Serbia could not cede the uncontested zone 'without the certainty' of acquiring Croatia, and that to offer Bosnia would be 'worse than to offer nothing' to the Serbians.<sup>183</sup> This was because the Serbian government saw 'Bosnia and Dalmatia as indisputably Serb...bound to come to Serbia sooner or later', and did not consider their annexation as any kind of 'reward.'<sup>184</sup>

On 1 February 1915 Seton-Watson's assertions proved correct, when Grey's attempts to promulgate his Macedonia policy were dashed by news received from des Graz. According to des Graz, Pašić remained unwilling to discuss the cession of the uncontested zone unless Britain promised more adequate territorial compensations, to quell the continuing domestic agitation.<sup>185</sup> Upon receiving this news, Grey became 'apprehensive' of putting pressure on Serbia to cede the uncontested zone, because it would 'destroy Serbian morale without securing the support of Bulgaria.'<sup>186</sup> However, Grey's prevailing reluctance to force the issue with the Serbian government did not arise out of the belief that his territorial formula was not adequate enough to move the Serbian government, but rather from a sense of optimism that a British success at the Dardanelles would make the Balkans states more amenable towards his policy of compromise.

---

<sup>182</sup> Seton-Watson to Walter Runciman, 19 March 1915, in, Seton-Watson, *R. W. Seton-Watson and the Yugoslavs*, pp. 206-207.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid; Trevelyan to Acland, letter, 15 January 1915, TNA, FO 800/112.

<sup>184</sup> 'Report by Captain Amery M.P. The Diplomatic Situation in the Balkans', 11 July 1915, TNA, FO 371/2261-94627.

<sup>185</sup> No 34, des Graz to Grey, 1 February 1915, TNA, FO 371/2242-12352.

<sup>186</sup> No 228, Grey to Buchanan, 15 February 1915, TNA, FO 371/2242-17541.

Thus, by 13 February 1915, Grey confidently asserted that successfully forcing the Turkish Straits would allow British diplomacy to be 'coordinated with strategy', much improving 'the opportunity for diplomatic steps at Sofia and elsewhere.'<sup>187</sup> Grey's assumption had been shaped by reports that, until the Bulgarian Government was 'persuaded' that the Allies were 'the winning side', they would not be convinced by any territorial offers, and would instead be 'watching military events with great minuteness.'<sup>188</sup> Grey's position seemed to be vindicated once the British navy commenced their bombardment of the Dardanelles. After receiving reports that Bulgaria had been 'impressed', Launcelot Oliphant, a clerk at the War Department, noted that it was 'obvious that if steady progress were made in the Straits the effect would be very sobering on Bulgaria.'<sup>189</sup> Overall, given these positive developments, it was agreed at the Foreign Office that until Bulgaria had been moved by military action, it was 'unnecessary to say anything at Niš.'<sup>190</sup>

By March 1915 Britain appeared to have found in the Dardanelles, a strategy that took into consideration both British and Serbian interests. Britain was potentially able to secure the belligerence of the Balkan neutrals, without having to make a great commitment of troops, whilst Serbia would receive much needed military support, once the British navy forced the Turkish Straits, and the Balkan neutrals joined the Allies. However, underneath this relatively stable state of affairs lingered the unresolved issue of whether the Serbian government could be reconciled to accept Grey's policy of concessions in Macedonia, given

---

<sup>187</sup> Grey to Buchanan, letter, 13 February 1915, TNA, FO 800/75.

<sup>188</sup> Bax-Ironside to Grey, letter, 28 January 1915, TNA, FO 800/43.

<sup>189</sup> Oliphant, minute, 24 February 1915, TNA, FO 371/2243-21522.

<sup>190</sup> No 649, Grey to Bertie, 26 March 1915, TNA, FO 371/2243-34367.

Pašić's commitment to the Niš Declaration. Thus, whilst British-Serbian relations remained cordial in early-1915, they remained subject to the ongoing military situation in the Near East. This was because any change in the military situation in the Near East that went against the Allies, meant that Serbia would again be at risk of being compelled to follow a policy inimical to its interests.

## Chapter Two: Serbia, Britain, and the Near Eastern Theatre of War

Britain's decision to commit itself to a strategy focused on forcing the Turkish Straits ossified the framework that had initially led British policy-makers in 1914, to view Serbia solely within the context of British interests. Ultimately it was these circumstances that led to a number of disagreements arising between Britain and Serbia over 1915. As the military situation became increasingly desperate at the Dardanelles, in an attempt to resolve this decline, Britain found itself having to sacrifice more and more of Serbia's interests and, as a result, British-Serbian relations became much more tense. This chapter will assess the course of British-Serbian relations from March to September 1915, showing how Britain became trapped by the logic of its strategy which necessitated it adopt a diplomatic policy inimical to Serbia, thus exacerbating the latent contradictions in Britain's wartime relationship with Serbia.

An unfortunate corollary of Grey's personal desire to not involve himself too deeply in the territorial discussions over Macedonia, was his willingness to subordinate his diplomacy to the dictates of Britain's Near Eastern strategy. According to Zara Steiner, Grey was firmly of the impression that 'in wartime the diplomats served the interests of the service chiefs', which meant 'the immediate needs of the war dictated Grey's diplomacy.'<sup>191</sup> Britain's decision to commit to a strategy focused on forcing the Dardanelles and securing the Turkish Straits meant that Grey's diplomacy became shackled to military developments in

---

<sup>191</sup> Zara Steiner, 'The Foreign Office and the War', in F. H. Hinsley (ed.), *British Foreign Policy Under Sir Edward Grey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 516, 531; Eustace Percy, *Some Memories* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1958), pp. 41-42; Robbins, *Sir Edward Grey*, pp. 301-302.

the Near East.<sup>192</sup> According to Kitchener, to ensure the security of Britain's Eastern Empire, once the decision had been made to force the Turkish Straits, 'there could be no going back' because 'the effect of a defeat in the Orient would be very serious.'<sup>193</sup> As David French argues, Britain's ardent commitment to the Dardanelles expedition was shaped by imperial considerations and the belief that to abandon the expedition would undermine British 'prestige' among the Empire's subjects in the East.<sup>194</sup> Given the strategic link between Britain's position at the Dardanelles and the Balkan situation, Grey was compelled to adopt a more involved and forceful diplomacy in the Balkans, compared to that of 1914, because to not get involved would be to directly risk Britain's interests.

Unfortunately, Britain's optimism surrounding the naval bombardment of the Dardanelles was soon dashed by the news that British ships had been unable to force the Turkish Straits, in a series of attacks in February and March 1915.<sup>195</sup> However, with Britain now committed to the Dardanelles expedition, it was decided that British troops would have to continue the attack, with plans being made for an assault on the Gallipoli peninsula in April.<sup>196</sup>

Although the naval operations at the Dardanelles did not, as hoped, move the Bulgarian government and the Balkan neutrals, they did have an effect on the Italian government who expressed their willingness to join the Allies in exchange for a large portion of Austrian

---

<sup>192</sup> Lowe, 'The Failure of British Diplomacy in the Balkans 1914-1916', p. 80.

<sup>193</sup> War Council Meeting Minutes, 24 February 1915, TNA, CAB 42/1/42.

<sup>194</sup> David French, 'The Dardanelles, Mecca, and Kut: Prestige as a Factor in British Eastern Strategy, 1914-1916', *War and Society*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1987), pp. 45-61.

<sup>195</sup> For more information on the naval bombardment of the Dardanelles, see, Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis II*, pp. 190-253

<sup>196</sup> Tim Travers, *Gallipoli 1915* (Stroud: Tempus, 2002), pp. 20-36

territory.<sup>197</sup> According to David Stevenson, Britain reacted favourably to these overtures due to an 'over-optimistic assessment' of Italy's military capabilities, and the 'likelihood' that Italy's entry would 'bring in the Balkan states, given the prevailing difficulties being experienced at the Dardanelles.'<sup>198</sup>

However, the problem for Britain was that Italy's territorial ambitions in the Adriatic were in direct conflict with Serbia's Yugoslav aspirations. Because Italian belligerence was seen as such an important facet of British strategy, the Cabinet decided to favour Italy's interests over Serbia's.<sup>199</sup> Whilst the Treaty of London, signed on 26 April 1915, secured Italy's cooperation, it also directly impinged on the Yugoslav programme by promising Italy a large portion of Dalmatia, whose population included a significant number of South Slavs.<sup>200</sup>

Despite the hopes of the Foreign Office that the terms of the treaty would remain a secret, it appears that Pašić had become aware of the secret negotiations with Italy as early as 26 March.<sup>201</sup> According to des Graz, Pašić had been inconsolable after hearing the news and had to be comforted by his ministerial colleagues.<sup>202</sup> The resulting backlash from the Serbian government (upon being informed of the secret negotiations regarding the Treaty of London) proved onerous for Britain to deal with, and was the first sign of a schism between Britain and Serbia over their differing perceptions towards the war.

---

<sup>197</sup> C. J. Lowe, 'Britain and Italian Intervention, 1914-1915', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 102, No. 3 (1969), p. 541. For a more comprehensive analysis of Britain and Italy's entry into the war see, Stefano Marcuzzi, *Britain and Italy in the Era of the Great War: Defending and Forging Empires* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 15-67.

<sup>198</sup> Stevenson, *The First World War and International Politics*, p. 53.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>200</sup> Lowe, 'Britain and Italian Intervention, 1914-1915', p. 548.

<sup>201</sup> Hugh and Christopher Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe: R.W. Seton-Watson and the Last Years of Austria-Hungary* (London: Methuen, 1981), p. 121.

<sup>202</sup> Des Graz to Nicolson, letter, 4 April 1915, TNA, FO 800/377.

On 3 April, Jovan Jovanović, the acting Serbian Foreign Minister, approached des Graz with 'serious concerns' over information he had received from 'a good diplomatic source' regarding Italy's desire to 'turn the Adriatic into an Italian lake.'<sup>203</sup> The rumours regarding the Treaty of London merely confirmed the prevailing suspicion in Serbia, that Italy was pursuing a policy detrimental to Serbia's own 'claims to the Adriatic and...wider aspirations' for a Yugoslav state.<sup>204</sup> At his meeting with des Graz, Jovanović had brought a map of Dalmatia to reinforce Serbia's point of view and show that a number of areas with a Slav majority had been promised to Italy, arguing that this would lead to 'a repetition of the Austrian policy' of 'strangling' the aspirations of Serbia to unite the South Slavs.<sup>205</sup>

The rumours surrounding the terms of the Treaty of London also affected Pašić's domestic position, because it provided his critics in the military and parliament with a means to publicly attack the coalition government.<sup>206</sup> On 27 April, during a session of parliament, Pašić's declaration that he had 'no information' to give the parliament in regard to the Allied talks with Italy was 'not well received.'<sup>207</sup> Soon after this, Jovanović visited des Graz again to highlight how an increasingly large section of the parliament were becoming 'suspicious' of Pašić's foreign policy.<sup>208</sup> Furthermore, as des Graz noted in his diary, certain unruly elements in the army were being 'awakened by [the] question in parliament.'<sup>209</sup> Jovanović warned des Graz that the discontent developing in Serbia, over the rumoured territorial

---

<sup>203</sup> No 116, des Graz to Grey, 3 April 1915, TNA, FO 371/2256-39200.

<sup>204</sup> Des Graz to Nicolson, letter, 4 April 1915, TNA, FO 800/377.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Miroslav Radivojević, 'Serbia, Italy's Entrance into World War I, and the London Agreement: A New Interpretation', *Istraživanja*, Vol 31 (2020), p. 190.

<sup>207</sup> No 154, des Graz to Grey, 28 April 1915, TNA, FO 371/2257-51348.

<sup>208</sup> No 158, des Graz to Grey, 30 April 1915, TNA, FO 371/2257-52833.

<sup>209</sup> Charles des Graz, Diary, 29 April 1915, CUL, MSS 9988/22.

promises made to Italy, could create the conditions for the parliament and army to collude together and instigate 'a withdrawal of confidence' in the government.<sup>210</sup>

On 3 May, des Graz informed Grey that Pašić's exclusion from the negotiations with Italy had made some of Pašić's colleagues in the cabinet 'inclined to make him responsible for [the] apparent lack of confidence' the Allies had in Serbia.<sup>211</sup> According to des Graz, the main issue was that parliamentary support for Pašić's coalition government had stemmed from its continued commitment to the Niš Declaration and the parliament's belief that the Yugoslav programme was in line with Britain's policy of supporting the rights of small nations.<sup>212</sup> Many parliamentarians who supported the coalition had assumed that Pašić 'enjoyed the full confidence' of the Allies, and it was this assumption that had led them to see Pašić as a suitable candidate to proselytize the Yugoslav cause amongst the Allies.<sup>213</sup> However Pašić's exclusion from the talks with Italy had proved these assumptions to clearly be false.<sup>214</sup> Pašić bemoaned to des Graz how the 'suddenness' of the news, that Serbia's Yugoslav aspirations had been sacrificed to Italy, made it 'impossible' for him 'to prepare parliament and public opinion.'<sup>215</sup> To remedy the situation, Pašić implored des Graz to inform him of any future negotiations concerning Serbian interests, so he could be better prepared when facing the public, and also that the concessions made by Britain to Italy should be liable to amendments and not 'irrevocably decided.'<sup>216</sup>

---

<sup>210</sup> No 158, des Graz to Grey, 30 April 1915, TNA, FO 371/2257-52833.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> No 30, des Graz to Grey, 12 May 1915, TNA, FO 371/2261-80591.

<sup>213</sup> No 162, des Graz to Grey, 7 May 1915, TNA, FO 371/2257-56374.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.





Figure 3: Map of the territory assigned to Italy in the Treaty of London. Source: Marcuzzi, p. 70.

Ultimately, Italy's cooperation was too important for Britain to ignore in favour of Serbia's Yugoslav interests. This decision was upheld despite the best efforts of Seton-Watson, who undertook a vigorous press campaign that declared Britain's territorial promises to Italy were harmful to the interests of Serbia and the South Slavs by contravening Britain's

supposed support of the nationality principle.<sup>217</sup> Yet as Grey explained to Seton-Watson, although he understood Pašić's frustration, it would 'be most ungenerous if the Serbs and other Slavs were, in the final settlement, to refuse what reasonable concessions were found necessary to enable the Great powers...the means of securing victory.'<sup>218</sup>

Grey's sympathy for Serbia went as far as ensuring it received 'commercial access' to the Adriatic, believing it 'unfair' for Italy's territorial demands to 'restrict Serbia.'<sup>219</sup> As a result, during the London negotiations, Grey was successful in securing for Serbia a significant portion of southern Dalmatia, including the ports of Spalato and Ragusa.<sup>220</sup> Furthermore, when des Graz informed Grey that Pašić's position was becoming increasingly 'untenable', Grey, on his own initiative, sought to privately assure Pašić that his apprehensions were 'most unwarranted', by personally promising him 'the whole of Bosnia-Herzegovina through union with Serbia [and] wide access to Adriatic in Dalmatia'.<sup>221</sup> Although it was a vague reference, Grey did also inform Pašić about a possible union between Croatia and Serbia, and that it would be a matter 'decided by the Croats themselves.'<sup>222</sup> In spite of Grey's efforts to reassure him, Pašić remained 'depressed' and 'anxious about [the] internal situation.'<sup>223</sup> Although Grey had mentioned Croatia, this had been in an unofficial capacity, and it was of no help to Pašić given his need to provide the parliament with tangible evidence of the Allies' confidence in Serbia. Fortunately for Grey, Britain's decision to

---

<sup>217</sup> Seton-Watson to Runciman, 26 April 1915, in, Seton-Watson, *R. W. Seton-Watson and the Yugoslavs*, pp. 212-213.

<sup>218</sup> Grey to Seton-Watson, 3 May 1915, in, Seton-Watson, *R. W. Seton-Watson and the Yugoslavs*, p. 211.

<sup>219</sup> Grey to Rennell Rodd, 25 March 1915, TNA, CAB 37/126/30.

<sup>220</sup> Otte, *Statesman of Europe*, p. 1140; Lowe, 'Britain and Italian Intervention, 1914-1915', p. 547.

<sup>221</sup> No 161, des Graz to Grey, 3 May 1915, TNA, FO 371/2257-53757; No 153, Grey to des Graz, 4 May 1915, TNA, FO 371/2257-53757.

<sup>222</sup> No 153, Grey to des Graz, 4 May 1915, TNA, FO 371/2257-53757.

<sup>223</sup> No 163, des Graz to Grey, 8 May 1915, TNA, FO 371/2257-56420; Charles des Graz, *Diary*, 7 May 1915, CUL, MSS 9988/22.

support Italy's territorial claims did not lead to the collapse of Pašić's government, and on 10 May des Graz reported that Pašić had calmed down because the 'storm' in parliament had 'blown over.'<sup>224</sup>

However, by the time Italy joined the war on 23 May, the Allies had lost the strategic initiative in the Near East.<sup>225</sup> This was because the landing of troops at Gallipoli on 25 April did not have the desired effect and resulted in a costly stalemate, akin to that on the Western front.<sup>226</sup> Furthermore, the commencement of the Austro-German offensive in Galicia on 2 May, had forced the Russians to undertake a comprehensive retreat.<sup>227</sup> As a result of these military setbacks, securing a victory at the Dardanelles, to bolster the flagging military efforts of the Allies, became even more central to the formulation of British strategy in the Near East. On 22 May, Grey informed Lord Bertie how the 'situation at the Dardanelles' had rendered, more than ever, the entrance of Bulgaria into the war 'of great importance.'<sup>228</sup> Lord Crewe, who was temporarily standing in for Grey at the Foreign Office, felt that it was Bulgaria 'whose assistance for strategic reasons we require most' because with the support of Bulgarian troops, the Dardanelles 'could be forced rapidly and cheaply.'<sup>229</sup>

The hardening of Britain's resolve to secure Bulgaria's belligerence left the Serbian government in an unenviable position. The original rationale for the Dardanelles expedition

---

<sup>224</sup> No 165, des Graz to Grey, 10 May 1915, TNA, FO 371/2257-57779; Charles des Graz, Diary 10 May 1915, CUL, MSS 9988/22.

<sup>225</sup> Stevenson, *The First World War and International Politics*, p. 58.

<sup>226</sup> B. H. Liddell Hart, *History of the First World War* (London: Cassel, 1970), pp. 170-182; Travers, pp. 46-90.

<sup>227</sup> Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front 1914-1917* (London: Penguin, 1998), pp. 141-143.

<sup>228</sup> No 1266, Grey to Bertie, 22 May 1915, TNA, FO 371/2245-64248.

<sup>229</sup> Crewe, memorandum, 28 July 1915, TNA, FO 800/95/65.

had been that a military success would lead to the creation of a Balkan league to assist Serbia. However, in what David French calls an 'ironic reversal of priorities', the military setbacks experienced by the Allies made Bulgaria's cooperation the prerequisite to ensure a success at the Dardanelles, rather than its objective.<sup>230</sup> The problem now faced by Britain was that, in having sacrificed Serbia's interests in the Adriatic, it would be even more difficult for it to overcome the Serbian government's prevailing reluctance to make territorial concessions in Macedonia.

The renewed imperative of securing Bulgaria's allegiance, meant that the Foreign Office had to disregard the poor state of Serb-Bulgar relations and make their first formal territorial offer to Bulgaria on 29 May 1915.<sup>231</sup> The offer promised Bulgaria, in return for attacking Turkey, the immediate cession of Eastern Thrace and the post-war cession of the uncontested zone, provided Serbia obtain Bosnia-Herzegovina and an outlet on the Adriatic.<sup>232</sup> Grey had learnt his lesson in keeping Pašić in the dark over the Treaty of London and, on 27 May he sent Pašić a note, to help him in 'dealing with the situation created by the decisions of the Powers to take in their own hands the settlement of Serbian and Bulgarian relations.'<sup>233</sup> The Foreign Office was not confident that its communication to Pašić would have any effect, believing that a negative response 'was to be expected.'<sup>234</sup> Yet Clerk remained firm that the strategic imperative of securing Bulgaria's cooperation meant there

---

<sup>230</sup> French, *British Strategy and War Aims*, p. 108.

<sup>231</sup> Potts, p. 221.

<sup>232</sup> K. G. Robbins, 'British Diplomacy and Bulgaria 1914-1915', *Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 49, No. 117 (1971), p. 576.

<sup>233</sup> No 178, Grey to des Graz, 27 May 1915, TNA, FO 371/2260-66901.

<sup>234</sup> Clerk, minute, 30 May 1915, TNA, FO 371/2260-69256.

was 'no reason' for Britain to alter its 'just and proper' territorial offer, 'for fear of Serbia having a fit of sulks.'<sup>235</sup>

Having already seen their territorial ambitions in the Adriatic thwarted by Britain's decision to sign the Treaty of London, the Serbian government was now even more reluctant to consider the cession of the uncontested zone. On 30 May, following a meeting with Pašić, des Graz noted in his diary how 'upset' Pašić had been after receiving the news of the Allies' offer to Bulgaria, adding that he himself could not help 'being sorry for the Serbs.'<sup>236</sup>

According to des Graz, Pašić had found it 'entirely erroneous' that Britain use the nationality principle to argue for the Serbian cession of the uncontested zone, 'when the same principle had not been observed in...[Serbia's]...favour in [the] question of concessions to Italy.'<sup>237</sup>

More pertinently, Pašić continued to find himself constrained by the domestic situation in Serbia and the views of the parliament and army. Firstly, the Serbian constitution stipulated that no government could agree to the cession of Serbian territory, without the approval of parliament.<sup>238</sup> Given Pašić's public commitment to the Niš Declaration, it was unlikely that he would risk the downfall of the coalition government, by facilitating a parliamentary vote on ceding the uncontested zone. Additionally, Pašić had informed des Graz that the 'feeling aroused' in the Crown Prince and the Serbian General Staff was 'even stronger than he anticipated', with them adamant that Serbia would only cede the uncontested zone if it was

---

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Charles des Graz, Diary, 30 May 1915, CUL, MSS 9988/22.

<sup>237</sup> No 197, des Graz to Grey, 11 June 1915, TNA FO 371/2261-75680.

<sup>238</sup> No 196, des Graz to Grey, 10 June 1915, TNA, FO 371/2261-75238.

taken by force.<sup>239</sup> In fact, des Graz had heard rumours that ‘the leading officers of the army would welcome an opportunity for a change of Prime Minister’ and that if an agreement was signed with Bulgaria, the army would simply refuse to fight.<sup>240</sup> However, rather than address these objections the Foreign Office felt it best to wait over June and July to see what Bulgaria’s response would be to their territorial offer.<sup>241</sup>

Incidentally, in response to Italy’s decision to join the war, the Romanian government began to signify its willingness to join the Allies, in exchange for southern Bukovina, Transylvania and the Banat.<sup>242</sup> The Banat had a large population of South Slavs and, given the reaction of the Serbian government to the Treaty of London, Grey was now aware that he had to tread carefully. Grey initially believed it was ‘not fair’ to promise Romania all of the Banat because, combined with the concessions made to Italy and the prospect of concessions in Macedonia, it would ‘turn all the Slavs to the other side.’<sup>243</sup> Hence, when on 20 May, Bošković visited Grey to discuss Serbia’s claims to the Banat, Grey initially agreed with Bošković that he could not support Romania’s ‘extreme claims’, because of the ‘importance of Serbia having a strategic frontier’ in the Banat.<sup>244</sup>

However, Bulgaria’s lukewarm response to the Allies’ offer on 29 May had led to rumours that Bulgaria had decided to join the Central Powers and, as a result, Britain now saw

---

<sup>239</sup> No 188, des Graz to Grey, 4 June 1915, TNA, FO 371/2261-72292; des Graz to Nicolson, letter, 2 June 1915, TNA, FO 800/378.

<sup>240</sup> No 32, des Graz to Grey, 1 June 1915, TNA, FO 371/2261-81002.

<sup>241</sup> Clerk, and, Nicolson, minute, 10 June 1915, TNA, FO 371/2261-75238.

<sup>242</sup> Glenn E. Torrey, ‘Rumania and the Belligerents 1914-1916’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (1966), pp. 182-184; V. N. Vinogradov, ‘Romania in the First World War: The Years of Neutrality, 1914-1916’, *The International History Review*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (1992), pp. 455-456.

<sup>243</sup> No 471, Grey to Rodd, 8 May 1915, TNA, FO 371/2245-57571.

<sup>244</sup> No 174, Grey to des Graz, 20 May 1915, TNA, FO 371/2257-63945.

Romania's cooperation as vital measure, to secure Serbia's precarious military position against a potential German-Austro-Bulgar attack.<sup>245</sup> Consequently, on 7 July, it was officially decided that Britain would acquiesce to Romania's demand for the whole of the Banat, although this promise was conditional on adequate measures being taken for the security of Belgrade.<sup>246</sup> Yet, despite the attempt by Britain to consider Serbian interests in their discussions with Romania, the Serbian government did not consider the British efforts satisfactory. When an 'indignant' Bošković visited Lord Crewe, to lodge a complaint over Britain's promise of the Banat to Romania, he asserted that the Serbian government 'had already on two occasions been left completely in the dark while communications were proceeding with a view of depriving her of territory which she either occupied or which she could advance a claim.'<sup>247</sup>

Although Britain seemed to be making headway in its negotiations with Romania, with the possibility of Bulgaria joining the Central Powers becoming increasingly likely, the Foreign Office was forced to return to the Macedonia question.<sup>248</sup> There had been increasing reports that Britain had 'lost much ground' at Sofia since their offer on 29 May and, as a result, the Central Powers were making serious overtures towards Bulgaria.<sup>249</sup> According to Hugh O'Beirne, the British Minister in Sofia, it 'would be a mistake' for Britain 'to suppose that if we fail to make offers to Bulgaria necessary to induce her to join us we cannot count upon her [to] maintain her neutrality.'<sup>250</sup> As a result, O'Beirne suggested that Britain adopt a

---

<sup>245</sup> No 546, Grey to Bertie, 29 June 1915, TNA, FO 371/2259-88146; No 1367, Grey to Buchanan, 6 July 1915, TNA, FO 371/2245-90471.

<sup>246</sup> Crewe, memorandum, 7 July 1915, TNA, FO 371/2259-92014.

<sup>247</sup> No 26, Grey to des Graz, 10 July 1915, TNA, FO 371/2261-94215.

<sup>248</sup> Robbins, 'British Diplomacy and Bulgaria 1914-1915', p. 578.

<sup>249</sup> No 1673, Grey to Bertie, 27 July 1915, TNA, FO 371/2263-101813.

<sup>250</sup> No 404, O'Beirne to Grey, 29 July 1915, TNA, FO 371/2263-103199.

policy of putting pressure on Serbia to cede the uncontested zone, to resolve the situation in Bulgaria.<sup>251</sup> Upon receiving this suggestion, des Graz, basing his opinion 'on language constantly held by the Serbian government', reported that any pressure on Serbia to cede the uncontested zone would precipitate a Serb-Bulgar conflict.<sup>252</sup>

Given the difficulty the Foreign Office faced in overcoming the Serb-Bulgar rivalry, Clerk found it 'tempting to leave the whole imbroglio alone and wait for military success on the part of the Allies to bring the Balkans in.'<sup>253</sup> However, convinced of the rightness of Britain's Near Eastern strategy, Clerk was resolved to force the issue with Serbia, risking a Serb-Bulgar conflict, because to do nothing would 'imperil' the situation at the Dardanelles, and leave 'the field clear' for the Central Powers.<sup>254</sup> As a result, Clerk concluded that Britain should 'speak frankly' to the Serbian government, and 'find out why they are so determined to wreck their own and the common cause.'<sup>255</sup> At this critical stage of the war, Britain was much more inclined to put pressure on Serbia and, as Grey put it to Pašić, he was now of the 'strong opinion' that it would be 'the height of imprudence' for Serbia to now refuse to make concessions.<sup>256</sup>

The prospect of a renewed round of territorial negotiations found des Graz despairing at the prospect of having to, once again, 'grasp the nettle' at Niš.<sup>257</sup> It was clear that des Graz was frustrated during his time in Serbia, and he personally 'did not see [a] way out' of the

---

<sup>251</sup> No 365, O'Beirne to Grey, 17 July 1915, TNA, FO 371/2261-97059.

<sup>252</sup> No 256, des Graz to Grey, 23 July 1915, TNA, FO 371/2261-100236.

<sup>253</sup> Clerk, minute, 20 July 1915, TNA, FO 371/2261-97740.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>256</sup> No 285, Grey to des Graz, 20 July 1915, TNA, FO 371/2263-98630.

<sup>257</sup> Charles des Graz, Diary, 29 July 1915, CUL, MSS 9988/22.



present difficulties over Macedonia.<sup>258</sup> Fortunately for des Graz, he was now aided by Valentine Chirol, a former editor of *The Times* and a close confidant of the Foreign Office, who had been sent to the Balkans in July, to provide the Foreign Office with a report on the situation in the various Balkan states.<sup>259</sup> The Foreign Office felt that because Chirol 'had knowledge of the Balkan question', he would be helpful in resolving the Balkan imbroglio.<sup>260</sup> On a deeper level, the decision to send Chirol to the Balkans can be seen to be a consequence of the feeling, at the Foreign Office, that des Graz had not done the best job in Niš.

By mid-1915 the Foreign Office had become increasingly frustrated with des Graz's efforts at reconciling Pašić with having to cede the uncontested zone. Nicolson believed that 'there was so much that he [des Graz] could say to calm his [Pašić] apprehensions' if only he were to 'argue dispassionately.'<sup>261</sup> Accordingly, the Foreign Office decided that a set of points should be drawn up, to provide des Graz with 'guidance' in his discussions with Pašić.<sup>262</sup> Unfortunately, the memorandum merely repeated the prevailing argument that Britain would not allow 'any considerable protraction of the war, due to the immobilisation of the Balkan states by mutual jealousies', and that Pašić should 'exert himself to bring that realisation home to the army as well as opposition parties.'<sup>263</sup> As a result, much to the chagrin of the Foreign Office, who were confident that their memorandum would set Pašić straight, des Graz eventually informed Grey that their arguments had no effect.<sup>264</sup>

---

<sup>258</sup> Charles des Graz, Diary, 24 July 1915, CUL, MSS 9988/22.

<sup>259</sup> Nicolson to Crewe, note, 2 July 1915, TNA, FO 371/2262-88697.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> Nicolson, minute, 21 June 1915, TNA, FO 371/2261-80593.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Percy, memorandum, 24 June 1915, TNA, FO 371/2261-83042.

<sup>264</sup> No 262, des Graz to Grey, 26 July 1915, TNA, FO 371/2263-102562.

Ultimately, des Graz's inability to act upon Britain's Balkan policy went beyond the Foreign Office's simple prognosis that he had failed to properly articulate Britain's position to the Serbian government. Rather, des Graz's difficulties were simply a reflection of the wider institutional problem that prevailed at the Foreign Office, which was indifferent to the Balkans. Simply put, the Foreign Office lacked an adequate pool of diplomats familiar with Serbian and Balkan affairs to rely upon. According to Edith Durham, a Balkan legation 'to an Englishman is a spot which he hopes to soon quit for a more congenial atmosphere in another part of Europe.'<sup>265</sup> This attitude was clearly translated into practice at the Foreign Office, given that prior to the outbreak of war Britain had more consular officials in Chile than the whole of the Balkans.<sup>266</sup> Incidentally, prior to arrival at Niš on 1 August 1914, des Graz had been the British Minister in Lima, Peru.<sup>267</sup>

As a result of his tenure in Peru, des Graz would have been guided by established British diplomatic practice of refusing to intervene, or become entangled in the internal political affairs of South America.<sup>268</sup> In Lima, des Graz had found a 'willingness' on behalf of the Peruvian government 'to do what has been asked of or suggested to them.'<sup>269</sup> However in contrast to this, he was now, with little experience, expected by the Foreign Office to encourage Pašić to adopt a certain line of policy that explicitly interfered with the internal political affairs of Serbia.

---

<sup>265</sup> Edith Mary Durham, *The Sarajevo Crime* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1925), p. 11

<sup>266</sup> French, *British Strategy and War Aims*, p. 30.

<sup>267</sup> Charles des Graz, Diary, 1 August 1914, CUL, MSS 9988/21.

<sup>268</sup> D. C. M. Platt, *Finance, Trade and British Foreign Policy 1815-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968) p. 312.

<sup>269</sup> Des Graz, 'Peru: Annual Report 1913', March 1914, TNA, FO 881/10402.

More detrimentally, having spent no time in Serbia, prior to the outbreak of war des Graz lacked any familiarity with the political circumstances in Serbia and the Balkans. In the absence of any real knowledge of Serbian affairs, des Graz fell back on Balkanist assumptions to make sense of his predicament. Or as des Graz noted in his diary ‘nothing is so strange as reality [in] Serbia.’<sup>270</sup> Like Grey, des Graz embodied the gentlemanly values of British diplomatic practice and his temperament found him unable to understand Serbia’s point of view. As des Graz explained to Nicolson, he found it ‘difficult to make any forecast of future developments’ that would help British diplomatic action, because ‘the Slav temperament makes many things possible.’<sup>271</sup>

According to Prince Grigorri Trubetskoi, the Russian Minister at Niš, while des Graz was ‘a most pleasant gentleman’ who ‘was considerate of others’, this also meant he was quite ‘naïve’ in his assumptions of people.<sup>272</sup> Trubetskoi was in fact critical of des Graz describing him as a ‘timid’ man who ‘preferred to avoid confrontation’, which made it difficult for Trubetskoi ‘to persuade him to come up with joint initiatives.’<sup>273</sup>

However, Trubetskoi’s criticism of des Graz was harsh given that Pašić ‘rarely confided his thoughts and ideas to others,’ and tended to approach men with some ‘distrust.’<sup>274</sup> Apart from official meetings, in which des Graz was joined by his ambassadorial colleagues, he rarely had an opportunity for an informal discussion with Pašić. Even when the opportunity

---

<sup>270</sup> Charles des Graz, *Diary*, 7 January 1916, CUL, MSS 7450/49.

<sup>271</sup> No 32, des Graz to Nicolson, 1 June 1915, TNA, FO 371/2261-81002.

<sup>272</sup> Grigorri N. Trubetskoi, and, Elizabeth Saika-Voivod (trans.), *Notes of a Plenipotentiary: Russian Diplomacy and War in the Balkans 1914-1917* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University, 2016), p. 64.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>274</sup> Dragnich, *Serbia, Nikola Pašić, and Yugoslavia*, p. 228.

did arise, des Graz had difficulty conversing with Pašić because Pašić spoke no English and was 'not very proficient in French.'<sup>275</sup> Finally, because Pašić was both Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, des Graz spent most of his time at Niš receiving his information from Jovan Jovanović, the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, with Pašić preoccupied by other matters.<sup>276</sup> Thus, despite the hopeful position of the Foreign Office, it was difficult for des Graz to ascertain the true motives of Pašić's policy beyond what he was officially told.

In addition to his personal qualities, the material circumstances des Graz found himself in were hardly conducive to his work. Owing to the proximity of Belgrade to the Austro-Hungarian frontier, the Serbian government had temporarily moved their capital to Niš on 26 July 1914. The immediate environs in which des Graz found himself would have been jarring for any diplomat, used to the relative comforts which his position usually afforded him. According to Chirol, Niš was a 'small provincial town' where life 'was very hard for everyone.'<sup>277</sup> The population of Niš, which had traditionally been around 20,000, swelled to over 120,000 due to the influx of refugees from Belgrade.<sup>278</sup> Lacking any adequate infrastructure to support such an increase in population, John Reed (an American journalist reporting on the war), described Niš as being composed of 'a sea of mud and cobbles bounded by wretched huts', and inhabited by 'miserable' refugees.<sup>279</sup> The sheer foreignness of the conditions at Niš for a diplomat like des Graz were humorously noted by Reed, who wrote that 'to see the British minister sail majestically past the pigsty and mount the club

---

<sup>275</sup> 'Memorandum on the Negotiations at Nish in regard to the Cession by Serbia of the Uncontested Zone in Macedonia to Bulgaria', 2 September 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-136385.

<sup>276</sup> Des Graz to Nicolson, letter, 2 June 1915, TNA, FO 800/378.

<sup>277</sup> Valentine Chirol, *Fifty Years in A Changing World* (London: Butler and Tanner Ltd, 1927), p. 310.

<sup>278</sup> John Reed, *The War in Eastern Europe* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1919), pp, 25-26.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid*, p. 22.

stairs as if it were Piccadilly was a thing worth coming miles.'<sup>280</sup> While des Graz himself described in his diary his astonishment that, when suffering from a 'raging neuralgia-toothache' and seeking medical attention, there was 'no dentist' in Niš.<sup>281</sup>

Naturally, the British legation found it difficult to find adequate accommodation in such cramped conditions. The Chancery was initially established in an inn called the Hotel Orient, occupying three rooms, with two of them doubling up as bedrooms for the vice-consuls.<sup>282</sup> This led des Graz to disdainfully describe it as the 'so called Chancery.'<sup>283</sup> Eventually des Graz sought to, with 'considerable difficulty', rent a small house affording greater privacy, due to the 'great discomfort and insecurity' of the Hotel Orient.<sup>284</sup> The new location of the Chancery, although an improvement on the Hotel Orient, was still described by Chirol as a 'small mosquito-ridden house.'<sup>285</sup> Additionally, owing to wartime inflation, des Graz found it 'impossible' to rent it for a price any lower than 600 francs a month, because 'the rent of a single room' was 'sometimes as high as 10 francs a night.'<sup>286</sup> Ultimately, des Graz was compelled to ask the Treasury if they could pay the cost of heating and lighting, because their price had 'risen to siege rates.'<sup>287</sup> Consequently, the uncongenial atmosphere des Graz found himself in made his work at the British legation difficult.

---

<sup>280</sup> Ibid, p. 27.

<sup>281</sup> Charles des Graz, Diary, 6 September 1914, CUL, MSS 9988/21.

<sup>282</sup> No 151, des Graz to Grey, 30 September 1914, TNA, FO 371/2099-66983.

<sup>283</sup> Charles des Graz, Diary, 22 August 1914, CUL, MSS 9988/21.

<sup>284</sup> No 165, des Graz to Grey, 26 November 1914, TNA, FO 371/2460-336.

<sup>285</sup> Chirol, p. 310.

<sup>286</sup> No 165, des Graz to Grey, 26 November 1914, TNA, FO 371/2460-336.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

Nonetheless, Chirol's arrival at Niš in late-July did inject some vigour into Britain's Balkan policy and the question of Serbia's territorial compensation. Having assessed the political conditions, Chirol immediately telegraphed the Foreign Office that it would 'require the greatest tact as well as energy' to convince Serbia to cede the uncontested zone.<sup>288</sup> Chirol found that Pašić's main source of resentment towards Britain was 'the manner' in which Serbian 'interests' had 'become the object of barter...without previous consultations.'<sup>289</sup> This perception was also held by the Crown Prince, who told Chirol that what had irked him the most was the Allies' lack of support for Serbian interests, and how Britain 'seemed unable to do anything diplomatically except at the expense of Serbia', making it difficult for the Serbian government to justify the sacrifice of Macedonia.<sup>290</sup>

In essence, Britain's decision to sacrifice Serbia's territorial aspirations to those of Italy, Romania and Bulgaria (as a result of the military situation in the Near East), had 'shaken' Pašić's standing with the Serbian public 'which rested largely on [the] belief that he possessed in a higher degree than any other Serbian statesman the confidence' of the Allies.<sup>291</sup> According to Chirol, although Pašić was not in direct conflict with the military and the parliamentary opposition, having been able to exercise a 'moderating influence' over them by the promulgation of the Niš Declaration, Britain's Near Eastern strategy had 'gone far to destroy that influence by neglecting to show' Pašić 'that measure of confidence that Serbia believed him to be entitled and assured of.'<sup>292</sup> To remedy the situation Chirol felt that

---

<sup>288</sup> No 373, O'Beirne to Grey, 19 July 1915, TNA, FO 371/2261-99304.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

<sup>290</sup> No 273, des Graz to Grey, 2 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2263-105657; Charles des Graz, Diary, 2 August 1915, CUL, MSS 9988/22.

<sup>291</sup> No 373, O'Beirne to Grey, 19 July 1915, TNA, FO 371/2261-99304.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid.

Britain had to elaborate more clearly upon Serbia's territorial compensation, which was currently defined as Bosnia-Herzegovina and 'wide access to the Adriatic.'<sup>293</sup> Chirol believed that this was the best approach to remove the lingering suspicion of the Serbian government that the Allies were inimical to their interests, thus making Serbia more amenable to the cession of the uncontested zone.<sup>294</sup>

By August 1915, Serbia's inability to contemplate ceding the uncontested zone had been exacerbated by the deteriorating military situation in the Near East, which had rendered the Serbian possession Macedonia with strategic importance. This was because the Niš-Salonica railway, which ran through the uncontested zone alongside the Vardar valley, was considered by most Serbian officials to be the country's 'spinal cord.'<sup>295</sup> The Niš-Salonica railway was Serbia's only line of communication with Greece and the Allies, as well as its only means of importing much needed war material and foodstuffs.<sup>296</sup> As des Graz informed Grey, Serbia's 'communication with Salonica and the Aegean, through Macedonia continues to be of the most vital importance to the interests of this country.'<sup>297</sup> The collapse of the Russian resistance in Poland in late-July, and the German occupation of Warsaw on 4 August, further heightened the feeling of isolation in Serbia, and the resolve to hold onto the uncontested zone.<sup>298</sup> In addition, the failure of the Suvla Bay landings at the Dardanelles on 6 August, had made it clear to the Bulgarian government that the Central Powers were in the ascendancy in the Near East, making it ever more likely that it would attack Serbia.<sup>299</sup>

---

<sup>293</sup> No 269, des Graz to Grey, 31 July 1915, TNA, FO 371/2263-105020.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> Niko Zupanic, *The Strategic Significance of Serbia* (London: Salisbury Supply Co Printers, 1915), p. 12.

<sup>296</sup> A. C. Wratislaw, *A Consul in the East* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1924), p. 310.

<sup>297</sup> No 173, des Graz to Grey, 30 December 1914, TNA, FO 371/2252-13146.

<sup>298</sup> Stone, pp. 171-181.

<sup>299</sup> Travers, pp. 137-162 ; Churchill, *The World Crisis II*, pp. 432-453

According to Colonel Harrison, the British Military Attaché in Serbia, ‘the check to Russia in Galicia, the slow progress of the Allies in the Dardanelles, and discussions of concessions to Italy and Romania’ had all been factors that justified the continued possession of Macedonia.<sup>300</sup> The overriding fear of the Serbian government was that, if Bulgaria were to receive the uncontested zone, Serbia would find itself isolated and wedged between Austria, Bulgaria and Albania, who were all hostile to Serbia.<sup>301</sup>

Furthermore, additional troop levies from Macedonia had provided crucial manpower for rebuilding the army in 1915, following the heavy losses suffered by the Serbian army in 1914.<sup>302</sup> With the Central Powers now potentially in a position to invade Serbia, maintaining the army became of the utmost importance to the Serbian government. According to the Serbian Military Attaché in Sofia, if the news that Serbia had to make concessions to Bulgaria was leaked, over 100,000 Macedonians who had been conscripted to the Serbian army ‘would refuse to fight’, severely weakening the army’s ability to withstand an invasion of Serbia.<sup>303</sup> Thus, the continued possession of the uncontested zone was also strategically important to Serbia because Macedonia was an additional reservoir of manpower for the depleted ranks of the army.

The overriding strategic importance of the Niš-Salonica railway to the Serbian government led Chirol to press the Foreign Office to provide Serbia with an ‘immediate quid pro quo’ on

---

<sup>300</sup> No 75, Colonel Harrison to War Office, 19 June 1915, TNA, WO 33/832, Secret Telegrams, Series E, Vol I,

<sup>301</sup> Slobodan Jovanović, ‘Nicholas Pašić: After Ten Years’, *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 15, No. 37 (1937), p. 375.

<sup>302</sup> No 27, des Graz to Grey, 29 January 1915, TNA, FO 371/2242-11283.

<sup>303</sup> No 42, Bax-Ironside to Grey, 9 February 1915, TNA, FO 371/2242-15480.



the uncontested zone, by promising them northern Albania.<sup>304</sup> The possession of northern Albania would allow the Serbian government to maintain the territorial connection with Greece, and prevent Serbia from objecting to cede the uncontested zone on the grounds that it would lead to its isolation.<sup>305</sup> Chirol was adamant that if these conditions were not fulfilled, Serbia's chances of ceding the uncontested zone would be 'nil.'<sup>306</sup> This was supported by des Graz, who was of the impression that a 'precise statement', guaranteeing Serbia's future territorial compensation and an 'immediate pledge' regarding northern Albania, constituted the 'best, if not perhaps only chance' of obtaining Serbian acquiescence.<sup>307</sup>

While they essentially agreed with Chirol's views, in practice the Foreign Office found it difficult to provide Serbia with a more comprehensive outline of its territorial gains, due to the position of the Italian government. Earlier in June, Grey had implored Sidney Sonnino, the Italian Foreign Minister, to consent to his proposal that the Allies inform Serbia of the specific portion of the Adriatic coastline, including Spalato and Ragusa, Serbia would receive.<sup>308</sup> As well as providing Serbia with a precise statement on the future status of Croatia and Fiume, because it would allow Britain to exercise 'strong pressure' on Serbia.<sup>309</sup> Sonnino, not seeing such a proposal as being in Italy's interest, was reluctant to agree, preferred to 'speak only of free access to sea' in regard to Serbia's portion of Adriatic coast, and refused to sanction any mention at all of the future status of Croatia and Fiume.<sup>310</sup>

---

<sup>304</sup> No 269, des Graz to Grey, 31 July 1915, TNA, FO 371/2263-105020.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

<sup>306</sup> No 272, des Graz to Grey, 2 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2263-105656.

<sup>307</sup> No 300, des Graz to Grey, 11 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-110250.

<sup>308</sup> No 781, Grey to Rennell Rodd, 20 June 1915, TNA, FO 371/2261-81454.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid.

<sup>310</sup> No 596, Rennell Rodd to Grey, 22 June 1915, TNA, FO 371/2261-82098.

However, with time running out for Britain to prevent Bulgaria from joining the Central Powers, the Foreign Office was pushed into taking a more definite position on Serbia's territorial gains. Influenced by Chirol, Percy wrote a detailed minute that stressed the need for the Allies to make 'a display of great tact and firmness at Niš,' so as to help Pašić 'restore his lost prestige with the nation in arms.'<sup>311</sup> Percy proposed that Britain provide a guarantee that, once the war was concluded, Serbia, Montenegro and Croatia could divide, between themselves, the whole territory west and south of the Drave and Danube rivers with a portion of the Adriatic coast extending from Fiume to San Giovanni di Medua in northern Albania.<sup>312</sup> The formula Percy settled on went beyond anything Britain had been prepared to offer Serbia previously and he was clearly aware of this, prefacing his minute with the disclaimer that he was 'very conscious of his own presumption', when making his suggestion.<sup>313</sup>

Nonetheless, Percy's position struck a chord with Grey and, on 31 July, Grey duly informed Sonnino that he did not find Serbia's apprehensions 'unreasonable', and that if Italy maintained their intransigence, they would 'incur a heavy responsibility' for losing Bulgaria.<sup>314</sup> Grey argued that, because he had already personally promised to secure Bosnia-Herzegovina and access to the Adriatic for Serbia in May, a failure to clarify the exact delineation of this territory would simply 'lessen the effect' of his pledge in Serbia.<sup>315</sup>

---

<sup>311</sup> Percy, minute, 30 July 1915, TNA, FO 371/2263-105071.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid.

<sup>314</sup> No 1139, Grey to Rennell Rodd, 31 July 1915, TNA, FO 371/2263-105071.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

However, despite Grey's efforts, Sonnino remained unmoved in his desire to say as little as possible to the Serbian government.<sup>316</sup>

Ultimately, through a combination of Sonnino's 'tenacious attitude' towards Serbian concessions, and the reports that the Bulgarian government 'seemed favourable' to the Allies' renewed offer of the uncontested zone on 3 August, Britain was compelled to make a corresponding communication to Serbia that included none of Chirol's recommendations.<sup>317</sup> Thus the communication made to Pašić on 4 August only offered him, in return for the uncontested zone, 'ample compensations' in the Adriatic, Bosnia-Herzegovina and 'elsewhere', as well as 'the maintenance', in some capacity, of Serbia's territorial connection with Greece.<sup>318</sup>

Although Pašić did not accept the Allies proposal, des Graz thought the 'gravity of the moment' was getting to the Serbian government and, as a result, Pašić asked for clarification on some points in Britain's communication.<sup>319</sup> Pašić firstly asked to know what were the 'precise compensations' Serbia would expect to receive; whether the 1912 line could be modified; and what the Allies meant by a territorial connection with Greece.<sup>320</sup> According to Pašić, Britain's response to his queries would 'have a very great influence on

---

<sup>316</sup> No 743, Rennell Rodd to Grey, 1 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2263-105450; No 749, Rennell Rodd to Grey, 3 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2263-106337.

<sup>317</sup> No 624, Rodd to Grey, 28 June 1915, TNA, FO 371/2261-85081; No 426, O'Beirne to Grey, 3 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2263-106825.

<sup>318</sup> No 280, des Graz to Grey, 5 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2263-107052.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>320</sup> No 283, des Graz to Grey, 5 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2263-107472.

the decision' to be reached by the Serbian government, and the heads of the military and parliamentary parties.<sup>321</sup>

The question of Albania was the most prescient because it related to offsetting Serbia's immediate loss of the Niš-Salonica railway and its isolated position in the Balkans. Pašić had made this clear on 3 August, arguing that it was of 'vital necessity' for Serbia to have a common frontier with Greece, so as not to be surrounded by a hostile Bulgaria and Austria.<sup>322</sup> However, as Percy noted, the Serbian possession of Albania was a 'most serious' point because it required an explicit revision of the decisions of the Great Powers to create an independent Albanian state, at the 1913 London Conference.<sup>323</sup> In addition, Sonnino was determined to see the maintenance of an independent central Albanian state, under Italian influence, which would act as a secure hinterland for Italy's position at Valona.<sup>324</sup>

Despite the difficulty it faced in doing so, the Foreign Office initially pushed to secure for Serbia, a frontier with Greece that was 'sufficiently long to admit a defensible strategic railway', so as to compensate for the loss of the Niš-Salonica railway.<sup>325</sup> Both Nicolson and Grey supported Percy's suggestion that Britain finance the construction of a strategic railway across the Serb-Greek frontier to assuage Serbia's fears.<sup>326</sup> However, after enquiring about the feasibility of such a venture with Charles Callwell, the Director of Military

---

<sup>321</sup> No 296, des Graz to Grey, 8 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-18839.

<sup>322</sup> No 42, des Graz to Grey, 5 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-122909.

<sup>323</sup> Percy, minute, 6 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2263-107472.

<sup>324</sup> Milano Rosario, 'The Albanian Question and Italian Neutrality (1914-1915)', in, Vojislav G. Pavlović (ed.), *Serbia and Italy in the Great War* (Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies, 2019), p. 171.

<sup>325</sup> Percy, minute, 6 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2263-107472.

<sup>326</sup> No 1735, Grey to Buchanan, 7 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2263-107472; Nicolson to DMO, note, 7 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-108567.

Operations at the War Office, it was clear that, while a strategic railway was a 'justifiable view' given Serbia's fears over Bulgaria's position (should they receive possession of the uncontested zone), such a venture, according to Callwell, was wholly impracticable.<sup>327</sup>

Callwell argued that, given the mountainous terrain in central Albania, it was 'impossible' to build a railway unless it was built along the Albanian coast which would, in consequence, directly interfere with Italy's interests in Valona and the creation of a central Albanian state.<sup>328</sup> Following these revelations, Oliphant, a clerk at the Foreign Office, was despondent that this news would 'wreck the ship' in regards to providing Serbia with adequate compensation.<sup>329</sup> The complicated nature of the Albania question meant that Britain, while resolved to maintain Serbia's territorial connection with Greece, could only inform the Serbian government on 16 August that it was 'at present unable to define its extent.'<sup>330</sup>

Having failed to secure for Serbia a strategically adequate frontier with Greece, Britain had to ensure that it was in a position to say something concrete regarding Croatia. Although Grey had consistently ignored Seton-Watson's argument, that only the promise of Croatia would have made the loss of the uncontested zone palatable to Pašić, the seriousness of the present situation in the Near East found Grey far more open to Seton-Watson's suggestions. Alarmed that Grey had initially relented to Sonnino's request to not say anything about the status of Croatia to Serbia, Seton-Watson visited the Foreign Office in August to again plead his case.<sup>331</sup> Seton-Watson was firmly of the impression that to offer Serbia Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slavonia, and half of Dalmatia (including Spalato and Ragusa), 'but not

---

<sup>327</sup> M.O. 2., Callwell to Grey, 10 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-110373.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid.

<sup>329</sup> Oliphant, minute, 10 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-110373.

<sup>330</sup> No 1800, Grey to Bertie, 12 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-111103.

<sup>331</sup> No 749, Grey to Rodd, 5 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2263-106337.

Croatia', would make Pašić's position impossible.<sup>332</sup> According to Seton-Watson, any territorial offer from Britain that did not mention Croatia was bound to fail, because Pašić would either accept 'in which case he and the Serbian Government became traitors to the whole cause of Yugoslav unity', or Pašić would refuse 'and the prospect of any Balkan agreement' would be 'rendered hopeless.'<sup>333</sup>

As a result of Seton-Watson's pressure, Grey found himself supporting the views of Sazonov, the Russian Foreign Minister, who also argued that the Allies should 'confidentially' inform Pašić of their decision to support the union of Croatia and Serbia; because 'without it...Serbian acquiescence cannot be expected.'<sup>334</sup> Thus, on 16 August, Grey told Pašić that in addition to Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slavonia, and half of Dalmatia, the Allies 'might...promise' to use their 'influence', at the conclusion of peace, 'to secure for Serbia a union with Croatia, should Croatia desire it.'<sup>335</sup>

Although Britain pushed hard to secure for Serbia the most extensive territorial compensation, the contents of their declaration, according to des Graz, 'were very clearly opposed' to Pašić's 'expectations.'<sup>336</sup> As a result, des Graz described how, when he presented Britain's offer, Pašić 'could hardly control himself' becoming 'resentful and bitter', leading him to declare that the Allies were treating Serbia 'like an African tribe.'<sup>337</sup>

---

<sup>332</sup> Clerk, minute, 16 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-112986.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid.

<sup>334</sup> Percy, minute, and, Oliphant, minute, 13 August 1915, TNA FO 371/2265-11918.

<sup>335</sup> No 359, Grey to des Graz 16 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-112986.

<sup>336</sup> No 306, des Graz to Grey, 15 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-112986.

<sup>337</sup> No 309, des Graz to Grey, 15 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-113802; Charles des Graz, Diary, 15 August 1915, CUL, MSS 9988/22.

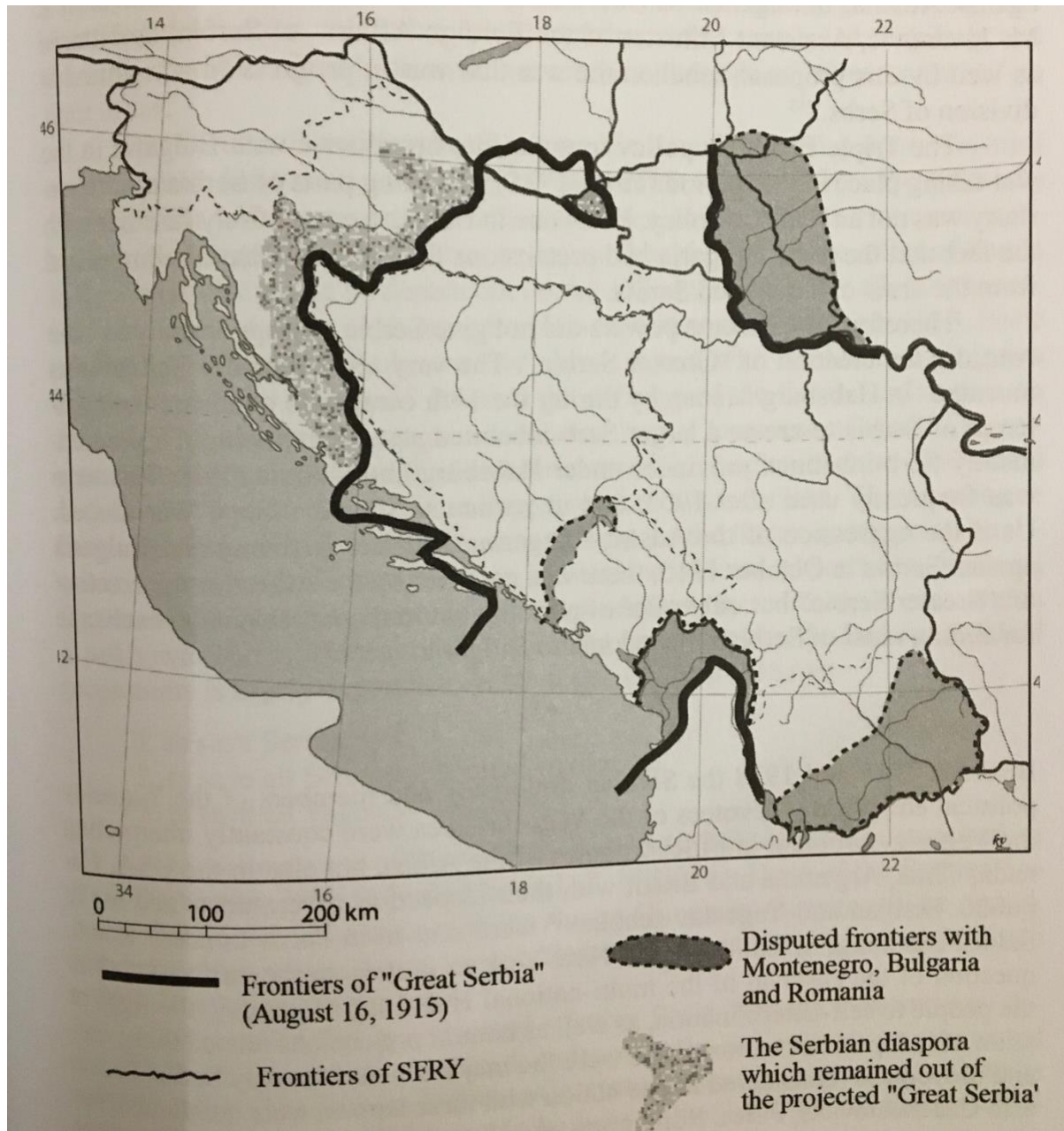


Figure 4: Map of 'Greater Serbia', the extent of the territory Britain guaranteed Serbia. Source: Popović, p. 135.

Despite Pašić's rancour, it is clear that the Foreign Office had been determined to secure for Serbia, the widest possible delineation of territorial compensation, within the parameters of Britain's strategic considerations. As Percy lamented, the Foreign Office had 'fallen between two stools' through having to mediate between Russia's desire to guarantee Serbia a union with Croatia and a Graeco-Serb partition of Albania, and Italy's desire to maintain an

independent central Albanian state and remain non-committal on Croatia.<sup>338</sup> This state of affairs put the Foreign Office in a difficult position because, although they were 'ready to go as far as Russia in promises to Serbia', they could not risk alienating the Italians and jeopardising the overall position of the Allies.<sup>339</sup> Thus, despite its best efforts, the Foreign Office was unable to provide Pašić with the 'categorical assurance' he required from the Allies, that they would secure the 'Serbo-Croatian lands' and a viable frontier with Greece for Serbia.<sup>340</sup> However, Seton-Watson did concede that, despite the 'guarded fashion' in which Grey's proposal had been made to Serbia, it was 'better than nothing', given his prior position on Serbia's territorial expansion.<sup>341</sup>

Following his meeting with Pašić on 16 August, des Graz was informed by Jovan Jovanović that Pašić had 'recovered from his first emotion and disappointment', and was now carefully considering the situation.<sup>342</sup> On 19 August Pašić told des Graz that, with Bulgaria wavering, he had realised the 'urgency' of the situation, and was ready to 'confront the subject' of making concessions to Bulgaria in a speech he was due to give in parliament.<sup>343</sup> Although Pašić was able to overcome the parliamentary opposition on 23 August, with the coalition government surviving a public vote of confidence, des Graz was sceptical because, despite

---

<sup>338</sup> Percy, minute, 15 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-112838.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid.

<sup>340</sup> No 1179, Buchanan to Grey, 18 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-115139; No 263, des Graz to Grey, 27 July 1915, TNA, FO 371/2263-103142.

<sup>341</sup> R. W. Seton-Watson to May Seton Watson, 22 August 1915, in, Seton-Watson, *R. W. Seton-Watson and the Yugoslavs*, pp. 233-234.

<sup>342</sup> No 311, des Graz to Grey, 17 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-114606.

<sup>343</sup> No 314, des Graz to Grey, 19 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-115937; Charles des Graz, *Diary*, 20 August 1915, CUL, MSS 9988/22.



the vote reaffirming Pašić's hold on power, he questioned whether this meant that Serbia would reply to the Allies communication 'to the extent required.'<sup>344</sup>

More pertinently, des Graz warned Grey that Pašić was yet to ascertain the all-important views of the Crown Prince and Serbian General Staff towards the Allies' communication.<sup>345</sup>

When Pašić returned from Kragujevac on 28 August, having discussed the situation with the Crown Prince and General Staff, he told des Graz that the main objection he encountered was based on strategic imperatives, and the importance of the Niš-Salonica railway as a line of communication.<sup>346</sup> Or, as the Serbian Chief of the General Staff bluntly told Chirol, the 'question of Macedonia is a military question and can only be settled by military men on military grounds.'<sup>347</sup> However, in spite of these objections, with Grey making clear to Pašić that any 'further delay' on his part would 'lead to Bulgaria being irretrievably committed to the other side', Pašić realised that he would have to make some sort of reply.<sup>348</sup>

Thus, on 1 September Pašić formally agreed to make territorial concessions to Bulgaria, on the stipulation that this would be done 'without endangering the vital interests of the country or provoking revolution.'<sup>349</sup> As a result, while Pašić accepted 'in principle' the cession of the uncontested zone (including to cede Monastir), he made a number of amendments to the 1912 line which, in practice, meant that Serbia had only agreed to cede

---

<sup>344</sup> No 322, des Graz to Grey, 21 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-117222; No 327, des Graz to Grey, 22 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-118456; Charles des Graz, Diary, 23 August 1915, CUL, MSS 9988/22.

<sup>345</sup> No 327, des Graz to Grey, 22 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-118456.

<sup>346</sup> No 332, des Graz to Grey, 28 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-121477; Charles des Graz, Diary, 28 August 1915, CUL, MSS 9988/22.

<sup>347</sup> Chirol, p. 317.

<sup>348</sup> No 391, Grey to des Graz, 27 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-120224.

<sup>349</sup> O'Beirne to Grey, 31 October 1915, TNA, FO 800/43.

around half the uncontested zone.<sup>350</sup> The decision to not cede the entire uncontested zone was partly justified on historical grounds, an example being Serbia's demand for the continued possession of the town of Prilep due to Serbia's 'national hero' Prince Marko being buried there.<sup>351</sup> A more important factor, that compelled Pašić not to cede the entire uncontested zone, was the failure of the Foreign Office to secure a portion of northern Albania for Serbia, and the resulting 'geographical impracticability' of the Serbo-Greek frontier proposed by the Allies.<sup>352</sup> Overall Pašić saw it as a 'vital necessity' to maintain Serbia's communications with Greece, so as to ensure that Serbia was not surrounded on three fronts by Austria, Bulgaria and an independent Albania, under Italian influence.<sup>353</sup>

Furthermore, rather opportunistically, Pašić also used the occasion to demand in his reply, the formal recognition by the Allies of the Yugoslav programme in its entirety.<sup>354</sup> Des Graz had already highlighted Pašić's 'disappointment' at the Allies' offer, because it had not 'definitely promised' Serbia's union with Croatia and omitted 'all mention of Serbian claims to the Banat'.<sup>355</sup> Thus Pašić insisted in his reply, that the Allies make a 'formal promise' for Serbia's union with Croatia, Slovenia and the western part of the Banat.<sup>356</sup> Overall, there was a sense of frustration in Pašić's response, and he indicated that Britain had not provided Serbia with the support that was warranted for an ally. According to Pašić, because Serbia's

---

<sup>350</sup> Ibid.

<sup>351</sup> Dormer, memorandum, 9 August 1915, TNA, FO 800/95/78.

<sup>352</sup> No 344, des Graz to Grey, 1 September 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-123654.

<sup>353</sup> No 47, des Graz to Grey, 16 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-122914; No 42, des Graz to Grey, 5 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-122909.

<sup>354</sup> Dragan Bakić, 'The Serbian Minister in London, Mateja Bošković, the Yugoslav Committee, and Serbia's Yugoslav Policy in the Great War', p. 201; Mitrović, p. 143.

<sup>355</sup> No 47, des Graz to Grey, 16 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-122914.

<sup>356</sup> No 343, des Graz to Grey, 1 September 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-124331.

sacrifice of its 'own people and territory' was far 'greater than any made by' the Allies, Britain owed it to Serbia to 'realise without discussion' Serbia's 'national desires.'<sup>357</sup>

Unfortunately, Pašić's reply on 1 September was considered by most at the Foreign Office as 'very unsatisfactory.'<sup>358</sup> Lord Crewe lamented at how Britain had earnestly pursued its Balkan diplomacy 'in the confident belief that it was essential to the interests of Serbia', adding that he regretted that the Serbian government could not give its assent to a territorial offer that was, 'under the circumstances, not ungenerous to Serbia.'<sup>359</sup> Although Nicolson was slightly more sympathetic than Crewe, noting that Britain's policy was 'a little hard upon Serbia', he was adamant that 'the general interests had to override the special interests of Serbia.'<sup>360</sup>

Ultimately Grey had never been sentimentally favourable towards Serbia's war aims, and he had only been pushed into elaborating on Serbia's territorial compensation because of his commitment to conducting his diplomacy, within the parameters of Britain's strategic considerations. Grey felt that his offer to Pašić was perfectly adequate and, upon receiving Pašić's reply to his communication, became exasperated, expressing that he 'was at a loss to know what more he could have reasonably expected.'<sup>361</sup> Grey summarised his position on Serbia and the Balkan negotiations to Sazonov thus: 'I not only do not desire to play a leading role in Balkan politics, but that I detest playing a role there at all.'<sup>362</sup> According to

---

<sup>357</sup> Ibid.

<sup>358</sup> Crewe, minute, 3 September 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-124331.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid.

<sup>360</sup> Nicolson to Hardinge, letter, 15 September 1915, TNA, FO 800/379.

<sup>361</sup> No 359, Grey to des Graz, 16 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-112986.

<sup>362</sup> No 1173, Grey to Buchanan, 18 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-114611.

Grey, he had only been compelled to elaborate on his initial promise of territory to Serbia because the prospect of winning the war would be greatly enhanced by Balkan 'unity', and it was in the 'general interest' for him to do 'what I can to promote unity and prevent division.'<sup>363</sup>

However, in order to justify the failure of British diplomacy in the Balkans, the Foreign Office turned to Balkanist tropes. Des Graz, in a memorandum summarising the course of Britain's negotiations with Serbia over 1915, identified a deficiency in the personal qualities of the Serbians as the main factor that led to the Serbian government declining the compensations offered to them.<sup>364</sup> It was alleged that, due to the 'intensely democratic' nature of Serbian politics, the representations made by the Allies 'lost half their weight owing to the failure of a nation of peasants to do more than half-appreciate the seriousness of the situation.'<sup>365</sup> Accordingly, it was argued by des Graz that because the Serbian people were too 'sentimental' they failed to consider Britain's territorial offer.<sup>366</sup> As a result, des Graz fatalistically concluded that, even if Serbia's 'strategical objections' were overcome, 'the force of popular sentiment was a rock against which the influence of any government...might well have flung itself in vain.'<sup>367</sup> These kinds of arguments obfuscated the fact that Britain had some responsibility for the breakdown in the territorial negotiations with Serbia, given Britain's emphasis on linking its Balkan diplomacy with its

---

<sup>363</sup> Ibid.

<sup>364</sup> 'Memorandum on the Negotiations at Nish in regard to the Cession by Serbia of the Uncontested Zone in Macedonia to Bulgaria', 2 September 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-136385.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid.

<sup>367</sup> Ibid.

military strategy in the Near East, as well as its reluctance to comprehensively support the Yugoslav programme early on in the war.

Overall, the Serbian reply on 1 September 1915 effectively marked the end of Britain's Near Eastern strategy of securing the Turkish Straits through the Dardanelles expedition, and enlisting the support of Bulgaria and the other Balkan neutrals. The logic of Britain's decision to tie its Balkan diplomacy to the military situation in the Near East, meant that Serbia found itself being compelled to make difficult sacrifices on behalf of Britain and its strategic imperatives. However, Serbia was only loosely tied to the Entente, and was resolved to pursue a policy independent of the Allies. Thus, Serbia found it difficult to accept the protestations of the Foreign Office that it sacrifice its own regional interests to a geopolitical rival, for the common cause of the Allies. Because Britain and Serbia were experiencing the war in different ways, each formed different assumptions as to what was an acceptable reward for Serbia ceding territory that was considered both historically and strategically important. The diplomatic stand-off that Britain and Serbia found themselves in during August, was a consequence of both sides simply refusing to back down from their respective positions, which each believed was right.

## Chapter Three: Britain and the 'Serbian Tragedy'

The collapse of Britain's Balkan diplomacy, in September 1915, led Britain to reconsider its Near Eastern strategy, eventually yielding to the fact that it was now prudent to scale back on its military commitments in the region, by potentially abandoning its position at the Dardanelles. However Britain's desire to now minimise its military commitments in the Near East were met by resistance on behalf of the Serbian government. Having found itself increasingly drawn into the orbit of Britain's strategic considerations over 1915, the Serbian government could not comprehend that Britain was now looking to extricate itself from the Balkans, at the precise moment the Central Powers and Bulgaria were making preparations for an attack on Serbia. This tense state of affairs created the circumstances for a number of disagreements between Britain and Serbia, with their relationship already marred by the breakdown in the Macedonia negotiations, over how best to address the deteriorating situation in the Near East. The three main points of contention, which will be assessed in this chapter, were: firstly, the differing reactions of the Serbian and British governments to the decision of the Bulgarians to mobilise; secondly, the difficulties faced by Britain in providing Serbia with adequate military support following the decision of the Central Powers to invade Serbia; and finally, how Britain handled the Serbian government and army following its decision to retreat into Montenegro and Albania, after the Central Powers successfully invaded Serbia.

Unable to accept Pašić's counter-proposal on 1 September, the Foreign Office continued to affirm that Britain had the 'right to press upon Serbia the necessity for complete

acceptance' of its territorial formula.<sup>368</sup> Fearing that the Bulgarians were considering an attack on Serbia, Grey explained to Pašić that his decision to continue territorial negotiations with Bulgaria was based on 'considerations of defence', rather than on grounds of strategy and securing Bulgarian cooperation.<sup>369</sup> By making a renewed offer of the uncontested zone, Grey felt he could convince the Bulgarian government to reconsider attacking Serbia.<sup>370</sup> On 14 September, Grey formally reiterated his promise to secure the uncontested zone for Bulgaria, should they declare war on Turkey.<sup>371</sup>

However, unbeknownst to Grey, the Bulgarian government had already signed a treaty of alliance with the Germans on 6 September, with the latter promising Bulgaria the entirety of Macedonia on the condition they attack Serbia, in conjunction with the Central Powers.<sup>372</sup> Although des Graz had noted the increasing mood of trepidation in Serbia, arising from 'hearsay' that Bulgaria had allied with Germany, it appeared that Pašić was not as worried as Grey was.<sup>373</sup> According to des Graz, although Pašić knew the Bulgarian government's 'heart and soul' was with the Central Powers, Pašić remained adamant that Bulgaria would not depart from its position of neutrality to attack Serbia, until it was 'quite certain' that the situation was in Bulgaria's favour.<sup>374</sup>

---

<sup>368</sup> No 1906, Grey to Bertie, 4 September 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-124331.

<sup>369</sup> No 431, Grey to des Graz, 10 September 1915, TNA, FO 371/2266-127344.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid.

<sup>371</sup> O'Beirne to Grey, 31 October 1915, TNA, FO 800/43.

<sup>372</sup> Gerard E. Silberstein, 'The Serbian Campaign of 1915: Its Diplomatic Background', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 73, No. 1 (1967), pp. 64-66.

<sup>373</sup> Charles des Graz, Diary, 10 September 1915, CUL, MSS 9988/22.

<sup>374</sup> No 379, des Graz to Grey, 16 September 1915, TNA, FO 371/2266-132935.

Pašić's confidence regarding Serbia's military position was shaped by his faith in the security provided by the 1913 Serbo-Greek treaty of alliance. Previously, the Serbo-Greek alliance had been a political 'instrument' for Pašić to undermine the Allies' policy of territorial concessions by strengthening his objections to ceding the uncontested zone, on the grounds that Serbia had political and strategic obligations to maintain a territorial connection with Greece.<sup>375</sup> However, the increasing likelihood that Bulgaria would join the Central Powers, found Pašić relying to a far greater extent on the stipulations of the military convention in the Serbo-Greek alliance. According to Chirol, Pašić viewed the alliance 'as the one permanent guarantee against Bulgarian ambition.'<sup>376</sup> Or as Bošković confidently asserted, if Bulgaria were to join the Central Powers, 'Greece would come to the assistance of Serbia and deal with the Bulgarian army.'<sup>377</sup> Part of the reason that Pašić had risked a rupture with Bulgaria, through his refusal to cede the entire uncontested zone, was because Venizelos, the Greek Prime Minister, had previously assured him that Greece would 'keep her treaty obligations' towards Serbia were Bulgaria to attack Serbia.<sup>378</sup>

On 22 September Pašić's faith in the Serbo-Greek alliance was put to the test when the Bulgarian government declared a state of armed neutrality and began mobilising its army. According to O'Beirne, the Bulgarian government, believing its negotiations with the Allies to be a failure, were now resolved to recover Macedonia the moment 'the sound of German guns was audible from the Bulgarian frontier.'<sup>379</sup> Perturbed at the turn of events, Pašić was

---

<sup>375</sup> Domna Visvizi Dantas, 'Troubled Friendship: Greco-Serbian Relations, 1914-1918', in, Dimitrije Djordjevic (ed.), *The Creation of Yugoslavia 1914-1918* (Santa Barbara: Clio Press, 1980), pp. 95-124.

<sup>376</sup> Chirol, p. 328.

<sup>377</sup> No 28, Grey to des Graz, 15 July 1915, TNA, FO 371/2263-97200.

<sup>378</sup> No 719, Elliot to Grey, 27 August 1915, TNA, FO 371/2265-120688.

<sup>379</sup> No 606, O'Beirne to Grey, 21 September 1915, TNA, FO 371/2266-135879.



compelled to again ask Venizelos whether Greece would now fulfill its treaty obligations to support Serbia.<sup>380</sup> Unfortunately for Pašić, despite Venizelos' personal support for Serbia, his ability to achieve this was constrained by King Constantine of Greece who favoured neutrality.<sup>381</sup> As a result, Venizelos informed Pašić that Greece could only fulfil its treaty obligations if the Allies were able to furnish the 150,000 troops that Serbia was unable to send, thereby activating the military clause of the Serbo-Greek alliance.<sup>382</sup>

The failure of the Greeks to instantly mobilise, created panic amongst the Serbian government and army officials, who now found themselves having to potentially repel an Austro-German-Bulgar invasion all on their own. Reflecting on the possibility that Serbia would be left to fight the Central Powers and Bulgaria, des Graz could only pessimistically note that the 'fat looks very near to the fire.'<sup>383</sup> Since their successful efforts against the Austrians in 1914, the poor state of the Serbian army had not greatly improved. According to Colonel Harrison, the former British Military Attaché at Kragujevac, there had been constant 'anxiety' at army headquarters over 'any action on [the] part of Bulgaria.'<sup>384</sup> Furthermore, the Serbian rank and file were 'demoralised' with many 'openly talking of surrender.'<sup>385</sup> Since the failure of the Allies to send troops to Salonica in February, the Serbian government had continued to ask Britain 'whether it might not be possible to send British troops to support the Serbian army in the event of it being hardly pressed.'<sup>386</sup> Thus,

---

<sup>380</sup> No 393, des Graz to Grey, 21 September 1915, TNA, FO 371/2266-135857.

<sup>381</sup> Leon, pp. 207-210.

<sup>382</sup> No 854, Elliot to Grey, 21 September 1915, TNA, FO 371/2266-135856; No 855, Elliot to Grey, 21 September 1915, TNA, FO 371/2266-135868.

<sup>383</sup> Charles des Graz, Diary, 23 September 1915, CUL, MSS 9988/22.

<sup>384</sup> No 72, des Graz to Grey, 4 March 1915, TNA, FO 371/2249-25505.

<sup>385</sup> No 71, des Graz to Grey, 4 March 1915, TNA, FO 371/2249-25509.

<sup>386</sup> No 22, Crewe to des Graz, 7 July 1915, TNA, FO 371/2249-92015.

without some form of military support, either from the Greeks or the Allies, the beleaguered Serbian army had little chance of withstanding a potential Austro-German-Bulgar invasion.

Yet, Venizelos' had not categorically ruled out mobilising in support of Serbia, rather he had placed the onus on the Allies to help Serbia fulfill its part of the military convention in the Serbo-Greek treaty. According to Trubetskoi, as a result of Venizelos' request and realising his miscalculation, Pašić took to the prospect of Allied military support 'like a drowning man clutching at straws.'<sup>387</sup> Consequently, Pašić pressed upon Grey that the 'strongest argument' for convincing Bulgaria to abandon their 'antagonistic' and 'provocative' policy was the immediate despatch of 150,000 Allied troops to support Serbia, and the presentation of an ultimatum at Sofia, asking the Bulgarian government to declare their intentions.<sup>388</sup>

However, Britain was far from enthusiastic about the idea of coming to Serbia's aid through the immediate despatch of British troops to the Balkans. Following the collapse of Britain's efforts to sway Bulgaria, a perception formed in Britain that the current situation in the Balkans was due to the attitude adopted by the Serbian government, and its refusal to heed Britain's counsel. Upon hearing the news of Bulgaria's mobilisation, Grey took the opportunity to sardonically lecture Bokšković that he 'sometimes gave advice that was wise, for if the advice given to Serbia as to the concessions had been taken in time the present situation might not have occurred.'<sup>389</sup> According to Asquith, it was the Serbian

---

<sup>387</sup> Trubetskoi, p. 115.

<sup>388</sup> No 395, des Graz to Grey, 22 September 1915, TNA, FO 371/2266-136599.

<sup>389</sup> No 465, Grey to des Graz, 24 September 1915, TNA, FO 371/2267-138172.

government's 'obstinacy and cupidity' that had brought Serbia to 'the verge of disaster.'<sup>390</sup>

In summary, Britain's lukewarm attitude towards Serbia's request for support, arose out of its abhorrence at potentially finding itself in, what O'Beirne described as, the 'ludicrous position of fighting in order that Serbia should remain in possession of territories which they [Britain] themselves have called upon her to cede and which they have actually guaranteed to Bulgaria.'<sup>391</sup>

The Foreign Office found the behaviour of the Serbian government to be in direct opposition to its own assumptions, that fair and straight dealing should be the guiding light of diplomatic practice. Having heard Bošković boldly declare that 'Serbia would rather stand-alone against the shock of an Austro-German offensive' than cede the uncontested zone, it was difficult for the Foreign Office to reconcile itself to Bošković's new demand that the Allies now make every effort to prevent Serbia being crushed.<sup>392</sup> Thus, when Lord Crewe received a third diplomatic note from Bošković in as many days, demanding the immediate despatch of troops to Serbia, he noted frustratingly how the Serbians were 'incredibly unreasonable people.'<sup>393</sup>

Despite these negative sentiments towards Serbia, Britain's strategic imperatives continued to be the primary motivation behind its diplomatic decisions involving Serbia. As Grey explained to Bošković, sending troops to the Balkans was a 'military question' and had to be

---

<sup>390</sup> Asquith to the King, 2 October 1915, TNA, CAB 137/135/1.

<sup>391</sup> No 636, O'Beirne to Grey, 30 September 1915, TNA, FO 371/2267-142132.

<sup>392</sup> No 30, Grey to des Graz, 26 July 1915, TNA, FO 371/2263-98630; Nicolson, note, 7 October 1915, TNA, FO 371/2270-146774.

<sup>393</sup> Crewe, minute, 25 September 1915, TNA, FO 371/2267-139287.

considered by Kitchener, before Grey could be in a position to respond.<sup>394</sup> Subsequently, the Dardanelles Committee, a second iteration of the War Council, met on 23 September to discuss the possibility of sending British troops to support Serbia. However, Kitchener proved reluctant to withdraw any troops from the Western Front for the purpose of a costly Balkan campaign. This was because Kitchener had already committed British troops to an offensive on the Western Front, which was due to commence at Loos on 25 September.<sup>395</sup> Furthermore, a War Office memorandum deprecated the alternate solution of withdrawing 300,000 troops from the Dardanelles - the number that it estimated would be needed if Britain were to 'protect Serbia from the combined attack of the Central Powers and Bulgaria.'<sup>396</sup> Overall Kitchener and the War Office deplored the idea of sending a large contingent of troops to the Balkans, firmly under the impression that Britain's strategic priority should be to focus its military efforts on the Western Front and the Dardanelles expedition.

However, while they agreed with the arguments of Kitchener and the War Office, the Dardanelles Committee was eventually motivated by political factors to 'associate' themselves, alongside the French government, with Venizelos' request for the despatch of 150,000 Allied troops to Salonica.<sup>397</sup> Britain assumed that fulfilling Venizelos' request and allowing the Greek army to mobilise in support of Serbia, would, by extension, compel the Greeks to join the Allies. Grey was fairly confident 'the assistance given to us [by Greece] in the landing [of Allied troops] would be such a complete breach of neutrality, that it *implied*

---

<sup>394</sup> Grey, note, 22 September 1915, TNA, FO 371/2266-137095.

<sup>395</sup> Cassar, p. 388; Magnus, p. 348.

<sup>396</sup> 'Appreciation of the Situation in the Balkans By The General Staff', 24 September 1915, TNA, CAB 42/3/29.

<sup>397</sup> Dardanelles Committee Minutes, 24 September 1915, TNA, CAB 42/3/30.

hostilities' with the Central Powers and 'the inclusion of Greece in the war.'<sup>398</sup> Thus, from its very conception, British support for Serbia was predicated upon a wider strategy that was motivated by the Greeks potentially joining the Allies, rather than any sentiment towards the Serbians and their predicament.

By designating the Salonica expedition as a political rather than military venture, the Dardanelles Committee were remaining within the strategic parameters set by Kitchener and the War Office. This meant that, rather than directly assisting the Serbian army against the Central Powers, the designated role of the British troops being sent to Salonica would be 'restricted to enabling and assisting the Greek army by protecting the Serbian flank and line of communications with Salonica.'<sup>399</sup> In essence, because it was reluctant to commit to large scale military operations in the Balkans, Britain saw it as more beneficial to its interests to use the Greek army as a proxy to provide Serbia with the required military support. However, in adopting this position Britain effectively condemned Serbia to withstand on its own, and in ignorance of the deplorable condition of the Serbian army, the brunt of the Austro-German attack.

More pertinently, the decision to despatch British troops to Salonica on political grounds meant that, until the Greek government assented to this action, Grey's Balkan diplomacy continued to be inimical to Serbia.<sup>400</sup> Following Bulgaria's declaration of armed neutrality, the Serbian government had been of the firm opinion that Bulgaria's mobilisation could only

---

<sup>398</sup> Ibid. Italics added.

<sup>399</sup> 'Appreciation of the Situation in the Balkans By The General Staff', War Office, 24 September 1915, TNA, CAB 42/3/29.

<sup>400</sup> Alan Palmer, *The Gardeners of Salonika: The Macedonian Campaign 1915-1918* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), pp. 34-36.

be 'directed against Serbia', and it pushed for the Allies to present Bulgaria with an ultimatum.<sup>401</sup> However, there was little Grey could do to fulfil this request because he felt that until British troops arrived at Salonica, verbal 'threats to Bulgaria' would be 'no deterrent and positively disadvantageous.'<sup>402</sup> Thus, until the situation with Greece was resolved, and the Allies in a position to land at Salonica, Grey felt he had no choice but to continue to appease Bulgaria, lest a strongly worded ultimatum cause Bulgaria to prematurely act upon its mobilisation and attack Serbia.<sup>403</sup> The only alternative to using strong language at Sofia was for Grey to continue to offer the uncontested zone to Bulgaria, despite Serbia's prior rejection of this scheme, in the hope that this would weaken its resolve to join the Central Powers.<sup>404</sup>

Grey's decision to appease Bulgaria, despite its mobilisation, meant that he had to interfere directly in the Serbian government and army's operational plan to deal with the Bulgarian army. According to des Graz, the Serbian government felt that if the Allies and the Greeks could not come to Serbia's aid, its 'only chance' to avoid fighting on two fronts against Bulgaria and the Austro-Germans was to attack Bulgaria before it had time to complete its mobilisation.<sup>405</sup> On 23 September, Colonel Phillips, who had replaced Colonel Harrison as Military Attaché at Kragujevac, informed Kitchener that the plan of action devised by the Serbian General Staff was to swiftly 'advance on Sofia' and defeat Bulgaria, before

---

<sup>401</sup> No 399, des Graz to Grey, 24 September 1915, TNA, FO 371/2267-138055.

<sup>402</sup> No 468, Grey to O'Beirne, 22 September 1915, TNA, FO 371/2266-135837.

<sup>403</sup> No 2166, Grey to Bertie, 28 September 1915, TNA, FO 371/2267-139731.

<sup>404</sup> No 465, Grey to des Graz, 24 September 1915, TNA, FO 371/2267-138172; No 620, O'Beirne to Grey, 24 September 1915, TNA, FO 371/2267-138772; No 634, O'Beirne to Grey, 29 September, 1915, TNA, FO 371/2267-141224; No 636, O'Beirne to Grey, 30 September 1915, TNA, FO 371/2267-142132.

<sup>405</sup> No 398, des Graz to Grey, 23 September 1915, TNA, FO 371/2266-137356.

concentrating its troops in northern Serbia.<sup>406</sup> According to des Graz, Pašić called this the ‘suicide of Serbia theory’, which would see the beleaguered Serbian army risk sacrificing itself in a last ditch attempt to secure their wavering position.<sup>407</sup> However, Serbia’s proposed pre-emptive strike on Bulgaria was completely at odds with Grey’s position. On Grey’s instructions, Kitchener sent a telegram to caution the Serbian General Staff that it would be ‘most unwise’ to precipitate hostilities with Bulgaria, while Britain was in the process of ‘arranging to send troops to Salonica...to enable the Greeks to support Serbia’ against Bulgaria.<sup>408</sup> When Bošković remonstrated with Grey that a pre-emptive strike on Bulgaria was a ‘strategical necessity’ for Serbia, Grey remained firm in the belief that ‘all the political and diplomatic arguments were against such action.’<sup>409</sup>

Although Grey felt he had good reason to not present an ultimatum to Bulgaria, and to prevent the Serbians from undertaking a pre-emptive strike, it created a negative impression amongst the Serbian public towards Britain.<sup>410</sup> The suspicions towards British diplomacy seemed to be confirmed by Grey’s decision on 28 September, to declare in the House of Commons, in a final effort to convince Bulgaria to not join the Central Powers, his ‘warm feeling of sympathy for the Bulgarian people.’<sup>411</sup> According to des Graz, when the text of Grey’s speech was published in Niš, it ‘caused dismay and painful impression

---

<sup>406</sup> No 262 (No 30), Phillips to War Office, 24 September 1915, TNA, WO 33/832, Secret Telegrams, Series E, Vol I.

<sup>407</sup> Charles des Graz, Diary, 26 September 1915, CUL, MSS 9988/22.

<sup>408</sup> No 264 (No 8235), Kitchener to Phillips, 25 September 1915, TNA, WO 33/832, Secret Telegrams, Series E, Vol I.

<sup>409</sup> No 36, Grey to des Graz, 27 September 1915, TNA, FO 371/2267-140604.

<sup>410</sup> No 791, Grey to Elliot, 27 September 1915, TNA, FO 371/2267-138767.

<sup>411</sup> House of Commons, *Hansard’s Parliamentary Debates: Official Report* (28 September 1915, vol. 74, cols. 731-732) [Online] <[https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1915/sep/28/announcement-by-sir-e-grey#S5CV0074P0\\_19150928\\_HOC\\_161](https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1915/sep/28/announcement-by-sir-e-grey#S5CV0074P0_19150928_HOC_161)> [accessed 3 August 2022]

amongst public here who...cannot understand consideration with which Great Britain treats Bulgaria, to the manifest detriment of Serbia.'<sup>412</sup>

In addition, the increasing climate of suspicion in Serbia towards Britain was borne out of Britain's failure to keep the Serbian government consistently informed of its decisions regarding the despatch of troops to Salonica. The anxious mood of the Serbian government was captured by des Graz who noted that 'one feels tension, not knowing of any action decided by the powers...and arrangements and consent for landing.'<sup>413</sup> By 29 September, a frustrated Serbian government warned Britain that, while it would 'do all they can to await the results of action' taken by the Allies, 'military considerations' would have to be a 'deciding factor', and that some form of action would be taken 'within three or four days.'<sup>414</sup>

Ultimately, the Foreign Office was not wholly ignorant of the impact its diplomacy had in undermining the prerogatives of the Serbian government. On 30 September, the Dardanelles Committee, having discussed the 'anxiousness' of the Serbian government, eventually came to the conclusion that Britain could no longer leave the Serbians in the lurch by placating Bulgaria, and that something had to be said to Bulgaria.<sup>415</sup> More importantly, despite not yet receiving the formal assent of the Greek government, the Dardanelles Committee agreed to make preparations to move the 10<sup>th</sup> Division to Salonica.<sup>416</sup> On 3 October, Grey duly informed the Serbian government that the Allies now considered their territorial offers to Bulgaria as having lapsed, and that Allied troops were

---

<sup>412</sup> No 413, des Graz to Grey, 2 October 1915, TNA, FO 371/2267-143180.

<sup>413</sup> Charles des Graz, Diary, 29 September 1915, CUL, MSS 9988/22.

<sup>414</sup> No 408, des Graz to Grey, 29 September 1915, TNA, FO 371/2267-141001.

<sup>415</sup> Dardanelles Committee Minutes, 30 September 1915, TNA, CAB 42/3/35.

<sup>416</sup> Ibid.



being sent to Salonica for the 'protection of Serbia.'<sup>417</sup> As a result, it appeared that Britain was now finally reconciling themselves to the dangerous situation faced by Serbia.

However, Britain's ability to provide Serbia with military aid remained contingent on Venizelos' ability to persuade the King of Greece to join the Allies. On 5 October, with the first contingent of Anglo-French troops beginning to disembark at Salonica, it was critical that Venizelos declare Greece's willingness to join the Allies, and mobilise in support of Serbia.<sup>418</sup> However, Britain's hopes that Venizelos could bring Greece into the war were dashed by his decision to resign, following the King of Greece's refusal to support Venizelos' pro-Allied policy in favour of maintaining Greece's neutrality.<sup>419</sup> This was a dire blow to the Serbian government because Britain's primary motive for sending troops to Salonica had been for the 'political purposes of convincing Greece' to join the Allies, rather than to explicitly 'protect' Serbia.<sup>420</sup> Britain had always perceived a military operation in the Balkans as strategically unviable, and it was unlikely to now change its mind, despite the inability of Greece to provide Serbia with military support. As Asquith explained, because Britain 'had only sent troops with reference to Greece', it had 'no obligation' to undertake military operations to save Serbia.<sup>421</sup> As a result, British policy-makers decided to suspend the transport of troops to Salonica, until the position of the new Greek government could be ascertained.<sup>422</sup> Following Venizelos' resignation, Britain's policy of supporting Serbia, by using Greece as a proxy, was doomed to failure.

---

<sup>417</sup> No 479, Grey to des Graz, 3 October 1915, TNA, FO 371/2267-142643.

<sup>418</sup> Palmer, pp. 33-36.

<sup>419</sup> Leon, pp. 240-244.

<sup>420</sup> Dardanelles Committee Minutes, 6 October 1915, TNA, CAB, 42/4/3.

<sup>421</sup> Ibid.

<sup>422</sup> Ibid.

To make matters worse, Austro-German troops began invading Serbia on 7 October, with the Bulgarians joining them on 14 October.<sup>423</sup> According to George Cassar, upon hearing the news of the invasion, Kitchener had ‘no hesitation in writing Serbia off’, due to his prevailing reluctance to commit British military resources.<sup>424</sup> Asquith agreed with Kitchener, declaring it was simply ‘out of the question...to throw a large body of troops into Serbia.’<sup>425</sup> By 22 October, with the Bulgarians capturing Uskub (cutting Serbia’s communications with Salonica), Bryan Mahon, the commander of British forces at Salonica, informed the War Office ‘that no action which the Allies can take now would be sufficiently timely to save Serbia.’<sup>426</sup> Mahon’s report simply confirmed Kitchener’s belief that ‘the Serbians were finished’, and that it would be ‘plainly impossible to either relieve the Serbian army or to save it.’<sup>427</sup> By early-November it was clear that Serbia was no longer a factor within British strategy in the Near East and, given the desperate situation in the Balkans, Britain began to make preparations for withdrawing its troops from Salonica.<sup>428</sup>

Despite Britain coming to the conclusion that there was nothing it could do for Serbia, it failed to clarify this position to the Serbian government. The line of communication taken by Britain was to be ‘most guarded’ regarding the situation at Salonica, so as to avoid ‘raising

---

<sup>423</sup> For more information on the Austro-German-Bulgar invasion of Serbia see, Cyril Falls, *Military Operations Macedonia Volume One: From the Outbreak of War to the Spring of 1917* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1933), pp. 33-37; Richard L. DiNardo, *Invasion: The Conquest of Serbia 1915* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2015); Charles E. J. Fryer, *The Destruction of Serbia in 1915* (New York: East European Monographs, 1997); Richard C. Hall, *Balkan Breakthrough: The Battle of Dobro Pole 1918* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), pp. 36-57.

<sup>424</sup> George Cassar, ‘Kitchener at the War Office’, in, Hugh Cecil and Peter H Liddle (eds.), *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced* (London: Leo Cooper, 1996), pp. 37-51.

<sup>425</sup> Dardanelles Committee Minutes, 11 October 1915, TNA, CAB 42/4/6.

<sup>426</sup> Bryan Mahon, Appreciation of Situation in Serbia, 22 October 1915, TNA, WO 32/5122.

<sup>427</sup> Dardanelles Committee Minutes, 25 October 1915, TNA, CAB 4/4/17.

<sup>428</sup> French, *British Strategy and War Aims*, pp. 141-144.

the premature hopes of [British] assistance' in Serbia.<sup>429</sup> Edward Carson, Attorney General and a member of the Dardanelles Committee, deplored this manner of communication and argued that Britain had an obligation to Serbia, on Britain's 'honour and good faith', to 'at least let them know' that Britain was taking 'no steps to save them.'<sup>430</sup> On 11 October, Carson demanded that Britain stop 'misleading the Serbians', and instead inform them that Britain had decided to take no military action to support Serbia.<sup>431</sup> Ultimately Carson's argument, that Britain had a sentimental obligation towards Serbia, was a minority view and not shared by the majority of the Cabinet. Thus, when Grey finally sent a telegram to the Serbian government, to inform them of the situation, he still refrained from informing the Serbians that Britain now considered any military support for Serbia as being out of the question. Instead Grey gave Bošković an open ended response arguing that, due to the 'undetermined attitude' of Greece, British troops currently at Salonica had 'no orders to proceed beyond Salonica at *present*.'<sup>432</sup>

Grey's ambiguous response to the Serbia government served to only hamper Britain's relations with Serbia, because the vagueness of Britain's language gave the Serbian government grounds to continue to argue that the British troops at Salonica be sent into Serbia. Although the Serbian government's initial reaction to Grey's Commons speech had been one of distaste, the Serbian government had held on to Grey's statement that Britain would give Serbia 'all [the] support in our power...without reserve and without qualification', should Bulgaria assume an aggressive attitude.<sup>433</sup> Following Grey's speech,

---

<sup>429</sup> No 308 (No 47), War Office to Phillips, 8 October 1915, TNA, WO 33/832, Secret Telegrams, Series E, Vol I.

<sup>430</sup> Ian Colvin, *The Life of Edward Carson II* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1936), p. 95.

<sup>431</sup> Dardanelles Committee Minutes, 11 October 1915, TNA, CAB 42/4/6.

<sup>432</sup> No 498, Grey to des Graz, 12 October 1915, TNA, FO 371/2270-147998. Italics added.

<sup>433</sup> House of Commons, (28<sup>th</sup> September 1915, vol. 74, cols. 731-732)

Bošković came to thank him ‘for *his promise* of support’.<sup>434</sup> The optimism of the Serbian government was so strong that des Graz, upon hearing the news of the disembarkation at Salonica, confidently estimated in his diary that Allied troops would begin arriving in Serbia ‘in about two days’.<sup>435</sup>

However, once it became clear that Britain was wavering in regard to sending troops into northern Serbia, the Serbian government became more desperate in their communications demanding military assistance from Britain. On 10 October des Graz informed Grey that the ‘non-arrival of troops, *who were expected*...have caused [a] feeling of dejection.’<sup>436</sup> Worried that Serbia was being abandoned by Britain, Bošković had made a habit of venturing ‘every day’ to the Foreign Office to demand that Britain fulfill its alleged promise of military support to Serbia.<sup>437</sup> In response to Bošković, the Foreign Office drew up a memorandum to ascertain the veracity of his claims, that Britain had promised Serbia military aid. The subsequent memorandum was categorical in declaring that ‘nothing definite was said to the Serbian government by way of the promise or refusal’ regarding the use of British troops to support Serbia.<sup>438</sup> However, the memorandum also made a tacit admission that Britain had only told the Serbian government British military support was ‘doubtful’ instead of it being ‘impossible.’<sup>439</sup>

---

<sup>434</sup> No 36, Grey to des Graz, 28 September 1915, TNA, FO 371/2267-140604. Italics added.

<sup>435</sup> Charles des Graz, Diary, 7 October 1915, CUL, MSS 9988/22. Italics Added.

<sup>436</sup> No 434, des Graz to Grey, 8 October 1915, TNA, FO 371/2270-147459; No 439, des Graz to Grey, 10 October 1915, TNA, FO 371/2270-147607.

<sup>437</sup> Dardanelles Committee Minutes, 11 October 1915, TNA, CAB 42/4/6.

<sup>438</sup> Percy, memorandum, 26 October 1915, TNA, FO 371/2270-169116.

<sup>439</sup> Ibid,

To complicate matters, Britain was unable to put into practice its intention to withdraw British troops from Salonica because of the prevailing need to take into consideration the views of the French government. Since the resignation of Venizelos, General Joffre had been impressing on Britain that the role of the Anglo-French troops at Salonica should now be to 'prevent the crushing of the Serbs', by securing their communications at Uskub, and helping them retreat southwards.<sup>440</sup> As David Dutton argues, Britain had to temporarily abandon its plans to evacuate Salonica, and join the French troops in the impossible endeavour of trying to save the Serbian army, to ensure that the French government did not collapse.<sup>441</sup>

Overall, Britain's failure to clearly articulate its intentions at Salonica to the Serbian government, were complicated by the fact that Britain was now compelled to keep its troops at Salonica, alongside the French. Such mixed messaging created the grounds for a wilful misunderstanding by the Serbian government, who used the lack of clarity surrounding Salonica, to continue to demand that Allied troops come to Serbia's aid. According to John Clinton Adams, the Serbian government's only strategic motivation, to retreat in a south-westerly direction towards the Montenegrin and Albanian mountains, 'was predicated on the hope that' the Allied forces 'would somehow manage to break through to them.'<sup>442</sup> As des Graz pointed out, despite Uskub falling to the Bulgarians, Pašić continued to show an 'habitual optimism' that 'rapid action' from the Allied troops in the south could 'perhaps save the situation.'<sup>443</sup> As late as 27 October, buoyed by the news that

---

<sup>440</sup> 'Summary of General Joffre's Note to Secretary State for War', 9 October 1915, TNA, CAB 42/4/6.

<sup>441</sup> For a comprehensive account of the political crisis in France and the role of Anglo-French relations in the genesis of the Salonica expedition see, David Dutton, *The Politics of Diplomacy: Britain and France in the Balkans in the First World War* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1998), pp. 17-57.

<sup>442</sup> John Clinton Adams, *Flight in Winter* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1942), p. 88.

<sup>443</sup> No 478, des Graz to Grey, 26 October 1915, TNA, FO 371/2272-159981; No 480, des Graz to Grey, 27 October 1915, TNA, FO 371/2272-159985.

the French troops had begun engaging the Bulgarians, Pašić again 'begged' des Graz that the British contingent at Salonica be compelled to join the French.<sup>444</sup>

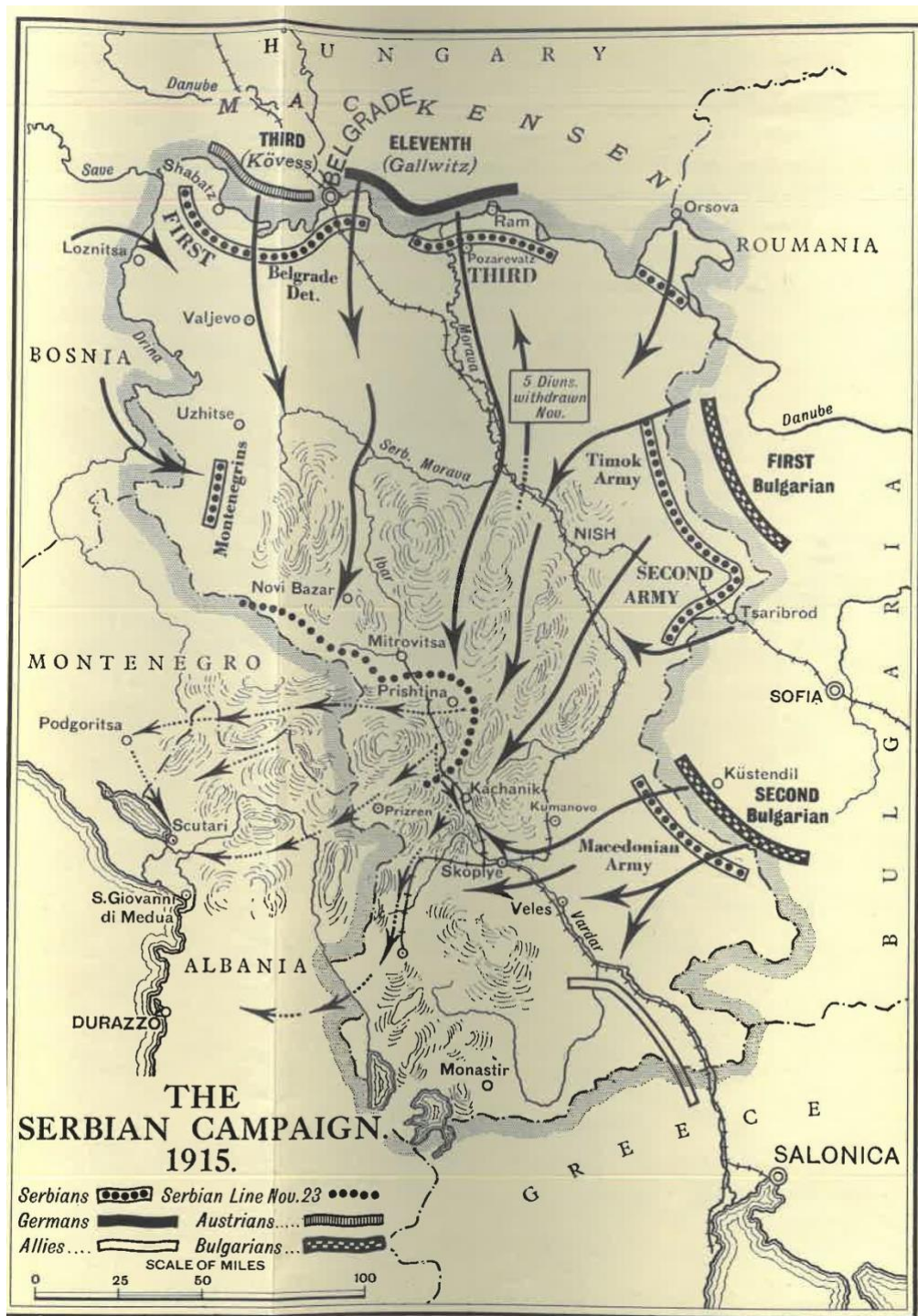


Figure 5: Map of the invasion of Serbia and the lines of retreat taken by the Serbia army. Source: Churchill, *The World Crisis: The Eastern Front*, p. 234.

<sup>444</sup> No 483, des Graz to Grey, 27 October 1915, TNA, FO 371/2270-159264.

The decision of the Serbian government to continue to demand that the British troops at Salonica make an effort to support the Serbians against the Central Powers, was deprecated by Colonel Phillips. The basis of Phillips' criticism was that the Serbians had neglected to listen to his advice to move their troops south towards Monastir, in an attempt to maintain their line of communications with Salonica and the Allied troops.<sup>445</sup> According to Colonel Phillips, instead of listening to him, the Serbian General Staff had, 'regardless of [the] consequences', decided to gamble by remaining in the north to try and 'force the French and English to advance.'<sup>446</sup> Overall, Phillips felt the Serbians had 'appeared to give up on any sustained resistance or organised retreat and...would rush from one place to another', whilst waiting for the Allies to break through in the south.<sup>447</sup>

The harshness of Phillips' views towards the Serbian government was due to the fact he was a known 'ultra Serbophobe.'<sup>448</sup> However, as Clerk made clear, although Phillips was prone to hearing 'the worst side of things', in regards to the Serbians, if the conviction grew in Serbia that the Allies were not coming to its rescue, a 'loss of morale' was 'certain.'<sup>449</sup> The erosion of morale in Serbia had crystallised out of Grey's initial policy of appeasement towards Bulgaria in late-September, and his supposed promise of military support, leading to the perception that Britain had abandoned Serbia. In early-October, des Graz had warned Grey that, should hostilities break out with Bulgaria, 'the blame will be laid at the door of the

---

<sup>445</sup> No 362 (No 77), Colonel Phillips to War Office, 20 October 1915, TNA, WO 33/832, Secret Telegrams, Series E, Vol I; No 383 (No 85), Colonel Phillips to War Office, 26 October 1915, TNA, WO 33/832, Secret Telegrams, Series E, Vol I.

<sup>446</sup> No 368 (No 80), Colonel Phillips to War Office, 22 October 1915, TNA, WO 33/832, WO 33/832, Secret Telegrams, Series E, Vol I.

<sup>447</sup> Colonel Phillips to War Office, Letter, 7 December 1915, TNA, WO 107/54.

<sup>448</sup> Oliphant, minute, 23 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2282-198519.

<sup>449</sup> Clerk, minute, 18 October 1915, TNA, FO 371/2249-151558.

Powers for not having forced Bulgaria to declare' its intentions, and denying Serbia the chance to attack Bulgaria.<sup>450</sup> Following the invasion of Serbia, it appeared that des Graz's prediction had come true, with Colonel Phillips informing the War Office that there was 'open talk' of Serbia being deserted by the Allies, with the 'chief complaint' being 'they were urged not to attack Bulgaria.'<sup>451</sup> By 25 October, Phillips was sure that the Serbian army's low morale meant the Serbian General Staff was 'speaking of peace as the only solution.'<sup>452</sup> In fact, the Serbian government themselves alluded to the possibility of surrender, by ending one of its appeals with the declaration that, if their pleas for military support continued to be ignored, it would 'have done all that we could and it would not be in our power to do more.'<sup>453</sup>

However, the idea that Serbia would seek a separate peace was in some ways overblown, and the Serbian government continued to keep its faith in the Allies. In August Pašić had privately informed Chirol, that the destruction of Serbia 'would not stop the Serb nation', and that Serbia would continue to fight alongside the Allies so long as the army remained a factor.<sup>454</sup> This position was confirmed by des Graz, who informed Grey that Pašić had told him that, 'as long as my government is at the helm there can be no question of peace, for Serbia would have the same fate as Belgium.'<sup>455</sup> With the Serbian government committed to the Niš Declaration, a separate peace with the Central Powers, while ending Serbia's

---

<sup>450</sup> No 413, des Graz to Grey, 2 October 1915, TNA, FO 371/2267-143180; No 428, des Graz to Grey, 7 October 1915, TNA, FO 371/2271-146082.

<sup>451</sup> No 336 (No 64), Colonel Phillips to War Office, 14 October 1915, TNA, WO 33/832, Secret Telegrams, Series E, Vol I.

<sup>452</sup> No 377, Colonel Phillips to War Office, 25 October 1915, TNA, WO 33/832, Secret Telegrams, Series E, Vol I.

<sup>453</sup> No 469, des Graz to Grey, 22 October 1915, TNA, FO 371/2270-156910.

<sup>454</sup> Chirol, 'Report on the Political Situation in the Balkan States', 29 August to 5 September 1915, TNA, FO 371/2262-128346.

<sup>455</sup> No 481, des Graz to Grey, 28 October 1915, TNA, FO 371/2277-159982.



immediate suffering, would mean the end of any opportunity for the creation of a Yugoslav state.<sup>456</sup> Consequently, Pašić came to see the survival of the Serbian army as 'a question of life and death' in regard to achievement of Serbia's interests.<sup>457</sup> Thus, on 29 October, the Serbian government, with the support of the Crown Prince, made the decision to continue their resistance and to remain loyal to the Entente, even if the army and government were forced into exile.<sup>458</sup>

Pašić's decision to remain committed to a policy that was favourable to the Allies was hampered by the resistance of the dissatisfied elements in the Serbian army. According to des Graz, following the invasion of Serbia, Pašić's position had become increasingly 'unstable' vis a vis the military agitators, who saw Serbia's current predicament as a result of Pašić's poor leadership.<sup>459</sup> They blamed Pašić for acquiescing to the Allies' demands that they refrain from attacking Bulgaria, and their annoyance was only heightened when the Allied support, which Pašić had 'guaranteed' the army, did not prove effective.<sup>460</sup> Hence, Pašić's demand that the Allied troops come to Serbia's rescue, was made in consideration of the 'imminent danger' of the Serbian army 'losing hope and confidence in the Allies', and surrendering to the Central Powers.<sup>461</sup> Bošković had tried to make this clear to the Foreign Office by pointing out how 'the moral effect of Allied troops appearing on Serbian soil would be immense', instilling in the Serbian army 'the confidence that the Allies are with us.'<sup>462</sup>

---

<sup>456</sup> Adams, pp. 126-127.

<sup>457</sup> No 499 (a), des Graz to Grey, 7 November 1915, TNA, FO 371/2270-167282.

<sup>458</sup> Dragan Bakić, 'Regent Alexander Karadjordjević in the First World War', *Balkanica*, XLVIII (2017), p. 199.

<sup>459</sup> No 499 (b), des Graz to Grey, 7 November 1915, TNA, FO 371/2270-167183.

<sup>460</sup> *Ibid*; Trubetskoi, p. 124.

<sup>461</sup> No 499 (a), des Graz to Grey, 7 November 1915, TNA, FO 371/2270-167282.

<sup>462</sup> Drummond, note, 15 October 1915, TNA, FO 371/2270-153535; Bošković, note, 30 October 1915, TNA, FO 371/2270-164537.

Thus the decision of the Serbian government to continue to demand the support of Allied troops was grounded in political considerations to prevent a collapse of morale within the Serbian army, rather than an irrational military strategy, as Colonel Phillips argued.

By early November, the Serbian army and government, having retreated to Kosovo, found themselves effectively surrounded by the Austro-German-Bulgar forces. While Pašić continued to hope that a successful counter-offensive (by either the Serbian or Allied forces) would lead to the recapture of Uskub (re-opening Serbia's communications with the south), he realised that an alternate plan would need to be devised to ensure the Serbian army did not dissipate under the pressure of the situation. On 29 October, Pašić informed des Graz that if the Serbians were compelled to retreat into Montenegro and Albania, it would be necessary for Britain to begin 'organising the despatch of food and supplies', so as to allow the Serbian army to continue fighting.<sup>463</sup> On 23 November, the Serbian army made one final attempt to break through to Uskub, with an assault on Kachanik Gorge.<sup>464</sup> At the same time, Bošković reiterated to Grey that if the Serbian attack failed, it was hoped that the Allies would 'take such measures as appear necessary' to secure the Serbian army, and prevent its destruction at the hands of the Central Powers.<sup>465</sup> When the Serbian army's attempts to break through failed, the Serbian government publicly declared its intention to retreat to the Adriatic coast, confident that the Serbian army would be resupplied by the Allies.<sup>466</sup>

---

<sup>463</sup> No 486, des Graz to Grey, 29 October 1915, TNA, WO 32/5835.

<sup>464</sup> Adams, pp. 124-125.

<sup>465</sup> Boskovic, note, 22 November 1915, TNA, FO 371/2272-176162; Boskovic, note, 24 November 1915, TNA, FO 371/2272-177952.

<sup>466</sup> Mitrović, p. 149.

Although the Serbian government had shifted from demanding that Britain make military efforts to save Serbia, to asking Britain to take measures to ensure the resupply of the Serbian army, strategic considerations continued to act as a constraint on Britain's ability to respond to the Serbian government. Throughout November/early-December, the War Committee, the third iteration of the War Council, had been predominantly preoccupied with discussions over the situation at Salonica and the evacuation of the Dardanelles.<sup>467</sup> As Arthur Balfour, First Lord of the Admiralty, asserted, because the Serbian army had 'ceased to have any influence on the war', the 'real question' was whether it was still worthwhile to maintain a British military presence in the Near East.<sup>468</sup> When Grey initially conveyed Pašić's request for the despatch of supplies to the Admiralty, Grey was informed that it would be 'quite impossible' to spare any British destroyers for the purpose of providing protection to the small craft and steamers transporting supplies.<sup>469</sup> This was because Britain required all available destroyers for their own extensive naval operations in the Mediterranean.<sup>470</sup> In addition, given that Britain was preoccupied with more fundamental questions regarding Britain's future strategic approach to the Near East, it found it difficult to find the time, as well as resources, to discuss the question of resupplying the Serbian army.

The ability of Britain to respond positively to the Serbian government's request was strengthened by Seton-Watson's decision to introduce the Foreign Office to Bozo Banaz, a Croatian shipping merchant, who had been sent to London (on Pašić's instructions), to help facilitate Britain's support in a scheme to resupply the Serbian army.<sup>471</sup> Following his

---

<sup>467</sup> French, *British Strategy and War Aims*, pp. 141-152; Dutton, pp. 64-78.

<sup>468</sup> War Committee Minutes, 6 November 1915, TNA, CAB 42/5/4.

<sup>469</sup> No 1981, Grey to Rodd, 29 October 1915, TNA, FO 371/2275-161026.

<sup>470</sup> Secretary of Admiralty to Maurice de Bunsen, 6 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2276-185300.

<sup>471</sup> Clerk, memorandum, 25 October 1915, TNA, FO 371/2275-157503.

introduction to Banaz, Clerk informed the War Committee that Banaz had proposed that if Britain provided, from its stores in the Mediterranean, the foodstuffs required by the Serbian army, then Banaz would undertake the procurement of the small craft and steamers, necessary to ship these supplies across the Adriatic.<sup>472</sup>

However, Britain's unwillingness to use its naval resources, to support a scheme to resupply the Serbian army, meant the War Committee only accepted Banaz's proposal, on the condition that the Italian government assumed 'naval responsibility' of the transport of supplies across the Adriatic.<sup>473</sup> Fortunately for Britain, the Italian government had provisionally agreed to 'cooperate' with Britain, through its declaration that they would 'do their best to protect vessels engaged in transport.'<sup>474</sup> Having received these assurances, the War Committee asked the Foreign Office, in conjunction with the War Office and Admiralty, to begin formulating a plan of operations roughly along the lines of Banaz's initial scheme.<sup>475</sup>

By 9 November the Foreign Office, Admiralty, and War Office had jointly formulated a memorandum outlining a scheme for the resupply of the Serbian army.<sup>476</sup> Firstly it was agreed that Britain would undertake to provide the foodstuffs required by the Serbians because, as Asquith begrudgingly put it, 'no one else would do it except us.'<sup>477</sup> These supplies would then be sent to Brindisi, in Italy, whereupon they would be transported

---

<sup>472</sup> War Committee Minutes, 6 November 1915, TNA, CAB 42/5/4.

<sup>473</sup> No 1981, Grey to Rodd, 29 October 1915, TNA, FO 371/2275-161026.

<sup>474</sup> No 1072, Rodd to Grey, 1 November 1915, TNA, FO 371/2275-161673.

<sup>475</sup> Clerk, minute, 8 November 1915, TNA, FO 371/2275-167784.

<sup>476</sup> 'Supplies for the Serbian Army', 9 November 1915, TNA, FO 371/2275-167784.

<sup>477</sup> War Committee Minutes, 13 November 1915, TNA, CAB 42/5/10.

across the Adriatic in small craft to the Albanian harbour-town of San Giovanni de Medua, escorted by Italian destroyers.<sup>478</sup> On arrival, they would be moved by road to Scutari, where a depot would be established to supply the Serbian army retreating in Montenegro.<sup>479</sup> The implementation of this scheme would be overseen by the British Adriatic Mission, who would aid in the process of organising the embarkation and disembarkation of supplies, as well as providing technical assistance by repairing and maintaining the roads in Albania and Montenegro.<sup>480</sup>

However, Britain's decision to delegate naval responsibility to the Italians, although seen as complementing Britain's decision to scale back on the use of its military resources in the Balkan theatre of war, in reality hampered the ability of the British Adriatic Mission to supply the Serbians. Around the same time Britain had begun making preparations for the supply of the Serbian army, the Italians were also preparing to undertake a military expedition to Valona.<sup>481</sup> Although Sonnino, the Italian Foreign Minister, had ostensibly declared that the aim of the Valona expedition was to 'join hands with and support the Serbian army', it was clear that the expedition's primary focus was in fact to strengthen Italy's control over southern Albania.<sup>482</sup> As a result, the Italians declared that they could not spare any destroyers for the purpose of escorting supply ships to Medua, until they had completed transporting their own troops and supplies to Valona.<sup>483</sup> This meant that from 1

---

<sup>478</sup> No 2066, Grey to Rennell Rodd, 9 November 1915, TNA, FO 371/2275-167784.

<sup>479</sup> Ibid.

<sup>480</sup> Ibid.

<sup>481</sup> John Gooch, *The Italian Army and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 120-121.

<sup>482</sup> No 1226, Rodd to Grey, 27 November 1915, TNA, FO 371/2272-180103; Clerk, minute, 30 November 1915, TNA, FO 371/2272-181012.

<sup>483</sup> No 1274, Rodd to Grey, 6 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2276-185862.

to 11 December, all available Italian naval craft in the Adriatic were engaged in the transport of troops and material to Valona.<sup>484</sup> James Rennell Rodd, the British Minister in Rome, despairingly informed Grey that, until an adequate amount of destroyers were available to escort the supply ships crossing to Medua, the British Adriatic Mission would face an 'almost insoluble problem in feeding the Serbians' at Scutari.<sup>485</sup>

Harry Lamb, the political head of the British Adriatic Mission, who had arrived at Scutari on 22 November to await the arrival of the Serbian government and army, was far bleaker in his assessment of the situation. On 25 November Lamb informed Grey that, unless 'adequate measures' were taken by the Italians to protect supply ships from Austrian submarines when making the crossing to Medua, the whole scheme of supplying the Serbian army would be 'doomed to failure.'<sup>486</sup> Lamb's pessimistic prognosis was based upon the deplorable condition he found the Serbian army in, as the first contingents began drifting into Montenegro. According to Crawford Price, a British journalist following the Serbian retreat, the Serbian army had been reduced to 'lantern-jawed skeletons, half-naked who looked at one with glassy, death-like eyes.'<sup>487</sup> Des Graz, who also retreated with the Serbians and arrived at Scutari on 1 December, concurred with Lamb's assessment of the situation, stressing that it was 'of gravest and most immediate importance' to provide relief to the emaciated Serbian army.<sup>488</sup>

---

<sup>484</sup> Miloš Ković, 'Italy and the Evacuation of the Serbian Army From Albania', in, Vojislav G. Pavlović (ed.), *Serbia and Italy in the Great War* (Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies, 2019), p. 228.

<sup>485</sup> No 1291, Rodd to Grey, 9 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2276-188168.

<sup>486</sup> No 1, Lamb to Grey, 25 November 1915, TNA, FO 371/2276-179571; Maurice de Bunsen to Secretary of Admiralty, 28 November 1915, TNA, WO 32/5835-179571.

<sup>487</sup> Crawford Price, *The Role of Serbia: A Brief Account of Serbia's Place in World Politics and Her Services during the War* (London: The Serbian Red Cross Society in Great Britain, 1919), p. 24.

<sup>488</sup> No 519, des Graz to Grey, 2 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2276-184111.

The delay in the despatch of Italian destroyers, crucial in providing adequate protection to the supply ships crossing the Adriatic, further hampered British-Serbian relations by continuing to provide the Serbian government with evidence that they were being neglected by Britain. As Colonel Phillips argued, the 'one cry' of the Serbians at Scutari continued to be that 'they have been betrayed' by the Allies.<sup>489</sup> The cause of the 'bitterness' felt by the Serbian government and army, was that they had been under the impression that Britain had 'promised', in late-October, to 'make all the arrangements' necessary, to ensure the Serbian army would be adequately resupplied upon its arrival at Scutari.<sup>490</sup> According to Pašić, Serbia 'had been led to expect that their deliverance' would be at hand upon their arrival at Scutari, only to find 'to their bitter disappointment', that 'no arrangements had been made to furnish them with even the mere necessities of life.'<sup>491</sup> This perception led Pašić to threaten Britain that, if Serbia's 'friends and Allies' did not come its aid, by putting 'strong pressure' on the Italian government 'with the view to the immediate despatch' of supplies to Medua, a 'catastrophe' was 'inevitable.'<sup>492</sup>

However, Pašić's criticism of Britain's handling of the situation was borne out of domestic considerations and the continuing need to preserve the status of the Serbian army, rather than an outright hostility toward Britain and the Allies. Upon his arrival in Montenegro, Pašić had been 'deeply anxious' over the possibility of 'disturbances and even a revolt' if the

---

<sup>489</sup> Colonel Phillips to War Office, letter, 7 December 1915, TNA, WO 107/54.

<sup>490</sup> No 10, Lamb to Grey, 3 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2276-184166; No 132, Grey to de Salis, 9 November 1915, TNA, FO 371/2275-167784; No 173, de Salis to Grey, 11 November 1915, TNA, FO 371-2275-170923; No 1159, Boskovic to Grey, 26 November 1915, TNA, FO 371/2276-180829.

<sup>491</sup> No 828, Barclay to Grey, 27 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2277-199552.

<sup>492</sup> No 10, Lamb to Grey, 3 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2276-184166; No 539, des Graz to Grey, 16 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2281-193644.

retreating Serbian army, who were due to arrive at Scutari, 'found no food on their arrival.'<sup>493</sup> Whilst Pašić and the Crown Prince remained indefatigably in 'favour of holding out [for] as long as possible', having 'by no means lost hope' in the cause of the Allies, they were aware of the fact that the 'course of events may force Serbian government to capitulate against their will.'<sup>494</sup> Ultimately, as Lord Bertie explained to Grey, the Serbian government was in a 'state of physical and moral depression' after a 'disastrous retreat,' and their bitterness was simply 'the natural outcome of a moment of cruel distress.'<sup>495</sup>

In spite of the Serbian government's criticism, the Foreign Office did make a concerted effort to cajole the Italians into making a greater effort to provide destroyers, for the purpose of escorting supply ships crossing the Adriatic. Due to the pressure of the Foreign Office, by 24 December, some 1000 tons of foodstuffs had been successfully disembarked at Medua.<sup>496</sup> Thus, in response to Bošković's allegations that only 350 tons of food had reached Medua, being 'hardly sufficient to appease the hunger' of the Serbian troops, Grey could counter that these numbers 'appeared to be based on incomplete information.'<sup>497</sup> Suffice to say, Grey felt that Pašić had been unfair in his assessment of British efforts to supply the Serbians, and he argued that Pašić had to 'be perfectly aware that ample provisions have been made for Serbian army', with the 'only obstacles to getting supplies to the army', being 'beyond our control.'<sup>498</sup>

---

<sup>493</sup> No 179, Grey to des Graz, 5 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2276-184111; No 524, des Graz to Grey, 6 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2276-186561.

<sup>494</sup> No 541, des Graz to Grey, 16 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2277-193704; No 552, des Graz to Grey, 26 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2281-201463.

<sup>495</sup> No 16, Bertie to Grey, 5 January 1915, TNA, WO 106/1404.

<sup>496</sup> No 1299, Rennell Rodd to Grey, 10 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2277-189105; No 1335, Rennell Rodd to Grey, 17 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2277-193549.

<sup>497</sup> No 1243, Boskovic to Grey, 23 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2277-198735; Grey to Boskovic, 31 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2277-198735.

<sup>498</sup> No 549, Grey to des Graz, 29 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2277-199552.



Ultimately, Britain remained constrained by its reliance on the Italian navy, given Britain's unwillingness to commit its own naval resources for the purpose of transporting supplies. According to Percy, the Italians had 'practically abandoned...their assurances of assistance', while Clerk was of the firm opinion that the Valona expedition had 'completely nullified' Britain's efforts at supplying the Serbian army.<sup>499</sup> Despite the attempts of the Foreign Office to put pressure on the Italian government to secure Medua as a supply route, Italy remained adamant that there was 'no prospect' of it providing naval escorts for supply ships 'at regular intervals.'<sup>500</sup> As a result of Britain's lack of control over the situation in the Adriatic, the Admiralty and War Office acquiesced to the Italian government by agreeing to make Valona, and not Medua, the main supply base for the Serbian army.<sup>501</sup> However, in adopting this decision, it would be necessary to ask the exhausted Serbian army to move south into central Albania, towards the port of Durazzo, where they could be 'more easily supplied' from Valona.<sup>502</sup> Because the re-supply of the Serbian army was seen by Grey as 'primarily and essentially a military and naval' problem, he had 'no course but to approve' the views of the Admiralty and War Office and, on 16 December, it was formally decided that Valona would become the new base for supply operations.<sup>503</sup>

Although the Foreign Office had no say in the decision made by the War Office and Admiralty, it was left to Grey to try and 'urge [the] Serbian government to move as many

---

<sup>499</sup> Clerk, and, Percy, minute, 6 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2276-185042.

<sup>500</sup> No 1334, Rennell Rodd to Grey, 17 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2277-193531.

<sup>501</sup> No 2285, Grey to Rodd, 2 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2276-181832.

<sup>502</sup> Director of Military Operations to Grey, 3 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2276-183879.

<sup>503</sup> Maurice de Bunsen to Secretary of the Army Council, 3 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2276-182401; No 3001, Grey to Bertie, 16 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2277-193084.

troops as possible towards Durazzo and Valona.<sup>504</sup> However, the Serbian government and army were reluctant to leave Scutari, with the Crown Prince having already rejected the idea of moving the Serbian army further south on 5 December.<sup>505</sup> The trickle of foodstuffs, which were continuing to arrive at Scutari from Medua, gave the Serbian government the impression that the naval crossing to Medua could be easily secured, if Britain simply put enough pressure on the Italians.<sup>506</sup> In addition, given the deplorable condition of the Serbian army, the Serbian government were fearful that if the 'exhausted' Serbian troops were made to march another 250 kilometres, towards Durazzo and Valona, there was a strong risk of 'over half' the army perishing.<sup>507</sup> Most pressing of all, there were increasing reports that the Austrians and Bulgarians were making preparations to move into Montenegro and Albania.<sup>508</sup> Given that the Serbian army was in no condition to resist a renewed Austro-Bulgarian advance, the Serbian government became fearful that the road from Scutari to Medua would be cut, trapping the government and army in Montenegro and 'forcing it to capitulate.'<sup>509</sup>

Rather than risk moving the army south, the Serbian government argued that the 'surest and quickest' way of preventing the collapse of the Serbian army would be for the Allies to immediately evacuate the majority of the Serbian army from Medua.<sup>510</sup> As Crown Prince Alexander explained in a personal letter to King George, the Serbian government had

---

<sup>504</sup> No 3044, Grey to Bertie, and, No 3036, Grey to Buchanan, 19 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2281-193918.

<sup>505</sup> No 5, Lamb to Grey, 5 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2276-183879.

<sup>506</sup> No 1252, Rodd to Grey, 2 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2276-183337; No 21, Lamb to Grey, 9 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2276-188166; No 547, des Graz to Grey, 20 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2277-198365.

<sup>507</sup> No 538, des Graz to Grey, 16 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2281-193881.

<sup>508</sup> No 471 (No 99), Colonel Phillips to War Office, 13 December 1915, TNA, WO 33/832, Secret Telegrams, Series E, Vol I; No 478 (No 100), Colonel Phillips to War Office, 15 December 1915, TNA, WO 33/832, Secret Telegrams, Series E, Vol I.

<sup>509</sup> No 538, des Graz to Grey, 16 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2281-193881.

<sup>510</sup> Ibid.

retreated into Montenegro, on the expectation that they would be able to ‘rest there’ before proceeding to reorganise the army in central Albania.<sup>511</sup> However, since arriving at Scutari the Crown Prince had found, ‘for various reasons’, the fruition of his plan becoming more and more difficult.<sup>512</sup> The Crown Prince was therefore forced to alter his original proposition of remaining in Montenegro and Albania, and now sought to ‘move his army elsewhere to someplace where its re-organisation in safety would be rendered possible.’<sup>513</sup> Together, the Serbian government was of the strong opinion that the Serbian army should be immediately evacuated from Albania and sent to Salonica to join the Allies, whereupon it would be re-organised as a fighting force.<sup>514</sup>

However, a series of reports regarding the poor condition of the Serbian army made it difficult for Britain to seriously consider its evacuation. On 8 December, the War Office had asked Colonel Philips for his personal opinion as to whether it was ‘worth the trouble and expense’ to re-arm and feed the Serbian army.<sup>515</sup> In response Phillips reported that the Serbian army had become an ‘undisciplined rabble’, concluding that it was, at the moment, ‘undesirable’ to re-arm and re-equip the Serbian army.<sup>516</sup> In addition, Lamb was of the firm opinion that if the Medua route were to be abandoned, and the Serbian army forced to march south, which now appeared likely, a ‘collapse’ would ‘not be long in coming.’<sup>517</sup> Overall, these pessimistic perceptions towards the status of the Serbian army fostered an

---

<sup>511</sup> No 550, des Graz to Grey, 23 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2282-198740.

<sup>512</sup> Ibid.

<sup>513</sup> Ibid.

<sup>514</sup> No 531, des Graz to Grey, 10 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2282-189182.

<sup>515</sup> No 458 (No 10819), War Office to Colonel Phillips, 8 December 1915, TNA, WO 33/832, Secret Telegrams, Series E, Vol I.

<sup>516</sup> No 462 (No 97), Colonel Phillips to War Office, 10 December 1915, TNA, WO 33/832, Secret Telegrams, Series E, Vol I.

<sup>517</sup> No 29, Lamb to Grey, 21 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2277-198799.

underlying assumption in Britain that, whilst the Adriatic Mission should continue to make efforts at feeding the Serbians, it would be 'futile', as Percy argued, for Britain 'to be particular about the Serbian army on the eve of their probable total capture.'<sup>518</sup>

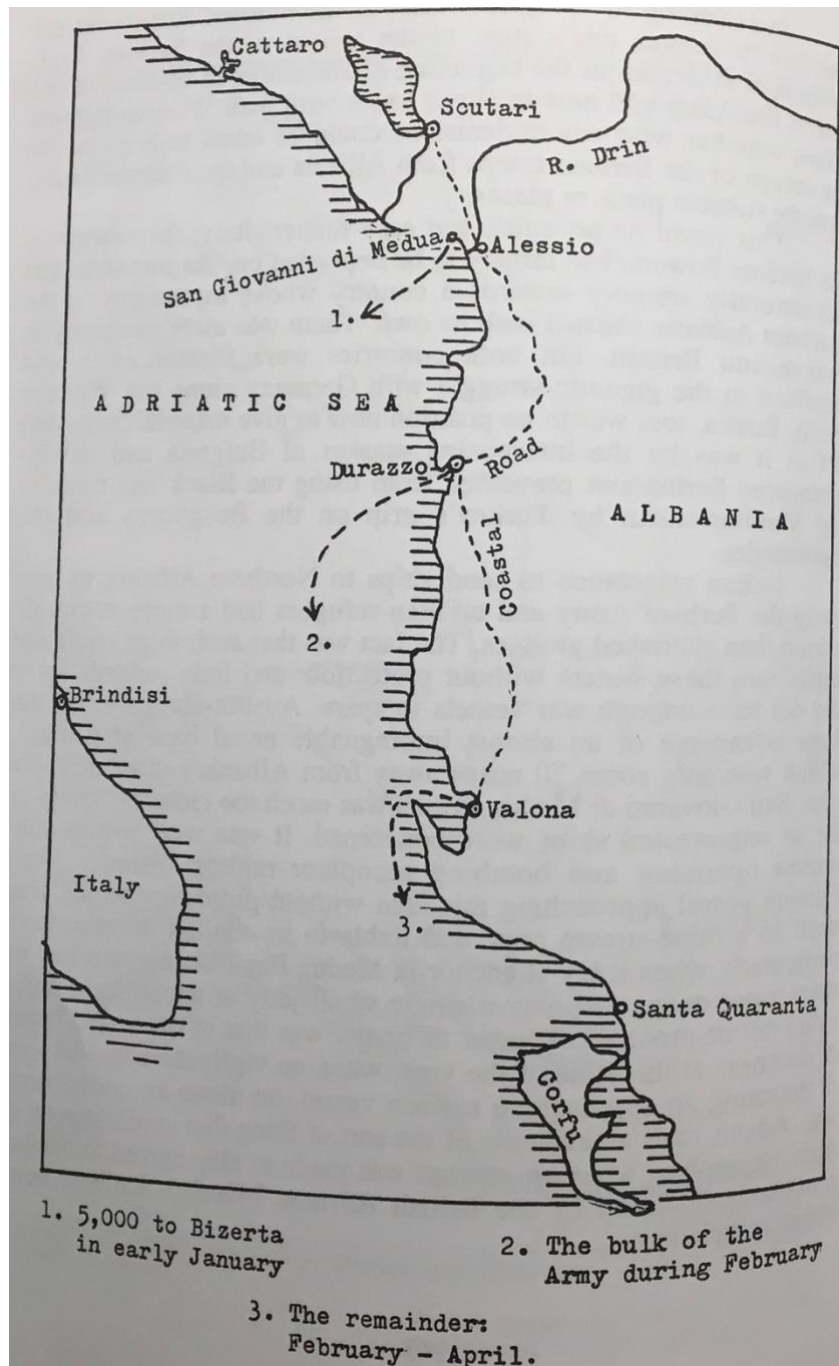


Figure 6: Map showing the places in Montenegro and Albania used for the supply and evacuation of Serbian Army. Source: Fryer, p. 114.

<sup>518</sup> Percy, minute, 17 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2280-193702.

Since the conception of the British Adriatic Mission, and the Mission's subsequent efforts to supply the Serbian army, Britain had remained relatively uninterested in the future military usefulness of the Serbian army itself. According to Percy, the British Adriatic Mission had become the 'orphan' of the British government, with the War Office and Admiralty, preoccupied with Salonica and the Dardanelles, maintaining a position of 'disinterested *non possumus*' towards the fate of the Serbian army.<sup>519</sup> As Grey argued, the creation of the British Adriatic Mission had been under the guise of it being a 'humanitarian enterprise' to help organise the supply of the Serbian army in Albania, rather than a military operation to evacuate the Serbian army.<sup>520</sup> Thus, despite Mount Lovćen being captured by Austrian troops on 11 January (directly threatening the Serbian government and army at Scutari), Grey remained firm in the belief that it was 'premature' to consider evacuating the Serbians, because there was a possibility that the 'greater part of the Serbian army would be cut off by the Austrians.'<sup>521</sup>

Ultimately, Britain's perception towards Serbia and the evacuation of the Serbian army remained wedded to its strategic considerations. On 4 December, the Serbian government asked the Foreign Office if there was any truth to the rumours that Serbia was 'now looked upon as crushed' by the Allies, with them no longer seeing 'any...necessity for a campaign...in [the] Balkan theatre of war.'<sup>522</sup> Having been put on the spot by Pašić's question, Grey initially informed him that the Allies, contrary to the rumours, did 'not regard [the] Balkan campaign as terminated', and that Britain would continue to do its 'utmost to

---

<sup>519</sup> Percy, minute, 6 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2276-185042.

<sup>520</sup> No 1, Grey to Lamb, 15 November 1915, TNA, FO 371/2275-171158; Percy, minute, 28 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2281-199569.

<sup>521</sup> No 93, Grey to Rodd, 14 January 1916, TNA, FO 371/2604-8121.

<sup>522</sup> No 517, des Graz to Grey, 4 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2281-184121.

assist [the] Serbian army.<sup>523</sup> Then, in a follow-up telegram, Grey made clear to Pašić that Britain's attitude towards the Serbian army, and the Balkan theatre of war, would remain 'subject to the requirements of the strategic situation as a whole.'<sup>524</sup> Given Britain's prevailing position toward military operations in the Balkans, and its desire to evacuate Salonica, it was evident that Britain's strategic considerations would consign the Serbian army to no longer having a role to play in the war.

However, the French government, without the knowledge of Britain, had also sent a military mission to the Balkans, with the intention of evacuating the Serbian army and re-organising it somewhere else.<sup>525</sup> Despite Britain's reticence, there was little it could do to stop France from using its own military and naval resources, to facilitate the evacuation of the Serbians from Montenegro and Albania. Although Britain had provisionally agreed in October to remain at Salonica, to support the French troops in their attempts to break through to Serbia, the War Committee continued to believe, as Asquith concluded, that 'it was a very unsatisfactory position' to have 'such a large force locked up for no purpose in Salonica.'<sup>526</sup> Despite Britain making it clear to the French, at the Calais Conference on 4 December, that it was resolved to undertake the immediate evacuation of British troops from Salonica, Britain was forced, again due to political reasons, to officially commit itself to supporting France by remaining at Salonica.<sup>527</sup> Britain's acquiescence had consequences for Serbia because implicit in this decision, was the British submission to France on more general

---

<sup>523</sup> No 541, Grey to des Graz, 18 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2281-191103.

<sup>524</sup> Ibid; No 542, Grey to des Graz, 19 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2281-191103.

<sup>525</sup> No 1039, Bertie to Grey, 24 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2281-198423.

<sup>526</sup> War Committee Minutes, 29 November 1915, TNA, CAB 42/5/24.

<sup>527</sup> David Dutton, 'The Calais Conference of December 1915', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (1978), pp. 143-156.

military matters regarding Salonica, which included the fate of the Serbian army. As a result, on 13 January, the War Committee agreed that it would offer 'no objection' to the French efforts to embark the Serbian army from Valona and Durrazzo, and to transport it to Corfu.<sup>528</sup>

Britain's formal decision to remain at Salonica meant that the Serbian army regained a degree of importance within Britain's strategic considerations. As David Dutton argues, the central question for British policy-makers now revolved around defining the role the Allied troops at Salonica would play, in the general conduct of the war.<sup>529</sup> Two factors led Britain to change its views on the Serbian army and Salonica. Firstly, it appeared that Colonel Phillips had underestimated the strength of the Serbian army, with the War Office now estimating that the Serbian army numbered around 140,000, and not 20,000 as Phillips had argued.<sup>530</sup> Secondly, the French government had accepted 'sole responsibility' over the reorganisation of the Serbian army, which complemented Britain's desire to scale back on the expenditure of British military resources in the Balkans.<sup>531</sup> As a result, Sir William Robertson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, informed the War Committee that 'the rapid reorganization of the Serbian armies' was now 'a military factor of considerable importance' for Britain.<sup>532</sup> This was because the Serbian army, at little cost to Britain, could be used to 'replace the Allied forces' at Salonica who were 'more urgently required for operations

---

<sup>528</sup> War Committee Minutes, 13 January 1915, TNA, CAB 42/7/5; No 526 (No M.H.Q. 34), British Adriatic Mission Headquarters, Rome, to War Office, 14 January 1916, TNA, WO 33/832, Secret Telegrams, Series E, Vol I.

<sup>529</sup> David Dutton, 'The "Robertson Dictatorship" and the Balkan Campaign in 1916', *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1986), p. 65.

<sup>530</sup> 'Minute from Mr Balfour to the Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence', 17 January 1916, TNA, CAB, 42/7/9; No 462 (No 97), Colonel Phillips to War Office, 10 December 1915, TNA, WO 33/832, Secret Telegrams, Series E, Vol I.

<sup>531</sup> No 107, Bertie to Grey, 23 January 1915, TNA, FO 371/2604-14219.

<sup>532</sup> Robertson, 'Note for War Committee on Co-ordination of Arrangements for Supplying and Equipping Serbian Army', 25 January 1915, TNA, CAB 42/7/13.

against the enemy's Western Front.<sup>533</sup> Overall, the War Committee concurred with Robertson's position, and Britain formally agreed to hand over the sole organisation of the Serbian army to the French government on 26 January 1916.<sup>534</sup>

By 16 February, Colonel Phillips confidently informed the War Office that the transfer of the Serbian army was 'progressing most favourably', and that the embarkation would be 'completed in a few days.'<sup>535</sup> Although Pašić had continued to exhibit the 'gravest anxiety', during the course of the evacuation, once the Serbian government and army reached Corfu, he became much more effusive towards Britain, and 'ceased from making complaints' about the alleged mis-treatment of Serbia.<sup>536</sup> Having joined the Serbian government at Corfu, des Graz noted 'how pleasing [it was] to hear...gratitude at arrangements and care taken of them [Serbia] by the French and especially the British.'<sup>537</sup> Similarly, the Crown Prince, on his way to London for an unofficial state visit, 'expressed himself as very grateful for the work done by the British Adriatic Mission', and was 'rather optimistic as to the future of the Serbian army who would...be greatly encouraged by their transfer...to Salonica...where they would feel themselves on their road to their own country.'<sup>538</sup> Following the invasion of Serbia, Pašić's overriding aim had been to preserve the Serbian army, so as to allow Serbia

---

<sup>533</sup> Ibid.

<sup>534</sup> War Committee Minutes, 26 January 1915, TNA, CAB 42/7/13.

<sup>535</sup> No 550 (No 112), Colonel Phillips to War Office, 9 February 1916, TNA, WO 33/832, Secret Telegrams, Series E, Vol I; No 560 (No 115), Colonel Phillips to War Office, 16 February 1916, TNA, WO 33/832, Secret Telegrams, Series E, Vol I; For more information on the evacuation of the Serbian army, see, Miloš Ković, 'The British Adriatic Squadron and the Evacuation of Serbs from the Albanian Coast 1915-1916', *Balkanica* XLIX (2018), pp. 35-44.

<sup>536</sup> No 64, Rodd to Grey, 13 January 1916, TNA, FO 371/2604-8121; No 12, des Graz to Grey, 23 January 1916, TNA, WO 106/1404; No 93, Rennell Rodd to Grey, 18 March 1916, TNA, FO 371/2617-54835.

<sup>537</sup> Charles des Graz, Diary, 10 February 1916, CUL, MSS 7450/49.

<sup>538</sup> No 93, Rennell Rodd to Grey, 18 March 1916, TNA, FO 371/2617-54835.



to continue fighting alongside the Allies. Given this had now been achieved, it was no longer politically prudent for Serbia to criticise Britain.

Although the strategic imperatives of both the British and Serbian governments had coalesced around their joint desire to despatch the Serbian army to Salonica, there remained a fundamental dissonance between them over Serbia's Yugoslav policy. The collapse of Britain's Near Eastern strategy, and the Austro-German-Bulgar invasion of Serbia, meant that Serbia and the Yugoslav question was relegated to the fringes of the Foreign Office's diplomatic preoccupations.<sup>539</sup> Grey felt it was 'quite unnecessary' for Sazonov to inform the Serbian government, in late-December, that the Allies were 'firmly resolved to not only re-establish Serbia in her former limits but also to fulfill [the] promise of territorial aggrandisement made to her.'<sup>540</sup> While Percy, upon finding out that the French had also affirmed their support for a Yugoslav state, remained firm that 'we cannot and will not continue this war until Yugoslavia is constituted.'<sup>541</sup> Ultimately, to ensure that Britain did not appear 'lukewarm' towards the aspirations of the Serbian government (compared to the French and Russian government), Nicolson felt it would 'be better' for Britain 'to say nothing at all' regarding Serbia's future.<sup>542</sup> Thus, des Graz was instructed to not make any declaration to the Serbian government, and to refer the matter to Grey, should the Serbian government approach des Graz over any question regarding Serbia and the Yugoslav programme.<sup>543</sup> This position was maintained by the Foreign Office and, upon receiving the news that the Crown Prince and Pašić intended to visit London to discuss Serbia's role in the

---

<sup>539</sup> Evans, p. 164.

<sup>540</sup> No 3071, Grey to Buchanan, 22 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2281-196058.

<sup>541</sup> Percy, minute, 29 December 1915, TNA, FO 371/2281-200194.

<sup>542</sup> Oliphant, and, Nicolson, minute, 2 January 1915, TNA, FO 371/2603-746.

<sup>543</sup> No 5, Grey to des Graz, 3 January 1916, TNA, FO 371/2603-756.

war, Nicolson was adamant that it would 'be desirable to be very cautious as to what was said to the Crown Prince in regards to a Serbo-Croatian union.'<sup>544</sup>

Ultimately, given the Serbian government was now in exile and in 'urgent' need of Britain's financial assistance to secure their 'means of existence', it would have been inopportune for Pašić to immediately raise the issue of the Yugoslav question.<sup>545</sup> Although the Yugoslav programme remained central to Serbia's national policy, Serbia's immediate task was to undertake 'a campaign to recover [its] country' as soon as the army reached Salonica.<sup>546</sup>

According to Andrej Mitrović, the only way for Serbia to 'demonstrate the continuity of its role and confirm its identity' as a member of the Allies, was to 'return to the battlefield.'<sup>547</sup>

Although the destruction of Serbia saw Yugoslavia largely disappear as an issue for the Foreign Office, the endurance shown by the Serbian army had led to a wide outpouring of admiration amongst the British public for the Serbians, and their cause.<sup>548</sup> Thus, despite not having an opportunity to further its war aims, the Serbian government was relatively content in the position it found itself vis a vis Britain. As des Graz noted, the Crown Prince's impression of London was 'excellent' and he had been 'charmed with [the] reception' he had received.<sup>549</sup> Similarly, following his visit to London, Pašić thanked Grey for the 'financial help' which had helped secure 'the existence of the Serbian state', and affirmed that he

---

<sup>544</sup> Nicolson, minute, 30 March 1916, TNA, FO 371/2615-58909.

<sup>545</sup> No 20, des Graz to Grey, 24 February 1916, TNA, FO 371/2605-36534.

<sup>546</sup> Charles des Graz, Diary, 26 March 1916, CUL, MSS 7450/49.

<sup>547</sup> Mitrović, p. 163.

<sup>548</sup> Slobodan G. Markovich, 'British Perceptions of the Balkan Christian Countries and Their Identities Until 1918', in, S. G. Markovich, and, V. Pavlovic (eds.), *Problems of Identities in the Balkans* (Belgrade: Dosije Press, 2006), p. 126; Hanak, *Great Britain and Austria-Hungary*, p. 91; Evans, p. 164.

<sup>549</sup> Charles des Graz, Diary, 13 May 1916, CUL, MSS 7450/49.

was 'more firmly convinced than ever' that together Britain and Serbia would be successful in defeating the Central Powers.<sup>550</sup>

Overall, in spite of its overwhelming desire to extricate itself from the Balkans, Britain can be seen to have made a concerted effort to try and continue to support Serbia over the autumn and winter of 1915-16. Nonetheless, these efforts remained strongly wedded to Britain's strategic imperatives, and it was ultimately these circumstances that created the conditions for disagreement between the Serbian and British government over how to deal with the situation, following the breakdown in the Macedonia negotiations, and the Central Powers' invasion of Serbia. Yet, through Britain's role in supplying, and helping evacuate the Serbian army and government to Corfu, British-Serbian relations became increasingly less acute. This was mainly due to the shared desire of both British and Serbian policymakers to dispatch the Serbian army to Salonica. And it was through the Salonica Front that Britain and Serbia were finally able to develop a working diplomatic relationship, over a shared goal, for the duration of the war.

---

<sup>550</sup> Pašić to Grey, letter, 21 June 1916, TNA, FO 800/76.

## Conclusion

The defining characteristic that emerges from an assessment of British-Serbian relations, from the outbreak of war in August 1914 to the evacuation of the Serbian government and army to Corfu in February 1916, is that Britain and Serbia had fundamentally different approaches towards the war. As Hew Strachan makes clear, the First World War was perceived, by its participants, to be an 'existential conflict' in which 'national survival' was the ultimate war aim.<sup>551</sup> Thus, both Britain and Serbia interpreted their national survival in different ways. For Serbia it was to finally free itself from the yoke of Austrian imperialism, by uniting the South Slavs into a Yugoslav state. While, for Britain, it was predominantly about focussing on the maintenance of its imperial position, and checking Germany's ambitions for European hegemony. As David Stevenson makes clear, British war aims differed from Serbia's 'in that European territorial arrangements were not their central preoccupation.'<sup>552</sup> Ultimately, it was these differing and contradictory interpretations in war aims that shaped the overriding circumstances for the development of British-Serbian diplomatic relations.

Initially, the deliberate vagueness of Britain's declaration, that it was going to war in support of the rights of small nations, created the conditions in which it appeared that Britain would be supportive of Serbia and its national aspirations. Serbia had seen the outbreak of war as an opportunity to break free from the shackles of Austrian imperialism and, according to

---

<sup>551</sup> Hew Strachan, 'Military Operations and National Policy, 1914-1918', in Holger Afflerbach (ed.), *The Purpose of the First World War: War Aims and Military Strategies* (Munich: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2015), p. 12.

<sup>552</sup> David Stevenson, *Cataclysm: The First World War as a Political Tragedy* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), pp. 117-120.

Pašić, to create a strong south-western Slav state, so as to guarantee ‘the survival and further development of the independence of Slavs.’<sup>553</sup> As Pašić informed des Graz, he believed that Britain had, due to Austrian aggression, come ‘to the assistance of Serbia in defence of rights of weak and on behalf of the principle [of] nationalities’ and, in this proclamation, the ‘Serbian government saw [the] programme of their own policy’ to create a Yugoslav state.<sup>554</sup> However, as much as Pašić tried to legitimise Serbia’s war aims by linking them with Britain’s opportunistic use of the nationality principle, it was unlikely that Britain would bring itself to unconditionally support Serbia against Austria, given its preoccupation with military operations on the Western Front and the defeat of Germany. As a result, a fundamental dissonance existed between the views held by Britain and Serbia, as to the extent to which Britain would become involved in the Balkans and be supportive of Serbia’s war aims.

Ultimately, Britain’s diplomatic relations with Serbia were conditioned by Serbia’s relevance to British interests, and the resulting strategy Britain formulated to secure these interests. Over the course of 1915 Britain did eventually come to perceive Serbia and the Balkan neutrals as an important component in Britain’s overriding strategy of ‘business as usual’ and decision to focus on the Near Eastern theatre of war.<sup>555</sup> Thus, once the Balkans became an area of military significance to Britain, following the Ottoman Empire’s decision to join the Central Powers, Serbia was drawn closer into the orbit of British strategy. Although Britain’s decision to force the Dardanelles arose out of Britain’s desire to find a low-cost opportunity to make a dramatic difference to the balance of power, the need to provide

---

<sup>553</sup> Pašić, memorandum, 4 September 1914, cited in, Mitrović, p. 89.

<sup>554</sup> No 162, des Graz to Grey, 7 May 1915, FO 371/2257-56374.

<sup>555</sup> French, *British Strategy and War Aims*, p. 244.

Serbia with relief did also form a part of this strategy.<sup>556</sup> At the beginning of 1915, fearing that an isolated Serbia would be destroyed, should the Central Powers renew its attack on Serbia, Britain saw it as 'essential to secure the participation' of the Balkan neutrals on the side of the Allies.<sup>557</sup> As Hew Strachan argues, Britain's decision to link the Dardanelles expedition with the creation of the Balkan league meant that, 'for the first time in the war', Britain was willing to 'give real succour to the hard-pressed Serbs.'<sup>558</sup> From the beginning of 1915, due to the changes in the military situation in the Near East, it appeared that Britain had found a balanced strategy that supported both British and Serbian interests.

However, while it may have appeared to the Serbian government that Britain was changing tack and beginning to take Serbian interests into consideration, when formulating its strategy, this decision ultimately remained wedded to a British perspective. This meant that Britain's support for Serbia was predicated on whether this support also secured British interests, rather than any genuine understanding of the difficult situation Serbia had found itself in at the end of 1914. A key example of this can be observed in the deliberations in Britain over whether to despatch British troops to Salonica in January and September/October 1915. On both occasions the initial impetus, to begin discussing the despatch of troops, had been Serbia's precarious military position, and the need to reinforce the beleaguered Serbian army. Yet the discussions over supporting Serbia, quickly became sublimated into the wider discussions over Britain's strategic imperatives in the Near East. As a result, the despatch of troops to Salonica was only considered in the context of securing Greek belligerence, rather than providing moral and military support to Serbia. In

---

<sup>556</sup> Jeffrey, p. 50.

<sup>557</sup> No 105, Grey to Bertie, 18 January 1915, FO 371/2241-6051.

<sup>558</sup> Hew Strachan, *The First World War* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2014), p. 114.

addition, Britain's decision to support Serbia's territorial expansion was not based on a sympathetic reading of the Yugoslav programme, as the manifestation of Britain's support for a policy of national self-determination, but rather as a necessary price to be paid, so as to better secure Britain's strategic position in the Near East, through enlisting the support of Bulgaria.<sup>559</sup>

Furthermore, the surface level synergy between Britain and Serbia, that seemed to have been achieved following Britain's decision to pursue a strategy centred on the Dardanelles expedition, would only prevail so long as events in the Near East continued to go the Allies' way. Once Britain began to experience a series of military setbacks at the Dardanelles, rather than having a net positive effect, as intended, Britain's strategy in the Near East began to undermine Serbia's position in the Balkans. In essence, over the course of 1915, Britain became trapped by the logic of committing itself to the Dardanelles expedition. This meant that Britain had no choice but to sacrifice Serbia's territorial interests in Dalmatia, Macedonia, and the Banat, because to not do so would be to risk defeat at the Dardanelles, and the collapse of Britain's position in the Near East.

Despite Britain's best efforts, its failure to find an adequate diplomatic solution to the Balkan imbroglio, and the deterioration of the military situation at the Dardanelles, led to Bulgaria joining the Central Powers and invading Serbia. Realising that its Near Eastern strategy had failed, Britain consequently sought to scale down its military commitments in the Near East. Although this strategic decision made sense to Britain, who no longer saw it

---

<sup>559</sup> Calder, p. 29-31.

as viable to continue military operations at the Dardanelles and Salonica, it came as a shock to Serbia, who had found itself in an increasingly precarious position against the Central Powers.

Following the decision of the Serbian government to retreat into Montenegro and Albania in late-November, Britain took a minimal interest in the survival of the Serbian army, given it was predominantly preoccupied with resolving the situation at Salonica, and the evacuation of the Dardanelles. Although Britain, through the British Adriatic Mission, helped organise a scheme of supply for the Serbian army, the despatch of foodstuffs and the provision of personnel to help transport these supplies, it was content to leave the naval operations to the Italian government. Britain's reliance on the Italians, who had their own geo-political motives to be in Albania, almost led to a situation where the Serbian army capitulated. Despite this, beyond feeding the Serbian army for humanitarian reasons, Britain remained relatively indifferent to the fate of the Serbian government and army. However, Britain's decision to give in to the demands of the French and remain at Salonica, created the conditions in which the survival of the Serbian army again became relevant to British strategy in the Near East. Although Britain had committed to remaining at Salonica, it still sought to maintain a minimal number of troops in the Balkans. As a result, Britain became receptive towards the evacuation of the Serbian army to Corfu and its transportation to Salonica, because it believed that this would allow Britain to make a minor contribution to the Salonica expedition.

An underlying, yet nonetheless important, facet of British-Serbian relations was Britain's unfamiliarity with Serbia, and the forces that shaped Serbia's domestic and international



politics. As Zara Steiner argues, there was a tendency at the Foreign Office to see the world in 'static terms', and to assume that 'all questions could be solved through rational discussion.'<sup>560</sup> This meant that British 'officials repeatedly underestimated the erratic and emotional factors in foreign relations.'<sup>561</sup> As a result, the Foreign Office came to perceive Serbian politics in very simplistic terms, underestimating the extent to which Pašić was trapped by the Niš Declaration and the constant threat he faced from the Serbian army, parliament and public. However, rather than accept that Pašić could not always act in complete compliance with British policy and strategy, the Foreign Office perceived the difficult situation as being due to Serbia's inability to act in a gentlemanly and civilised manner.

Britain's unfamiliarity with Serbia compelled the Foreign Office to fall back on Balkanist assumptions, which characterised the Serbians as people who, according to Maria Todorova, did 'not conform to the standards of behaviour devised as normative.'<sup>562</sup>

Although the Foreign Office did not initially put pressure on Serbia to cede the uncontested zone, this lack of pressure was borne out of an underlying expectation that Serbia would share in Britain's point of view; that it was perfectly reasonable for Serbia to make sacrifices that would benefit the cause of the Allies. A typical response of the Foreign Office, to one of des Graz's despatches outlining the difficulties Pašić' faced, is encapsulated by Clerk's assertion that all that was needed was for Pašić to be 'reminded' of the 'sacrifices' Britain had made for Serbia, and that the defeat of Germany and the Central Powers could not be

---

<sup>560</sup> Zara Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy 1898-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 210.

<sup>561</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>562</sup> Todorova, p. 3.

'jeopardised' by Serbia's 'unreasonableness.'<sup>563</sup> As a result, the perception that the Serbian government was incapable of understanding Britain's point of view, served as a useful means to exonerate Britain from any accusations of wrongdoing in their handling of Serbia.

This underlying Balkanist perception of Serbia went hand in glove with Britain's decision to frame its relationship with Serbia on the basis of its relevance to British strategy. As events show, the implication of such an approach was that Serbia became a dispensable object in British diplomacy. However, Britain was able to counter the negative ramifications of this approach by placing the blame on Serbia for creating a situation in which Britain had to abandon its Near Eastern strategy and Serbia. As Slobodan Markovich argues, in the absence of any real knowledge of Serbia, Britain perceived the Balkans through 'the lens of balkanism.'<sup>564</sup> This meant that any 'Balkan country could be easily upgraded to a kind of "us" or downgraded to "otherness" depending on current political circumstances...or wider geostrategic considerations.'<sup>565</sup> Thus on the one hand, when it was beneficial for Britain to do so, it was willing to make reference to Serbia and its struggle against Austria, supporting Serbia both militarily and diplomatically. On the other hand, this support only extended as far as the parameters of British strategy would allow it to. And, when the situation called for difficult decisions, such as sacrificing Serbia's territorial ambitions and leaving Serbia to face the Central Powers alone, Britain did not hesitate to make them. More importantly, any criticism of Britain's failed Near Eastern strategy could be shifted onto the shoulders of

---

<sup>563</sup> Clerk, minute, 9 November 1914, FO 371/1902-68567.

<sup>564</sup> Slobodan G. Markovich, 'British-Serbian Cultural and Political Relations 1784-1918', in Slobodan G. Markovich (ed.) *British-Serbian Relations from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries* (Belgrade: Zepter Book World, 2018). P. 62.

<sup>565</sup> *Ibid.*

Serbia and the poor behaviour of its government, rather than that of the Foreign Office and its misreading of the political conditions in Serbia and the Balkans.

Overall, Britain's wartime relationship with Serbia was summarised in a pamphlet written by Valentine Chirol in support of Serbia upon the outbreak of war. As an avowed imperialist, Chirol initially made an effort to distance Britain from Serbia by arguing that 'we ourselves are not fighting for Serbia, nor should we ever have fought for Serbia, since we were never under any obligation to fight for the interests so far removed from our own.'<sup>566</sup> But, despite this inherent lack of cohesion between British and Serbian interests, Chirol made clear that Britain had 'no reason to feel ashamed' in fighting alongside Serbia, because Britain and Serbia shared 'a common enemy' and were fighting for the same cause; 'the cause of freedom.'<sup>567</sup> Thus, from August 1914 to February 1916, Britain, in its relations with Serbia, oscillated between the two impulses outlined by Chirol. If it was in Britain's interest to do so then it would not hesitate to make reference to Serbia's territorial expansion and consider the despatch of British troops to the Balkans. But, at the same time, because Britain lacked any genuine sympathy for Serbia, and was prone to perceiving the war from purely a British perspective, it found it just as easy to sacrifice Serbian interests rather than support them, when it was beneficial for it to do so.

---

<sup>566</sup> Valentine Chirol, *Serbia and the Serbs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1914), p. 18.

<sup>567</sup> *Ibid.*

## **Bibliography**

### **Primary Sources**

#### **i) Archival Sources**

##### **The National Archives, London**

##### 1. Cabinet Papers

CAB 37 (Cabinet Memoranda)

CAB 41 (Cabinet Letters)

CAB 42 (War Council and Successors)

##### 2. Foreign Office Papers

FO 371 (General Correspondence)

FO 881 (Confidential Prints)

##### 3. War Office Papers

WO 32 (Registered Papers)

WO 33 (Reports and Memoranda: O and A Series)

WO 106 (Directorate of Military Operations and Military Intelligence)

WO 107 (Quartermaster General Department: Correspondence and Papers)

#### **ii) Private Papers**

Sir Edward Grey, The National Archives, London, FO 800/35-118

Sir Arthur Nicolson, The National Archives, London, FO 800/336-381

Sir Charles des Graz, Cambridge University Library, Cambridge, MSS Add, 9988/21-22, 7450/49

#### **iii) Memoirs and Biographies**

Asquith, Herbert, *Memories and Reflections 1852-1927* (London: Cassell and Company Limited, 1928)

Chirol, Valentine, *Fifty Years in A Changing World*, (London: Butler and Tanner Ltd, 1927)

Churchill, Winston, *The World Crisis* 6 vols (London: Thornton, 1923)

Colvin, Ian, *The Life of Edward Carson* 3 vols (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1936)

- Grey, Edward, *Twenty-Five Years 1892-1916* 2 vols (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1925)
- Lloyd George, David, *War Memoirs of Lloyd George* 2 vols (London: Oldham Press Ltd, 1933)
- Masterman, Lucy, C. F. G. *Masterman: A Biography* (London: Nicholson and Watson, 1939)
- Percy, Eustace, *Some Memories* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1958)
- Trubetskoi, Grigorri N., and, Elizabeth Saika-Voivod (trans.), *Notes of a Plenipotentiary: Russian Diplomacy and War in the Balkans 1914-1917* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University, 2016)

#### iv) Printed Primary Sources

- Asquith, Herbert H., 'The War of Civilization: A Speech by the Prime Minister In Edinburgh, 18 September 1914', (London: Methuen and Co., 1914)
- Chirol, Valentine, *Serbia and the Serbs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1914)
- Durham, Edith Mary, *The Sarajevo Crime* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1925)
- Price, Crawford, *The Role of Serbia: A Brief Account of Serbia's Place in World Politics and Her Services during the War* (London: The Serbian Red Cross Society in Great Britain, 1919)
- Reed, John, *The War in Eastern Europe* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1919)
- Wratislaw, A. C., *A Consul in the East* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1924)
- Zupanic, Niko, *The Strategical Significance of Serbia* (London: Salisbury Supply Co Printers, 1915)

#### v) Parliamentary Speeches

- House of Commons, *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates: Official Report* (28 September 1915, vol. 74, cols. 731-732) [Online] <[https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1915/sep/28/announcement-by-sir-e-grey#S5CV0074P0\\_19150928\\_HOC\\_161](https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1915/sep/28/announcement-by-sir-e-grey#S5CV0074P0_19150928_HOC_161)> [accessed 3 August 2022]

#### vi) Edited Collections

- Seton-Watson, Hugh, and, Christopher (eds.), *R. W. Seton-Watson and the Yugoslavs, Correspondence 1906-1941: Vol One 1906-1918* (London: British Academy, 1976)
- Brock, Michael, and, Eleanor (eds.), *H. H. Asquith Letters to Venetia Stanley* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982)
- Gooch, G.P, and, Temperley, Harold (eds.), *British Documents on the Origins of War 1898-1914: Volume V* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1934)

Gooch, G.P, and, Temperley, Harold (eds.), *British Documents on the Origins of War 1898-1914: Volume IX* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1934)

### Secondary Sources

#### **i) Books**

Adams, John Clinton, *Flight in Winter* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1942)

Antić, Čedomir, *Ralph Paget: A Diplomat in Serbia* (Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies, 2006)

Babac, Dusan, *The Serbian Army in the Great War 1914-1918* (Solihull: Helion and Company, 2016)

Beckett, Ian, and, others, *The British Army and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017)

Bentley, Michael, *The Liberal Mind 1914-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977)

Bourne, J. M., *Britain and the Great War: 1914-1918* (London: Edward and Arnold, 1989)

Calder, Kenneth J., *Britain and the Origins of New Europe 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976)

Cassar, George, *Kitchener: Architect of Victory* (London: William Kimber, 1977)

Clark, Christopher, *The Sleepwalkers* (London: Allen Lane, 2012)

Crampton, R. J., *The Hollow Détente: Anglo-German Relations in the Balkans, 1911-1914* (London: George Prior Publishers, 1981)

Curtright, Lynn H., *Muddle Indecision and Setback: British Policy and the Balkan States, August 1914 to the Inception of the Dardanelles Campaign* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1986)

DiNardo, Richard L., *Invasion: The Conquest of Serbia 1915* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2015)

Djokić, Dejan, *Elusive Compromise: A History of Interwar Yugoslavia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007)

Dragnich, Alex N., *The First Yugoslavia* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1983)

Dragnich, Alex N., *Serbia, Nikola Pašić, and Yugoslavia* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1974)

Dutton, David, *The Politics of Diplomacy: Britain and France in the Balkans in the First World War* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1998)

- Evans, James, *Great Britain and the Creation of Yugoslavia: Negotiating Balkan Nationality and Identity* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2008)
- Falls, Cyril, *Military Operations Macedonia Volume One: From the Outbreak of War to the Spring of 1917* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1933)
- Fest, Wilfried, *Peace or Partition: The Hapsburg Monarchy and British Policy, 1914-1918* (London: George Prior, 1978)
- French, David, *British Economic and Strategic Planning 1905-1915* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982)
- French, David, *British Strategy and War Aims 1914-1918* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986)
- Fryer, Charles E. J., *The Destruction of Serbia in 1915* (New York: East European Monographs, 1997)
- Gooch, John, *The Italian Army and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014)
- Greenhalgh, Elizabeth, *Victory Through Coalition: Britain and France During the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005)
- Hall, Richard C., *Balkan Breakthrough: The Battle of Dobro Pole 1918* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010)
- Hall, Richard C., *The Balkan Wars 1912-1913: Prelude to the First World War* (London: Routledge, 2000)
- Hanak, Harry, *Great Britain and Austria-Hungary During the First World War: A Story in the Formation of Public Opinion* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962)
- Heller, Joseph, *British Policy Towards the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1914* (London: Frank Cass, 1983)
- Helmreich, Ernst, Christian, *The Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars 1912-1913* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1966)
- Jelavich, Barbara, *History of the Balkans: Twentieth Century* vol II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983)
- Joll, James, *The Origins of the First World War* (New York: Longman, 1984)
- Kennedy, Paul, *The Realities Behind Diplomacy: Background Influences on British External Policy, 1865-1980* (London: Fontana, 1981)
- Leon, George B., *Greece and the Great Powers 1914-1917* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1974)
- Liddell Hart, B. H., *History of the First World War* (London: Cassel, 1970)
- Lyon, James, *Serbia and the Balkan Front 1914* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015)

- Magnus, Phillip, *Kitchener: Portrait of an Imperialist* (London: Jon Murray, 1958)
- Marcuzzi, Stefano, *Britain and Italy in the Era of the Great War: Defending and Forging Empires* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020)
- Markovich, Slobodan G., *British Perceptions of Serbia and the Balkans, 1903-1906* (Paris: Dialogue, 2000)
- Mitrović, Andrej, *Serbia's Great War 1914-1918* (London: Hurst and Company, 2007)
- Morris, Anthony J., *Radicalism Against War 1906-194: The Advocacy for Peace and Retrenchment* (London: Longman, 1972)
- Neilson, Keith, *Strategy and Supply: The Anglo-Russian Alliance 1914-1917* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1984)
- Newton, Douglas, *The Darkest Days: The Truth Behind Britain's Rush to War, 1914* (London: Verso, 2014)
- Otte, T. G., *The Foreign Office Mind: The Making of British Policy 1865-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)
- Otte, T. G., *Statesman of Europe: A Life of Sir Edward Grey* (London: Allen Lane, 2020)
- Otte, T. G., *July Crisis: The World's Descent into War, Summer 1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014)
- Palmer, Alan, *The Gardeners of Salonika: The Macedonian Campaign 1915-1918* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965)
- Platt, D. C. M., *Finance, Trade and British Foreign Policy 1815-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968)
- Robbins, K. G., *Sir Edward Grey: A Biography of Lord Grey of Fallodon* (London: Cassell, 1971)
- Roskill, Stephen, *Hankey, Man of Secrets, Vol I 1877-1918* (London: Collins, 1970)
- Seton-Watson, Hugh, and, Christopher, *The Making of a New Europe: R.W. Seton-Watson and the Last Years of Austria-Hungary* (London: Methuen, 1981)
- Steiner, Zara, and, Neilson, Keith, *Britain and the Origins of the First World War, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003)
- Steiner, Zara, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy 1898-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969)
- Stevenson, David, *Cataclysm: The First World War as a Political Tragedy* (New York: Basic Books, 2004)
- Stevenson, David, *The First World War and International Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988)



Stone, Norman, *The Eastern Front 1914-1917* (London: Penguin, 1998)

Strachan, Hew, *The First World War* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2014)

Strachan, Hew, *The First World War Volume I: To Arms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)

Travers, Tim, *Gallipoli 1915* (Stroud: Tempus, 2002)

Todorova, Maria, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)

Wilson, Keith, *The Policy of the Entente* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)

Wilson, Keith, *The Limits of Eurocentricity: Imperial British Foreign Policy in the early twentieth century* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2006)

Zametica, John, *Folly and Malice: The Hapsburg Empire, the Balkans and the Start of World War One* (London: Shephard and Walwyn, 2017)

## ii) Articles and Chapters

Aleksić-Pejković, Ljiljana, 'Political and Diplomatic Importance of the Balkan Wars', in, Bela K. Király, and, Dimitrije Djordjevic (eds.), *East Central European Society and the Balkan Wars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 372-386

Antić, Čedomir, 'Crisis and Armament: Economic Relations Between Great Britain and Serbia 1910-1912', *Balkanica*, XXXVI (2005), pp. 151-161

Antić, Čedomir, 'The Alleged Responsibility of the Kingdom of Serbia for the Outbreak of the First World War', in, Dragoljub R., Živojinović (ed.), *The Serbs and the First World War* (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Science and Arts, 2015), pp. 457-458.

Bakić, Dragan, 'Regent Alexander Karadjordjević in the First World War', *Balkanica*, XLVIII (2017), pp. 191-217.

Bakić, Dragan, 'The Serbian Minister in London, Mateja Bošković, the Yugoslav Committee, and Serbia's Yugoslav Policy in the Great War', *Balkanica*, L (2019), pp. 173-215.

Bataković, Dušan T., 'Serbian War Aims and Military Strategy, 1914-1918', in, Holger Afflerbach (ed.), *The Purpose of the First World War: War Aims and Military Strategies* (Munich: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2015), pp. 79-94

Bataković, Dušan T., 'Serbia 1914-1918: War Imposed, Martyrdom, Resurrection', in, Dragan Purešić (ed.), *Serbia in the Great War: Anglo-Saxon Testimonies and Historical Analysis* (Belgrade: National Library of Serbia, 2014), pp. 9-36

Bataković, Dušan T., 'On Parliamentary Democracy in Serbia 1903-1914: Political Parties, Elections, Political Freedoms', *Balkanica*, XLVIII (2017), pp. 123-142.

Bataković, Dušan T., 'Storm Over Serbia: The Rivalry between Civilian and Military Authorities (1911-1914)', *Balkanica*, XLIV (2013), pp. 307-356.

Bataković, Dušan T., 'Serbia and Greece in the First World War: An Overview', *Balkan Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (2004), pp. 59-80

Boff, Jonathan, 'Sir Hew Strachan and the Study of the First World War', *War in History*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (2020), pp. 605-616.

Bucarelli, Massimo, 'Allies or Rivals? Italy and Serbia during the First World War', in, Dragoljub R., Živojinović (ed.), *The Serbs and the First World War* (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Science and Arts, 2015), pp. 247-262.

Cassar, George, 'Kitchener at the War Office', in, Hugh Cecil and Peter H Liddle (eds.), *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced* (London: Leo Cooper, 1996), pp. 37-51.

Crampton, R. J., 'The Balkans, 1909-1914', in, F. H. Hinsley (ed.), *British Foreign Policy Under Sir Edward Grey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 256-270.

Djordjevic, Dimitrije, 'Yugoslav Unity in the Nineteenth Century', in, Dimitrije Djordjevic (ed.), *The Creation of Yugoslavia 1914-1918* (Santa Barbara: Clio Press, 1980), pp. 1-17.

Dragnich, Alex, N., 'Nikola Pašić', in, Aleksander Pavkovic, and, Peter Redan (eds.), *The Serbs and their Leaders in the Twentieth Century* (London: Ashgate, 1997), pp. 30-58

Dragnich, Alex N., 'The Serbian Government, the Army, and the Unification of Yugoslavs', in, Dimitrije Djordjevic (ed.), *The Creation of Yugoslavia 1914-1918* (Santa Barbara: Clio Press, 1980), pp. 37-50

Du Quenoy, Paul, 'With Allies Like These, Who Needs Enemies?: Russia and the Problem of Italian Entry into World War I', *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, Vol. XLV, No. 3-4 (2003), pp. 409-440

Dutton, David, 'The "Robertson Dictatorship" and the Balkan Campaign in 1916', *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1986), pp. 64-78.

Dutton, David, 'The Calais Conference of December 1915', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (1978), pp. 143-156.

Ekmečić, Milorad, 'Serbian War Aims', in, Dimitrije Djordjevic (ed.), *The Creation of Yugoslavia 1914-1918* (Santa Barbara: Clio Press, 1980), pp. 19-36

French, David, 'The Dardanelles, Mecca, and Kut: Prestige as a Factor in British Eastern Strategy, 1914-1916', *War and Society*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1987), pp. 45-61.

French, David, 'The Origins of the Dardanelles Campaign Reconsidered', *History*, Vol. 28, No. 223 (1983), pp. 210-234

Hanak, Harry, 'The Government, The Foreign Office and Austria-Hungary, 1914-1918', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 47, No. 108 (1969), pp. 161-197.

Hay, William A., 'A Problem Postponed: Britain and the Future of Austria-Hungary, 1914-1918', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (2002), pp. 57-80

Jeffery, Keith, 'British Strategy and War Aims in the First World War', in, Holger Afflerbach (ed.), *The Purpose of the First World War: War Aims and Military Strategies* (Munich: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2015), pp. 45-60

Jovanović, Slobodan, 'Nicholas Pašić: After Ten Years', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 15, No. 37 (1937), pp. 368-376.

Kennedy, Paul, 'Britain in the First World War', in, Alan R. Millet, and, Williamson Murray (eds.), *Military Effectiveness: Volume One, The First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 31-79

Ković, Miloš, 'The Peace Initiative of Sir Edward Grey and his Proposal for Austro-Hungarian Occupation of Belgrade, 29 to 31 July 1914', in, Dragoljub R., Živojinović, (ed.), *The Serbs and the First World War* (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Science and Arts, 2015), pp. 299-307.

Ković, Miloš, 'Italy and the Evacuation of the Serbian Army From Albania', in, Vojislav G. Pavlović (ed.), *Serbia and Italy in the Great War* (Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies, 2019), pp. 223-234.

Ković, Miloš, 'The British Adriatic Squadron and the Evacuation of Serbs from the Albanian Coast 1915-1916', *Balkanica XLIX* (2018), pp. 29-41.

Lowe, C. J., 'The Failure of British Diplomacy in the Balkans 1914-1916', *Canada Journal of History*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1969), pp. 73-100

Lowe, C. J., 'Britain and Italian Intervention, 1914-1915', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 102, No. 3 (1969), pp. 533-548.

Lyon, James, "'A Peasant Mob": The Serbian Army on the Eve of the Great War', *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 61, No. 3 (1997), pp. 481-502

Markovich, Slobodan G., 'British Perceptions of the Balkan Christian Countries and Their Identities Until 1918', in, S. G. Markovich, and, V. Pavlovic (eds.), *Problems of Identities in the Balkans* (Belgrade: Dosije Press, 2006), pp. 115-138

Markovich, Slobodan G., 'British-Serbian Cultural and Political Relations 1784-1918', in, Slobodan G. Markovich (ed.), *British-Serbian Relations From the 18<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries* (Belgrade: Zepter, 2018), pp. 13-118.

May, Arthur J., 'Seton-Watson and British Anti-Hapsburg Sentiment', *The American Slavic and East European Review*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (1961), pp. 40-54

May, Arthur J., 'Seton-Watson and the Treaty of London', *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (1957), pp. 42-47

Malešević, Siniša, 'The Mirage of Balkan Piedmont: State Formation and Serbian Nationalism in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (2017), pp. 129-150.

Milano, Rosario, 'The Albanian Question and Italian Neutrality (1914-1915)', in, Vojislav G. Pavlović (ed.), *Serbia and Italy in the Great War* (Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies, 2019), pp. 161-184.

Milkić, Miljan, 'The Serbian Army in the Chalkidiki in 1916', *Balkanica*, XLIX (2018), pp. 43-55.

Miller, Nicholas J., 'R.W. Seton-Watson and Serbia During the Re-emergence of Yugoslavism, 1903-1914', *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism*, Vol. XV, No. 1-2 (1988), pp. 59-69.

Neilson, Keith, 'Kitchener: A Reputation Refurbished?', *Canadian Journal of History*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (1980), pp. 207-227.

Otte, Thomas G., "'Postponing the Evil Day": Sir Edward Grey and British Foreign Policy', *The International History Review*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (2016), pp. 250-263.

Perkins, James, 'Peasants and Politics: Re-Thinking the British Imaginative Geography of the Balkans at the Time of the First World War', *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (2017), pp. 55-77.

Philpott, William J., 'Kitchener and the 29<sup>th</sup> Division: A Study in Anglo-French Strategic Relations, 1914-1915', *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (1993), pp. 375-407.

Potts, J. M., 'The Loss of Bulgaria', in Alexander Dallin, and others, (eds.), *Russian Diplomacy and Eastern Europe 1914-1917* (New York: Kings Crown Press, 1963), pp. 194-234.

Popović, Nikola B., 'The Triple Entente and the Idea of "Greater Serbia" During the First World War', in Dragoljub R., Živojinović, (ed.), *The Serbs and the First World War* (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Science and Arts, 2015), pp. 129-139.

Radivojević, Miroslav, 'Serbia, Italy's Entrance into World War I, and the London Agreement: A New Interpretation', *Istraživanja*, Vol. 31 (2020), pp. 183-196.

Radovich, Frances A., 'The British Court and Relations with Serbia 1903-1906', *East European Quarterly*, Vol. XIV, No. 4 (1980), pp. 461-468.

Robbins, K. G., 'British Diplomacy and Bulgaria 1914-1915', *Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 49, No. 117 (1971), pp. 560-585.

Robbins, K. G., 'The Foreign Secretary, the Cabinet, Parliament and the Parties', in F. H. Hinsley (ed.), *British Foreign Policy Under Sir Edward Grey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 3-21.

Robbins, K. G., 'Public Opinion, the Press and Pressure Groups' in F. H. Hinsley (ed.), *British Foreign Policy Under Sir Edward Grey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 70-88.

Robbins, K. G., 'Foreign policy, Government Structures and Public Opinion', in F. H. Hinsley (ed.), *British Foreign Policy Under Sir Edward Grey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 533-546.

Rosario, Milano, 'The Albanian Question and Italian Neutrality (1914-1915)', in Vojislav G. Pavlović (ed.), *Serbia and Italy in the Great War* (Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies, 2019), pp. 161-184.

Rothenberg, Gunther E., 'The Austro-Hungarian Campaign Against Serbia in 1914', *The Journal of Military History*, 53/2 (1989), pp. 127-146

- Silberstein, Gerard E., 'The Serbian Campaign of 1915: Its Diplomatic Background', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 73, No. 1 (1967), pp. 51-69
- Steiner, Zara, 'The Foreign Office under Sir Edward Grey, 1905-1914', in, F. H. Hinsley (ed.), *British Foreign Policy Under Sir Edward Grey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 22-69.
- Steiner, Zara, 'The Foreign Office and the War', in, F. H. Hinsley (ed.), *British Foreign Policy Under Sir Edward Grey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 516-531.
- Stokes, Gale, 'The Role of the Yugoslav Committee in the Formation of Yugoslavia', in, Dimitrije Djordjevic (ed.), *The Creation of Yugoslavia 1914-1918* (Santa Barbara: Clio Press, 1980), pp. 51-71.
- Strachan, Hew, 'The Real War: Liddell Hart, Cruttwell, and Falls', in, Brian Bond (ed.), *The First World War and British Military History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 41-67.
- Strachan, Hew, 'The First World War as a Global War', *First World War Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2010), pp. 3-14.
- Strachan, Hew, 'Military Operations and National Policy, 1914-1918', in, Holger Afflerbach (ed.), *The Purpose of the First World War: War Aims and Military Strategies* (Munich: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2015), pp. 7-28.
- Suonpää, Mika, 'Financial Speculation, Political Risks, and Legal Complications: British Commercial Diplomacy in the Balkans, 1906-1914', *Historical Journal*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (2012), pp. 97-117.
- Suonpää, Mika, 'Britain, Balkan Conflicts and the Evolving Conceptions of Militarism, 1875-1913', *History (London)*, Vol. 19, No. 337 (2014), pp. 632-651.
- Todorova, Maria, 'The Balkans from Discovery to Invention', *Slavic Review*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (1994), pp. 453-482.
- Torrey, Glenn E., 'Rumania and the Belligerents 1914-1916', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (1966), pp. 171-191.
- Vinogradov, V. N., 'Romania in the First World War: The Years of Neutrality, 1914-1916', *The International History Review*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (1992), pp. 452-461.
- Visvizi Dostas, Domna, 'Troubled Friendship: Greco-Serbian Relations, 1914-1918', in, Dimitrije Djordjevic (ed.), *The Creation of Yugoslavia 1914-1918* (Santa Barbara: Clio Press, 1980), pp. 94-124.
- Watt, D. C., 'The British Reactions to the Assassination at Sarajevo', *European Studies Review*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (1971), pp. 233-247
- Zametica, John, 'The Elusive Balkan Spark: 28 June 1914, Again and Always', *Tokovi Istorije* Vol. 29, No. 3 (2021), pp. 297-331.
- Živojinović, Dragoljub R., 'Serbia and the 1915 Treaty of London', in, Vojislav G. Pavlović (ed.), *Serbia and Italy in the Great War* (Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies, 2019), pp. 121-136.

