

ROMANIAN DIPLOMACY DURING THE BALKAN WARS (1912-1913)

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Abstract: *The young national Romanian state would reaffirm itself in the first decades of the 20th century as a factor of equilibrium and of collective security in the Balkan Peninsula, in the context of the two wars which were about to begin (1912;1913), both conflicts which would precede the greatest diplomatic and military conflict known to international society until that time, namely the First World War (1914-1918). Romania acted in accordance with the principles of public international law regarding its external policy to maintain its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of state built from the ruins of the former Ottoman Empire, thus acting for the respect of the status quo in the Balkan area according to the regulations of international treaties, seen as formal sources of law.*

Key words: *diplomacy, treaty, belligerent state, habit, independence*

1. Introduction

The external policy and the prior actions in international relations of the young state acknowledged by the Berlin Treaty of July 13th, 1878 would be placed in the context of the new diplomatic and political coordinates of the beginning of the 20th century, namely that of reorganizing both its orientation according to its national interest and its external policy and previous political and military alliances, which provided a certain autonomy from the Central Powers; however, certain circles of the Romanian diplomacy still aimed to remain faithful to the treaty ratified on November 6th, 1883 by King Carol 1st with Austria-Hungary.

This would become even more obvious starting from 1908 when the Romanian political circles noticed a reorientation of Austria and Hungary's external policy, thus becoming much more expansive in south-east Europe, and politically and diplomatically supporting all endeavors aiming to put an end to the Ottoman Empire.

By valorizing the revolution of the "Young Turks" as well as Russia's indecision of that time, the dualist monarchy would annex Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is also the time when "Bulgaria unified with Rumelia acquires state independence"(xxx, 1980, p.360); these elements were likely to cause concern for the Bucharest diplomacy, as such a close connection between the Vienna chancellery and the Bulgarian circles represented

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a serious threat. At the same time, the fight for national sovereignty of the three million Romanians who aimed to be liberated from the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy viewed the Romanian capital as the only ally and support for social and national emancipation.

It is not random that, in such a context, we witness a change in the orientation of the Romanian external policy, thus the national party of I.C. Brătianu takes the lead as a much more independent party, which follows D.A. Sturza, a partizan party close to the Central Powers.

This did not go unnoticed by the German and the Austrian – Hungarian political and diplomatic circles, which aimed to maintain Bucharest under their influence, thus we notice an intensification in diplomatic relations which would result in numerous visits to Bucharest carried out by high ranking diplomats, namely Kron – the German prince, as well as the heir to the Austrian – Hungarian throne, Franz Ferdinand, who both stated that within the liberal party of Romania “there are much more favorable circumstances for the Triple Alliance” than for the Entente.

At the same time, the Romanian diplomacy would be courted by Russia and France who both aimed to limit the German influence in Romania, a fact which would become a constant, especially by the coming of Sazonov at the lead of the Tsarist Empire who would “intensify the diplomatic relations regarding the external policy of Bucharest as one of the most important priorities” (Sazonov, 1927, p.110).

The Russian diplomat, along with the French diplomacy, stated, in an internal document, the fact that the Romanian prime minister I.C.Brătianu “exclusively leads according to the interests of his country, as he sees them, and not by external influences” (Gheorghiu, 1067, p.112).

The French diplomacy held a similar position to that of Russia with regard to Bucharest, thus, its representative Blondel pointed out that “if German influence becomes greater by the day, the mistake is that of our compatriots who abandoned the fight and are unable to capitalize on the friendly feelings the Romanians have towards our country” (Vesa, 1975, p.30).

The diplomatic endeavors of the Romanian politicians would remain without echo in the Entente political circles, especially given the position and activity of the Romanian ambassador in Paris, accredited in 1908, i.e. Al.E. Lahovari, who aimed to change Romania’s influence, and was, in the opinion of the French political circles, under the influence of the Triple Alliance, a fact which was contradicted by the specific endeavors of Queen Maria, who, by origin and education, was fond of the British circles.

The significant Romanian tendency towards the Entente was more and more present, given that, after 1908, the Austrian – Hungarian influence in the Balkan area was more and more aggressive, becoming acute when Macedonia was divided; this was likely to cause great concern in the Romanian circles who were interested in maintaining the status quo and the observance of the Berlin treaty, but also from the perspective of the faith of the Aromanian population south of the Danube and the continuous strengthening of the neighboring state Bulgaria who was under the direct influence of the Central Powers - a threat to Romania.

The Austrian–Hungarian diplomatic circles did not want to revise the Dobrogea frontier, namely the Silistra- Varna line, a request phrased by the Romanian party, given

that by strengthening Bulgaria, the Russian expansion in the area would be stopped and furthermore, a strong Bulgaria would be preferred in the specific endeavor to discourage Bucharest's political and diplomatic circles from supporting the nationalist movement of the Romanians within the monarchy.

Thus, a favorable background was created for the counteroffensive against Serbia that harbored resentment towards the Austrian – Hungarian empire because of the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Serbia laid all its political and diplomatic hopes on Russia, thus Bulgaria's attachment to the Central Powers provided a favorable solution.

The fact that, in 1911, a conservative government came to power in Romania, a government led by Petre P. Carp and Titu Maiorescu as a foreign affairs representative, both determined on maintaining and strengthening the alliance with the Central Powers would diminish all previous efforts of the French and Russian diplomacy.

Within this context, around the time the Balkan wars erupted, Romania continued to remain faithful to the alliance with the Central Powers, a fact strengthened by the actions and orientation of the Royal Household, as King Carol 1st was an uncontested agent in this matter.

As stated by the specialty doctrine "Until the Balkan wars erupted, Romania remained faithful to the Central Powers" (xxx, 1980, p.364) a position which would give expression to new political circles "favored by the position they held in the country's leadership" (xxx, 1980, p.364).

The Balkan wars would bring to light the fact that the Balkans would become „the gunpowder barrel" of Europe in the first decades of the 20th century; the fact that the issues of the Christian people under the Ottoman Empire were still unresolved, as well as the rivalry between the great powers in the area, would eventually lead to the activation of the „Oriental problem" which would be one of the causes of the greatest political and military conflict of the world between the years 1914-1918.

The beginning of the Italy-Turkey war for Tripolitania in 1911 would weaken the Ottoman Empire and revisit the issue of the division of Macedonia, which was likely to worsen the existing acute rivalry between Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece; thus, the Romanian diplomacy could not remain indifferent considering the faith of the Aromanian population in the area and the potential dangers of maintaining the southern state frontier; another pressing issue was the protection of the general international public law principles regarding the right of self-determination of people and the guarantee of sovereignty and state independence of young subjects of international law risen from the ruins of the former Ottoman Empire.

By aiming to make known its presence in south-eastern Europe and force its opposition in the area, in 1911 Russia started a project meant to create an alliance between the Christian states in the Balkans, an alliance which would include Romania and Russia; thus, the Christian states in the Balkans would obtain the right to send battleships in the area of the straits, which was unconceivable by the Great Powers who would rush to Turkey's aid by disapproving these endeavors by the Russian diplomacy.

The project of a so-called Balkan alliance started with the political and diplomatic negotiations between Serbia and Bulgaria, which later resulted in the "issue of dividing Macedonia".

The fact that it was impossible to „establish ethnical frontiers” (xxx, 1980, p.365) made the agreement a temporary one, as Russia would act as a mediator in order to establish middle ground.

The agreement between Bulgaria and Serbia of March 13th, 1912 stated that, in case of an attack on Serbia from Austria – Hungary, Bulgaria would provide support in the amount of 200.000 military personnel; mutually, if Bulgaria was attacked by Romania, it would obtain aid form Serbia in the amount of 150.000 combatants. Thus, a treaty of alliance with Greece was signed on May 29th, 1912 but it did not contain express regulations regarding any military support offered by the two states, Bulgaria and Greece.

On October 9th, Montenegro declares war on the Ottoman Empire and, on October 17th it wound enter into hostilities with Turkey and its three allies; surprisingly, this did not cause concern for the European diplomacy who saw Turkey as the winner who would maintain the status quo in this area. However, things would take a different turn as the allies obtained a notable success in ending the occupation of Constantinople, thus Turkey is forced to demand a “truce” on December 3rd, 1912.

The London peace treaties failed given the misunderstandings between former allies and because Turkey proved rigid in regard to giving up territory including the evacuation of Adrianople, a fact which eventually led to a new military conflict which erupted on February 3rd, 1913.

This time, Austria and Hungary’s position was much more energetic considering the armed intervention against Serbia, a country which was seen as a potential danger as it could cause future national emancipation conflicts of the Slavic people from the south of the dualist monarchy.

The fall of Adrianople on March 26th, 1913 would cause concern for Russia, who considered the fall of Constantinople as imminent, given the energetic offensive of the Bulgarian army, thus the great powers undertook a common effort and demanded new peace treaties; on May 30th, the London peace preliminaries were signed, by which Turkey “would give to the allies the territories situated west of the Enos – Midiaki Crete line, and the situation of Albania and the islands of the Aegean Sea would be solved by the Great Powers” (xxx, 1980, p.366).

Thus, the first Balkan war was concluded but, by not solving the issues which caused it, it merely set the path for the second Balkan war when, in June 1913 Bulgaria attacked Serbia and Greece, thus military operations prevailed in the detriment of any political and diplomatic endeavors.

The Romanian political circles followed the evolution of political, diplomatic and miliary actions in the area, as Romania was seen by the Great Powers as a factor of stability in the area; it was described as the most important “political and economic actor of this region of the continent” (Iorga, 1933, p.12). During this time, the main strategic objective of Romanian diplomacy was the maintaining of the Balkan status quo, thus maintaining a neutral position and disapproving the military solution to any conflicts and providing diplomatic support to those who offered guarantees for the faith of the Aromanian population in the area. This position of the Romanian government is synthetically presented by Titu Maiorescu who stated to the Bulgarian minister in

Bucharest, on the occasion of the meeting of October 16/29, 1912 that “within the limits of the Berlin Treaty, Romania’s neutrality comes natural and if territorial changes occurred in the Balkans, Romania would have a say” (DDD, 1913, p.6).

The Vienna diplomacy was aware of the danger coming from Romania, from the perspective of promised territorial changes, especially those beyond the Carpathians or the extended Dobrogea area and it would switch to a radical change in its external policy; “As Russia and France insisted to remove themselves from the Central Powers, the dualist monarchy demanded swift actions for the maintaining of the Romanian alliance” (OUA, 1913, p.871).

Given the new context in this area, on June 30th, without any declaration of war, Bulgaria attacked its former allies, thus the Romanian government issued the order for military mobilization. It was one of the first acts of the Romanian Government in showing Romania’s independence from Vienna, a fact which was enthusiastically stated by France’s representative in Bucharest by showing that “if someone didn’t know the main objective of the military mobilization, it would be possible to think that Romania is going to war against Austria” (OUA, 1913, p.871). By having a tacit agreement with France and Russia, the Romanian army enters Bulgaria without significant resistance from the Bulgarian side, reaching Sofia, at which time the Bulgarian government demanded peace.

The peace treaty would be concluded in Bucharest on July 28th/August 10th, 1913 between Bulgaria, on one side and Romania, Serbia and Greece, on the other side.

The peace talks were presided by Titu Maiorescu, thus showing the important role of Romania in this area in regard to the ending of the Balkan conflict; however, we must notice that only the belligerent countries participated in the peace conference talks; none of the great powers participated, a fact which turned out to be uncomfortable for Austria – Hungary as it was later stated by the Vienna chancellery.

According to the peace treaty, Bulgaria was forced to give Serbia a part of Macedonia, Greece would obtain the south of Macedonia and the north of the Thracian region, whereas the eastern part of the Thracian region would go to Turkey with Adrianople in the center, thus depriving Bulgaria from access to the Aegean Sea.

The Bucharest peace would also regulate that Romania would take the southern area of Dobrogea on the line Turtucaia – Ecrene. To fulfill those agreed upon in the peace conference, the parties would mutually provide guarantees.

The fact that the states of the Balkan Peninsula decided their future political and diplomatic regime outside the interest of the great powers was a historical outset.

The Austrian – Hungarian diplomacy collided with that of Germany and France when it demanded to revisit the Bucharest peace agreement in a subsequent peace conference, by invoking the precedent created in San Stefano and Berlin; however, it was met with firm opposition from Germany and France, who both attempted to attract Romania on their side, which turned out to be decisive in concluding this endeavor.

Furthermore, the Berlin and Paris chancelleries and even the Russian tsar congratulated Romania’s King Carol 1st, on the manner in which the Romanian side conducted itself in these talks by preventing possible conflicts with much more harmful effects on the international relations in the Balkans or even in the European area.

The young independent Romanian state affirmed itself as a factor of equilibrium in the area and as an important factor in solving the conflict on the Balkan Peninsula.

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