

THE ENFORCEMENT OF PUBLIC INTERNATIONAL LAW PRINCIPLES IN ROMANIAN DIPLOMACY ON THE VERGE OF WORLD WAR ONE

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Abstract: *Around World War One, Romanian diplomacy had to occupy a position which satisfied the fundamental strategic objectives of the Romanian nation, namely the achievement of the Romanian national unified state.*

Key words: *diplomacy, war, neutrality, peace, treaty, convention*

As the contradiction between the great powers became more acute and their fight for new areas of influence within the colonial system of the late 19th century and beginning of the 20th century would eventually generate the First World War which, by the consequences it generated, has substantially changed the existing relation of forces in regard to the political and diplomacy relations, as well as the birth of a new world order.

The First World War would also bring to discussion a new set of principles and postulates acknowledged by specific legal means of international law which entailed the harmonization of opposing interests of great or small states seen in their dynamic on one hand; on the other hand, we notice the specific endeavor of democratization of international relations which would be acknowledged based on new coordinates, thus giving space to the legitimate affirmation of the states' right to self determination based on the perennial values of a state, such as independence, national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Based on these coordinates, the use of violence means to solve conflict between states, as opposed to the use of peaceful means to solve inter-state conflict, were proven to be counterproductive in regard to ensuring a climate of peace and collective security, but especially in regard to the catastrophic consequences caused by a war, the immense loss of human lives and material resources.

On the verge of the First World War, between the years 1914-1918, the external politics of Romania had as a main objective the achievement of a unified frame which entailed the creation of a favorable political and diplomatic climate in order for the national community to acknowledge the legitimate right of the Romanian nation to

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forge a unified state, which was sovereign and independent within the border of "Great Romania".

Romanian diplomacy would support the promotion of all Romanian causes phrased by the national party since 1848, namely that of a unification of all Romanian provinces within a whole state formation, equal in rights to all subject of international public law.

Thus, we notice an increasing interest in bringing to the work agenda of international diplomacy, the 14th point of the Wilsonian declaration which regulated the right of each people to decide its own faith, to promote its ideals of freedom and social justice within a national state which can guarantee the respect of public rights and freedoms in consensus with the acts and documents of public international law acknowledged by the international community.

The formation of two political and military blocks, namely the Triple Alliance or the Central Powers on one hand and the Entente or Triple Alliance, which represented a great challenge for Romanian diplomacy; it also represented an act of great significance, as all future endeavors will be aimed at diligently negotiating the fact that Romania would side with a certain party in the future, namely the side which would provide firm guarantees in regard to completing the unification process and the completion of the national and state unity of the Romanian people.

As a result, the great powers were unable to ignore the important position, both geo strategic and economical, held by Romania in this area of Europe, thus, we can see a fervent action of European Chancelleries in attracting Romania to each side.

It was thus stated that "when First World War erupted, Romania was, without a doubt, one of the central interests of European diplomacy" (Romanian in International Relations, 1980).

The decisive factor which would substantially influence the conduct of Romanian diplomacy on the verge of World War One would be connected to the faith of Transylvanian Romanians and their statute within the Austrian - Hungarian monarchy; this would determine a concentrated activity of French - Russian diplomacy, which, by profiting from unsolved diplomacy conflicts between Romanian - Austrian - Hungarian states, would act with the purpose of separating Romania from the Triple Alliance.

Once the new liberal Government, presided by Ionel Bratianu, came to power, we see a more obvious delimitation in the political circles of the Triple Alliance; in time, this would become a certainty thus resulting in the manifest declaration of the first minister, who replied to King Carol I and insisted on an unconditional siding with Austria and Hungary and the fact that it would be contrary to Romanian interests to continue any kind of collaboration with the countries which were part of the block of Central Powers.

Thus, Ionel Bratianu categorically stated the following "I doubt it, sir, that a Romanian government, would be able to enforce this treaty," (the Triple Alliance Agreement) (Sozonov, S, 1927, p.120).

The increasing connection of Russian diplomacy with Romanian political circles is more obvious during this time, a fact which would cause worry for the Austrian - Hungarian diplomacy. Thus, the visit of the Russian tsar to Constanta in 1912, as well as the visit of foreign minister S. Sozonov to Bucharest, who would accompany the prime minister

Ionel Bratianu on a trip to Transylvania, would cause a strong emotional echo in European diplomacy (Cazan, Gh.N., Radulescu-Zoner, St., 1978, p.65).

At the same time, there was diplomatic pressure on Romania by the Central Powers and especially Germany and Austria - Hungary which, by the voice of Czernin, an extraordinary ambassador to Bucharest, a first rank political personality and friend of the throne successor Franz Ferdinand, persistently demanded the rescission of secrecy of the treaty concluded between Austria - Hungary and Romania.

However, the Romanian diplomacy manifested a neutral position, defeatist even, in relation to the express demands of the Austria - Hungarian Empire, which could not neglect the military and economical potential of Romania, a position which would be acknowledged by Czernin in a note sent to his government, which stated that "while Bulgaria begs for an alliance with Austria - Hungary, Romania sees the secret treaty concluded with it as just a mere piece of paper, also showing that it regrets accepting a sterile mission,, (Rusu-Abrudeanu, I., 1930, p.101).

The conciliation of a strong alliance between Romania and Austria - Hungary was becoming an utopia, as the conditions showed chauvinistic reactions from the Hungarian leader in Transylvania, a fact which would bring serious prejudice to the Romanian nation of this province; this very thing was noticed by the Berlin diplomacy which urged Count Tisza to consider a more balanced national policy.

In this regard, the advice of German emperor Wilhelm the Second to Franz Ferdinand in June 1914, on the occasion of a meeting in Kanopist, is suggestive; thus, it is recommended that all diplomatic notes addressed to Count Tisza should begin with the phrase "Sir, think about the Romanians,,(Rusu-Abrudeanu, I., 1930, p.112).

Obviously, Germany was considering the economic and military potential of Romania, a potential which was hard to neglect; additionally, the presence of the Hohenzollern dynasty on the throne would create an advantage in the dispute with the diplomacy of the powers which formed the Central Powers.

Furthermore, Berlin would pressure the Hungarian government, thus resulting in the negotiations which took place at the end of 1913 between Tisza and the representatives of the executive Committee of the Romanian National Liberal Party. However, these negotiations failed, considering the inflexible position of the Hungarian government in regard to the claims of the Romanian delegation.

Thus, it was becoming more and more obvious that Romanian diplomacy had to wisely choose the time when Romania would go to war and the party which it will choose, considering the strategic objective of national unification within the Great Romanian borders.

In regard to the evolution of Romanian diplomacy between 1914-1918, we notice two major stages with distinctive objectives and political action - namely the time of neutrality between 1914-1916 and the second stage from August 1916 until the conclusion of the war.

The dilemma facing the Romanian diplomacy around the beginning of the First World War was amplified by the existing rivalry between the neighboring great empires, namely Austria - Hungary and Russia, as well as the future political and military position of small states in the geopolitical area of central and south east Europe.

However, it is undisputed that Romania, by its diplomatic, political and military orientation will be a factor of influence for other states in the area which have similar interests, namely that of creating a unified national state.

A significant element would be the orientation of Entente diplomacy who aimed to recreate the Balkan front, formed of Romanians, Bulgarians and Greeks who would all support Serbia in its dispute with Turkey; on the other hand, it aimed to counter the diplomacy of Central Powers, who wanted to create another Balkan front (Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece) which would annihilate Serbia.

Thus, it was easy to notice that Serbia would represent the stake in the dispute of interests between the two political and military blocks, namely the Entente and the Central Powers; each aiming to increase their influence in the Balkans and open a road to the Middle East, thus Constantinople and the straits which, once conquered, ensured economical and geo-strategic supremacy in this extremely important area of the globe.

In this extremely tense climate which suggested war was imminent, the diplomacy of Balkan countries has temporarily opted for neutrality; this was obviously a temporary solution, as the Balkan countries would choose a side at a favorable time, when those states would support that certain political-military block which would promise to satisfy their legitimate interests.

An important factor was the relation of force between the main actors of south east European countries and their influence over internal public opinion, which had to be considered in making the decision to support one block or the other, as it entails future military operations, material costs and loss of human lives.

In this context, we can state that the public opinion in Romania, as well as the great majority of Romanian political circles were firm, from the beginning of the war, in supporting the Entente, considering Transylvania's situation which was incorporated in Austria - Hungary, an ally of Germany; this collided with the orientation of the palace who was under German influence by dynasty descendant and by tradition.

The diplomatic circles of South Eastern Europe were aware of the future position of Italy which would be forced to rescind its neutrality; this was a decisive factor considering its position and influence in the area, for countries which would decide which part they would support in the impending war.

Italy, along with the just claims it had in regard to unified territory with the areas which were under Austria - Hungary sovereignty, had an expansion tendency in regard to expanding its position in the Balkan Peninsula and the Middle East.

Thus, the press of that time stated that, for Italy, "The Middle East as a decisive value and influence is, before all, the Adriatic, the Dalmatian and Albanian Coast, the Oriental Mediterranean, the Balkan Peninsula, Small Asia and, further, the Red Sea" (Romania in International Relation, 1980, p.379).

In this extremely sensitive international context, which would point out serious interests in geopolitical and territorial nature of all member states, involved, directly or indirectly in this endeavour, Romanian diplomacy chose the temporary position of neutrality, based on reasons which pertained to the enforcement of international regulations.

As a consequence, "Romania justly stated that it can't be *casus foederis*, stated in the 1853 treaty, subsequently renewed in 1913, as Austria-Hungary has attacked without previously consulting the Romanian Government,, (Romania in International Relation, 1980, p.380) which would invalidate the mentioned treaty, thus it would not produce legal effects.

However it was obvious that "a position of neutrality would actually mean the unilateral rescission of the Austria-Hungary treaty and namely a distance from the Triple Alliance and a closeness to the Entente," (Radulescu-Zoner, St., 1977, p.176-177).

In this context, the Entente political circles would salute the August 3rd, 1914 decision of the Crown Council, when Romania declared its neutrality, however temporary and relative it may be, as, on a diplomatic level, the Romanian Government underwent numerous diplomatic endeavors in order to attract support from the great powers in regard to Romania's state objective, namely the Romanian unified state.

The Entente powers, considering this national and political objective promoted by Romanian politicians, would speculate the time when Romanian diplomacy would reject Germany's and Austrian - Germany powers.

It is obvious that European diplomacy was in a permanent congruence with the „*jure et de facto*, evolution of the military situation on the western front, as by the operations of autumn 1914 it became obvious that "the illusion of the so-called *Blitzkrieg*" was annulled, thus moving on to the backup plan of a position war (see the Marne battle - September 1914), a hypothesis which would prove to be a winning one, that in which the side which has the most material and human resources will provide it for the battle.

As a consequence, attracting the neutral countries was a major objective and Romania was an important actor, given its geographically strategic position, its military potential (500.000 soldiers) and its material and economical support.

However, we must not forget an important factor, namely the oil resources of Romania, resources which had the potential to tilt the scale of victory, given the military technique of those times.

As shown by military historians "Romania's decision of join the Entente meant an expansion of the front for the Central Powers by 1000 km, the closing of the road to the Balkan Peninsula and the isolation of Bulgaria and Turkey" (Vesa, V., 1975, p.83-84) as well as important support provided to Serbia.

All these aspects were significant advantages for the Romanian Government in carrying out diplomatic negotiations with the fundamental objective of maintaining stability and unifying Romanian territories of the monarchy.

As a reference in regard to diplomatic efforts of the Romanian political circles, we can see the prudence and timely attitude in regard to constant pressure of both sides, which, most times, would make promises which they were unable to fulfill.

In this context, foreign policy analysts showed that, during this time, both "belligerent sides engaged in an undignified and unscrupulous battle to attract the small states,, (Seton-Watson, R.W., 1937, p.83-89).

From the time Serbia was attacked, Germany promised Romania, in order to convince it to enter the war with the Allied Powers, Basarabia and the south of Bukovine and the promise it would make all necessary efforts with Austria - Hungary to convince it to renegotiate in a favorable manner the faith of all Romanians from Transylvania, in order to put an end to this tense ethnic situation.

On the other hand, Russia's offer, under the influence of French diplomacy, was much clearer in this matter, namely entering the war with the Entente, thus the czarist empire unconditionally promised Romania the territory of Transylvania which was occupied by Austria - Hungary.

This was known at the highest level, as the French president R. Poincaré declared to Isvolsky, the Russian minister to Paris that "in order to produce the desired effect on Romania, Transylvania had to be promised to Romania" (Romania in International Relation, 1980, p.379).

The evolution of military operations, as well as the general political context, determined Russia to undergo the final endeavour in order to sign a convention with Romania, on September 18th, 1914, by which Romania was guaranteed territorial integrity and legitimate rights over the territories which were under the sovereignty of Austria - Hungary.

In regard to Bukovina, the convention signed by both parties, mentioned that it will entail "the principle of nationalities which will serve as a basis in establishing the territories which will pass from Russia to Romania," (Romania in International Relation, 1980, p.383)

This convention, although secret, was of major importance, as for the first time in an international document, it stated the legitimate rights of Romanians over the provinces of the Austrian - Hungarian monarchy.

It was a first step by Romanian diplomacy which, by following a constant line in this matter, will undergo political and diplomatic actions similar to those of other powers which formed the Entente, so as to guarantee, in a political and military manner, the legitimate right of the Romanian nation in regard to creating a unified territory.

In this general context, neutrality, as a political, diplomatic and military statute became a temporary state, as England and France underwent diplomatic measures with the chancelleries of Austria and Hungary to negotiate a separate peace agreement, which would annul Romania's claims, as the convention with Russia would become void,, (Ranghet, B., 1975, p.11).

We must also not neglect the diplomatic actions underwent by the diplomacy of Austria and Hungary, who aimed to finalize their plan to create a Balkan alliance in which Romania and Bulgaria were the central pawns under the coordination of Italy, in order to counter the Entente's influence in the area.

The diplomacy of Entente powers had the same plan, as it attempted to create an alliance between Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece, all this in the context of "satisfying some territorial claims from Bulgaria" (MAE Archive, Fond 71, E2, Londra, vol.11, p.102).

Within this line of events, the government led by I.C. Bratianu signaled to the powers of the Entente that Bulgaria was already under the influence of Austria - Hungary, thus putting Romania at a huge risk, as it would be forced to fight on two fronts, in the south and in the west, against the Central Powers.

However, it was obvious that the diplomacy of the two political and military blocks would adopt a superficial position in regard to the general context and the existing rivalries of the Balkan Peninsula, which would impair on the interests of the states in the area and create increasing tension.

As a result, at the end of 1914, Romania was in an extremely difficult position both on a diplomatic level and on a political and military one.

Under the pressure of the diplomacy of the two political and military sides, Romania would chose, from the start of the war, a position of expectancy, thus being neutral, as stated in the Crown Council of August 3rd, 1914.

As a result, we can conceptually make a distinction between the general ensemble of political and military events of the year 1914 on one hand, and the ineffectiveness of the tools and principles agreed upon by general consensus by the states of the world, seen as subjects of public international law, as well as the blunt violation of the elementary rules of mutual respect in regard to diplomatic actions and endeavors.

At the same time, it was made obvious that the interest of the great powers grouped in the two blocks, namely the Triple Alliance and the Entente were in contradiction, in regard to the objectives and political and military actions of small and middle states which were legitimate and aimed to unify their states.

From this perspective, Romanian diplomacy would hold a firm and constructive position, by publicly denouncing the actions which were in conflict with the rules and basic principles of public international law, thus condemning the forceful and threatening policies, as well as the dictatorial practices in international diplomatic relations.

Through its representatives, Romanian diplomacy condemned the war as the main means to solve a conflict between states and supported the respect of the right to self determination of each nation, based on principles of equity and equality within the structure of the international public system.

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