

The Impact of Macedonian Reforms on the Austro-Hungarian Annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (1903-1908)

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Abstract: The internationalization of the Macedonian issue and the outbreak of the Bosnian Crisis were closely linked to the foreign policy of Austria-Hungary. During the period of the Macedonian Reforms, the initially fragile alliance between Austria-Hungary and Italy was severely tested by disagreements over the occupation of Macedonian zones and their competition for regional hegemony. The original cooperative relationship between Austria-Hungary and Russia, which was committed to maintaining regional peace, became unsustainable as the reform process deepened and exposed structural disputes between the two countries over their interests in the Balkans. Germany, finding itself increasingly isolated internationally and fearing abandonment by its key ally, reluctantly abandoned its efforts to restore the traditional German-Russian friendship and to cultivate favorable German-Turkish relations. Instead, Germany was compelled to firmly support Austria-Hungary's Balkan policy, which led to a pronounced shift in German-Austrian primacy within the alliance. The realignment of relations among the Great Powers during the Macedonian reforms allowed Austria-Hungary to carry out its plan to annex the provinces of Bosnia-

“ Gao, J. (2026). The impact of Macedonian reforms on the Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (1903–1908). *Journal of Balkan Studies*, 6(2), (79–102)



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Balkan Studies Foundation
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51331/A073>
Journal of Balkan Studies, 6 (1), 2026
balkanjournal.org



Received: 09.04.2026
Revision: 18.06.2026
Accepted: 08.07.2026



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Herzegovina. However, the Bosnian Crisis, triggered by the annexation, further reshaped the relations between the Great Powers and the Balkan states, ultimately paving the way for the outbreak of the First World War.

Keywords: Austria-Hungary, Macedonian Reforms, Bosnian Crisis, Diplomatic Games, Bosnia-Herzegovina

Introduction

The Bosnian Crisis of 1908–1909 was the direct result of Austria-Hungary's aggressive foreign policy. The crisis profoundly affected the balance of power in the Balkans and triggered fundamental changes in the international system. In its aftermath, the previously cooperative relationship between Austria-Hungary and Russia over Macedonian reforms deteriorated significantly. Italy gradually distanced itself from the Triple Alliance and developed friendly relations with the Triple Entente. The remaining trust between the two military blocs evaporated, and the situation slid irreversibly toward an eventual rupture. As one scholar observed, the Bosnian Crisis exacerbated the confrontation between the two imperialist blocs and served as a prelude to the First World War (Antonoff 2006, p. 2).

For a long time, academic research has focused on the process of the Bosnian Crisis and the realignments of Great Powers relations before and after it. However, existing studies have failed to explore the intrinsic link between the Macedonian reforms, which were led by Austria-Hungary, and its subsequent decision to annex the two provinces. This paper examines the shifting great-power relations among Austria-Hungary and Italy, Austria-Hungary and Russia, and Germany and Austria-Hungary in the context of the Macedonian reforms. Drawing on archival materials from Britain, France, Germany, and other countries, it seeks to uncover the internal logic behind Austria-Hungary's active leadership of the Macedonian reforms and its annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Furthermore, this paper analyzes the impact of the Bosnian Crisis on the European political landscape, aiming to deepen scholarly understanding of the adjustments in Great Powers relations before the First World War, the complex situation in the Balkans, and the evolution of the Near Eastern question.

The Protagonists of Geopolitical Strife: The Austro-Hungarian Factor in the Evolution of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Issue and the Internationalization of the Macedonian Issue

The connection between Bosnia-Herzegovina and Austria-Hungary originated during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878. To prevent Austria-Hungary from intervening in the conflict, Russia promised the former the right to occupy the two provinces at an opportune moment. However, the Treaty of San Stefano, signed by Russia and the Ottoman Empire, disregarded Austria-Hungary's claims, provoking strong opposition from the latter. The subsequent Treaty of Berlin not only annulled the Treaty of San Stefano but also granted Austria-Hungary the right to occupy the two provinces and station troops in Novi Pazar. To legitimize this right and expand its influence in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Austria-Hungary adopted a series of measures. On April 21, 1879, the Austro-Turkish agreement was signed, compelling the Ottoman Empire to recognize Austria-Hungary's right to occupy and govern Bosnia-Herzegovina and maintain a military garrison in the Novi Pazar region (Yavuz and Sluglett 2010, p. 58). On December 20 of the same year, Austria-Hungary passed a law stipulating that all customs-related orders required the approval of both the Austrian and Hungarian governments. Furthermore, Bosnia-Herzegovina was to have a joint Ministry for Foreign Affairs to handle all customs and trade matters with other countries. The law of February 1880 granted the two governments constitutional powers of control over the affairs of the occupied provinces, enunciating the principle that any proposed change in the relationship between the occupied provinces and the monarchy must receive the assent of both the Austrian and Hungarian legislatures (BDFA 1991, vol. 34, pp. 146-147). In addition, Austria-Hungary intensified its religious and cultural penetration of Bosnia-Herzegovina. According to statistics, by the early 20th century, the public servants in Bosnia-Herzegovina were almost entirely Austrian or Hungarian subjects; even after years of educational development, the native population accounted for only 27% (BDFA 1991, vol. 34, p. 145). This indicates that under the long-term governance of Austria-Hungary, the two provinces had already

become an inseparable part of the former. At this point, although the Ottoman Empire remained the nominal suzerain, it was widely recognized that it had lost Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Novi Pazar region forever.

The internationalization of the Macedonian issue was a dynamic and evolving process. Throughout this process, Austria-Hungary played a crucial role.

First, Austria-Hungary sought to prevent the Balkan states from gaining regional dominance and exploited their internal conflicts to expand its own influence. This was most evident in its relations with Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece. In 1881, Austria-Hungary formed an alliance with Serbia through the Austro-Serbian secret treaty. This treaty promised to support Serbia's claims for greater rights and interests in the Balkans, surpassing those of its rivals, Greece and Bulgaria. Article 7 specifically stated that Austria-Hungary would not oppose Serbia's acquisition of territory on its southern borders, with the exception of the province of Novi Pazar. This southern border referred mainly to the province of Kosovo in northern Macedonia, as Macedonia was then divided into three provinces: Monastir in the west, Kosovo in the north, and Salonika in the south. In 1899, it was further clarified that Serbia would expand its territory "as far as conditions permit, in the direction of the Vardar Valley" (Wilkinson 1951, p. 95). Furthermore, Austria-Hungary actively discouraged expansionist efforts by Greece and Bulgaria. On the one hand, it worked to dissuade Bulgaria from supporting Macedonian revolutionary organizations in order to prevent the regional crisis from escalating. In July 1895, the French ambassador in Constantinople stated that Austria-Hungary would do everything in its power to prevent the spread of the Macedonian disturbances and would not give Bulgarian agitators any reason to intervene (DDF 1951, 1^{re} Série, Tome 12, pp. 106-107). In January 1899, the Austro-Hungarian ambassador in Constantinople, Calice, informed Bulgarian representatives that they should not expect any support or sympathy from Austria-Hungary for their involvement in Macedonian revolutionary actions (GP 1924, 12. Band, Zweite Hälfte, S. 523-524). On the other hand, Austria-Hungary did not support Greece's attempts to expand its power into southern Macedonia and establish hegemony in the Aegean region.

In 1895, Greece declared that it would not survive if it lost Macedonia, which it considered the acropolis of Athens and the forefront of Greek culture (Akhund 1998, p. 55). In July 1896, Greece organized several expeditions to Macedonia to establish its influence, but ultimately had to withdraw due to lack of support from the Great Powers, including opposition from Austria-Hungary.

In addition, Austria-Hungary pressured the Ottoman government to implement necessary reforms in Macedonia in order to address the grievances of the local population. After the signing of the Treaty of San Stefano, Austria-Hungary promised to help the Ottoman Empire restore order in Macedonia, proposed that the latter protect both Muslims and Christians, and also forced Serbia and Montenegro to accept changes to the treaty (DDF 1930, 1^{re} Série, Tome 2, p. 308). In October 1895, Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister Goluchowski expressed a desire to use the favorable moment of the Eastern Crisis to push for reforms in the Macedonian region. He believed that if the issue were resolved, Bulgaria would no longer have a reason to involve itself in Macedonian affairs (GP 1924, 10. Band, S. 145). In November of the same year, the Austrian Emperor also expressed concern about the growing revolutionary movement in Macedonia and warned that the situation could become dangerous if the Ottoman government did not establish control in the Balkans (GP 1924, 10. Band, S. 163). This implied that the Ottoman government needed to implement reforms promptly to prevent the spread of popular discontent in Macedonia.

Ultimately, Austria-Hungary collaborated with other Great Powers to maintain its dominant position in the Balkans. In the late 19th century, as the Macedonian national liberation movement gained momentum and crises erupted in the Near East, Austria-Hungary, along with Great Britain and Italy, exerted pressure on the Bulgarian government to refrain from supporting the Macedonian revolt. This was crucial, as without the support of the Great Powers, the revolt could not have succeeded (GP 1924, 12. Band, Erste Hälfte, S. 125). In 1897, Austria-Hungary and Russia reached an agreement to maintain the status quo in the Balkans, avoid interference in the internal affairs of Balkan states, and cooperate diplomatically, which gave Austria-Hungary the freedom to act in Macedonia. In

January 1899, Goluchowski discussed with Russian Foreign Minister Muravyov the possibility of a Turkish-Bulgarian war. He stated that if Bulgaria emerged victorious, it would occupy Macedonia, and if the Ottoman Empire won, it could lead to a Europe-wide crisis, neither outcome was desired by either country. Thus, joint Austro-Russian pressure on the Balkan states could prevent a possible conflict between them (GP 1924, 12. Band, Zweite Hälfte, S. 523).

At the turn of the 20th century, the situation in Macedonia was rapidly deteriorating. To prevent a potential war among the Balkan states over the region and to protect their own spheres of influence, Austria-Hungary and Russia decided to intervene. Goluchowski announced that the Austro-Russian governments were working on a plan to improve the administration of the Macedonian provinces under the control of the Ottoman Empire. This plan would be presented to the signatories of the Treaty of Berlin, who would oversee the reforms implemented by the Ottoman government (BD 1929, vol. 4, p. 43). On February 21, 1903, the two countries officially submitted their proposal, known as “the Vienna Scheme” (BD 1928, vol. 5, pp. 51-53; DDF 1931, 2^e Série, Tome 3, pp. 115-118), to the Ottoman government. This marked the formalization of the Macedonian question as a European concern. Later that year, on October 2, the Austro-Hungarian and Russian governments proposed “the Mürzsteg Programme” (ASEE 1904, No. 2 (1904), p. 51) in an attempt to quell regional unrest. This program included even more extensive reforms. However, the Great Powers were more concerned with securing their own interests in the Balkans and engaged in complicated diplomatic maneuvers surrounding the implementation of the reform program.

Fragile Alliance: The Increasingly Fierce Struggle for Regional Hegemony between Austria-Hungary and Italy

In the early 1880s, Italy faced bitter colonial disputes with France in North Africa. Consequently, Italy accepted Germany’s invitation to join the Triple Alliance, which aimed to isolate France. This decision required Italy to temporarily set

aside its differences with Austria-Hungary. However, the Austro-Italian alliance was fragile from the start due to territorial disputes and conflicting interests. Since the unification of Italy, a growing trend of irredentism had emerged in the country. This movement sought to acquire Italian-speaking provinces under Austria-Hungary's control (Lowe and Marzari 1975, p. 11). From Italy's perspective, its legitimate claims within the alliance, including Trento and Trieste, were a logical consequence of irredentism (Bosworth 1979, p. 11). This made genuinely friendly Austro-Italian relations extremely difficult, as it was uncertain when war might break out between the two countries. Additionally, there were significant disagreements between Austria-Hungary and Italy regarding their respective expansion plans in the Balkans. This tension was particularly evident in the late 19th century, when both countries vied for influence in Albania, straining relations within the Triple Alliance and between the two powers. Austria-Hungary viewed Albania's independence as a means to counter Pan-Slavism and prevent Serbian and Montenegrin expansion in the western Balkans, while Italy saw Albania as a strategic location for economic investment and an opportunity to expand its interests in Southeastern Europe (Roselli 2006, p. 3). These conflicting goals ultimately led Austria-Hungary to regard Italy as its natural enemy in the Adriatic Sea, the Balkans, and territories such as Trento and Trieste. As a result, Austria-Hungary was willing to resort to a preventive war if necessary to eliminate this perceived threat (Herrmann 1992, p. 227). The alliance between the two countries became increasingly fragile as the Macedonian issue gained international attention and as reforms deepened the divide between them.

First, regarding the partition of Macedonia, Austria-Hungary opposed Italy's acquisition of Monastir, a western Macedonian province neighboring Albania. Calice argued that the formation of Christian gendarmerie battalions in Albanian areas, which had a predominantly Muslim population, would provoke violent riots among the local population, contradicting the original intention of the Mürzsteg Programme. Consequently, Albania needed to be excluded from the reform program, and it would be preferable for Italy to occupy Serres in the province of Salonika (GP 1927, 22. Band, S. 102). Goluchowski also remarked on

Italy's greed for Albania and its desire to interfere in everything (DDF 1932, 2^e Série, Tome 4, p. 442). Austria-Hungary's opposition to the Italian occupation of Monastir was based on the following considerations: since the Great Powers had already agreed to the reorganization of the gendarmerie by an Italian general, granting Monastir to Italy would only increase Italian influence in Macedonia and Albania. Furthermore, Italy had a marital relationship with Montenegro, which would result in Italy controlling the entire Adriatic Sea, thereby inevitably blocking Austro-Hungarian maritime trade routes. Italy opposed the Austro-Hungarian advance toward the southern tip of the Balkan Peninsula and sought a share in Monastir in order to strengthen its control over Albania. To achieve this goal, Italy actively sought the support of Britain and France. Italy expressed to France that it hoped for a Franco-Italian consensus to address the issue, given Austria-Hungary's preference for a dominant role in the Balkans (DDF 1932, 2^e Série, Tome 4, p. 410). France replied that it hoped for open communication among Britain, France, and Italy to avoid unnecessary disputes in the Balkans. As a result, France not only rejected Calice's proposal for Italy to occupy Salonika but also stated that the best way to resolve the Macedonian issue was for Austria-Hungary and Russia to develop a reform program that would be approved by the other Great Powers (DDF 1932, 2^e Série, Tome 4, p. 431). Britain showed its willingness to coordinate with Italy to push for the implementation of Macedonian reforms (BD 1928, vol. 5, p. 68). Additionally, if Austria-Hungary insisted on occupying Üsküb (Skopje) in Macedonia, Britain would support Italian possession of Monastir (DDF 1932, 2^e Série, Tome 4, pp. 454-456). In the end, with German mediation, Italy gained a share of Monastir, Austria-Hungary took Üsküb, and Albania was excluded from the reforms. Although the demands of Austria-Hungary and Italy were partially met, their differences only became more pronounced in the subsequent reforms.

Second, regarding Macedonian fiscal reform, Italy was displeased that it had not been consulted before the Austro-Russian reform plan was presented, viewing this as a unilateral action that violated the spirit of the Concert of Europe established by the Treaty of Berlin, and the reform plan included only Austria-Hungary and Russia, leaving out Italy (GP 1927, 22. Band, S. 206). As

a result, Italy proposed that representatives from all signatories of the Treaty of Berlin be appointed to monitor the reform alongside the Austro-Russian representatives (GP 1927, 22. Band, S. 247). To gain support from other Great Powers, Italy actively sought cooperation with Britain. Italian Foreign Minister Tittoni told Barrère, the French ambassador in Rome, that he fully agreed with the British view that, given the failure of the Mürzsteg Programme and the critical situation in Macedonia, it was very important for the Western Powers, mainly Britain and France, to agree on concerted action (DDF 1935, 2^e Série, Tome 6, p. 79). Germany was deeply concerned about the deterioration of Austro-Italian relations. It stated that the recent Austro-Russian actions had not been communicated in advance to the other Great Powers. The supreme control over Macedonian finances made the other Great Powers subservient to Austro-Russian influence, which put Italy in an awkward position. Given the divergence of Austro-Italian relations in a number of areas, it was difficult to imagine what Austro-Russian, and especially Austro-Hungarian, measures might have been taken to irritate Italy, both in form and in essence (GP 1927, 22. Band, S. 211). As a neighbor of the Balkan states, Italy had a special interest in the region. In any case, actions taken by Austria-Hungary in the Balkans would only increase Italian distrust, and the egoistic aims of Austria-Hungary would drive Italy away from it while pushing Italy to support the Western Powers (GP 1927, 22. Band, S. 244). Britain, France, and Italy agreed to send representatives to Macedonia to take charge of the finances, hoping to force the Ottoman government to accept the proposals of the Powers by a fait accompli, an action that confirmed German suspicions (DDF 1937, 2^e Série, Tome 7, p. 270).

In short, the Austro-Italian dispute over Macedonian reform worsened the already fragile alliance between the two countries. From the end of the 19th century, Franco-Italian relations began to ease, and the two countries started discussing the possibility of a commercial treaty and an attempt at political cooperation (BDFA 1991, vol. 24, p. 276). In November 1902, France and Italy concluded a treaty of neutrality, which weakened the position of the Triple Alliance in Italy's foreign policy. Even if the Triple Alliance had been renewed, it could not prevent the Franco-Italian rapprochement. Italy assured

France that it would not sign any military agreement or treaty involving a German attack on France (Fay 1966, p. 91). France stated that, in view of Italy's unquestionable loyalty, there was no need for the French government to seek explanations and assurances from the Italian government regarding the renewal of the Triple Alliance (BDFA 1991, vol. 24, p. 335). Furthermore, the Austro-Italian struggle for regional hegemony in the Balkans, on the one hand, drove Italy to often coordinate its actions with Britain and France on matters of Macedonian reform, aiming to prevent Austria-Hungary from dominating Balkan affairs. On the other hand, it forced Austria-Hungary to re-examine German-Austrian, Austro-Russian, and Austro-Turkish relations with the intention of maximizing its Balkan interests.

From Cooperation to Confrontation: The Collapse of the Austro-Russian Reform Framework in Macedonia

Austria-Hungary's initial determination to occupy Bosnia-Herzegovina was motivated by a desire to shorten the Austro-Turkish border, protect its fragile Dalmatian possessions, prevent the union of Serbia and Montenegro, eliminate the threat posed by Serbian expansionism, and preserve its growing economic ties with Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Orient. Ultimately, however, these motives stemmed from the ambition to maintain a central role in confronting Russia and preventing it from gaining a foothold among the Balkan Slavs or dominating the southern Balkans (Ruthner et al. 2015, pp. 24-26). As the two main rivals in the Balkans, both Austria-Hungary and Russia sought to maximize their own interests at each other's expense. When Russia shifted its focus to the Far East at the end of the 19th century, Austria-Hungary turned its attention to domestic affairs. Thus, preserving the status quo in the Balkans became a mutual goal. The Austro-Russian Agreement of 1897, brokered by Germany, aimed to enable the two countries to maintain the balance of power in the Balkans and thereby facilitate peace (Seaman 2003, p. 164). Cooperation between the two countries continued until the issue of Macedonian reforms arose.

Firstly, the British proposed sending officers to reorganize the gendarmerie. However, Austria-Hungary and Russia favored appointing a foreign general to lead the reform, with officers from each Great Power providing assistance. Russia proposed that, following the appointment of the foreign general, a note would be drafted by the Russian and Austro-Hungarian ambassadors in Constantinople, with input from the ambassadors of the other Great Powers. This note would then be distributed to the assigned officers. Additionally, Austria-Hungary stated that the overall organizational plan would be developed by the Austro-Hungarian and Russian ambassadors, with ongoing communication between them and the ambassadors of the other Great Powers (ASEE 1904, No. 2 (1904), pp. 152-153). This collaboration between Austria-Hungary and Russia, in contrast to the British approach, solidified their leading roles in the reform process.

Secondly, regarding the division of occupation zones in Macedonia, Russia, constrained by the war situation in the Far East, largely favored the Austro-Hungarian position. In a conversation with Goluchowski, Russian Foreign Minister Lamsdorff stated that despite the distractions of Asian affairs, the Tsarist government would not ignore the Macedonian issue and would be willing to provide effective assistance to Austria-Hungary in ensuring peace in the region. Furthermore, he openly acknowledged that the Russo-Japanese War would affect the two countries' stance on the Macedonian issue, potentially encouraging a belligerent attitude from the Ottoman Empire that could jeopardize the reform process (DDF 1932, 2^e Série, Tome 4, p. 399). Therefore, to secure their respective advantages, Austria-Hungary and Russia should present their agreed-upon plan to the Great Powers for discussion. This would ensure that the other Great Powers understood that even if the Mürzsteg Programme failed, it did not signify the end of the two countries' mission, and would prevent them from hoping that Austria-Hungary and Russia would surrender their dominance over Balkan affairs (DDF 1932, 2^e Série, Tome 4, p. 437).

Finally, both Austria-Hungary and Russia unanimously demanded that the Ottoman government increase the number of foreign officers and extend their

powers. The ambassadors of the two countries sent multiple joint notes to the Ottoman government, requesting that it recognized the authority of foreign officers to give orders to Turkish officers and to dismiss any imperial officers and soldiers who were not physically, intellectually, or morally qualified, or who had a history of misconduct or lack of discipline. These dismissed officers and soldiers were to be immediately transferred elsewhere and the Ottoman government also agreed to receive the necessary foreign officers and non-commissioned officers for the reorganization of the gendarmerie, as proposed by the Great Powers (ASEE 1904, No. 4 (1904), pp. 65-66). To pressure the Ottoman government into accepting the additional officers, Austria-Hungary and Russia sent officers to Macedonia without prior notice. Calice stated that the two countries would inform the Ottoman government that if it wished to conclude contracts with these new officers on the same terms as the previous ones, the embassy would be happy to accept such an arrangement. Otherwise, the new officers would be paid by their respective governments and wear national uniforms while assisting their colleagues. This procedure was required by the Mürzsteg Programme (ASEE 1905, No. 2 (1905), p. 68). Subsequently, Austria-Hungary and Russia threatened the Ottoman government with coercive measures from the Great Powers and demanded that it accept their proposals. In a joint note sent by the ambassadors of Austria-Hungary and Russia to the Ottoman government, it was stated that due to the disorder and confusion in the Macedonian provinces, it was crucial to appoint additional officers. If the Ottoman government refused to accept the proposal, the Great Powers would take joint action—an action for which France and Italy had already expressed their support (ASEE 1905, No. 2 (1905), p. 79). Ultimately, the Ottoman government was forced to agree to the Austro-Russian proposal.

With the end of the Russo-Japanese War, Russia, seeking to get rid of domestic pressure caused by its defeat in the Far East, once again shifted its diplomatic focus to the Balkans, where competition with Austria-Hungary resumed. As a result, the relationship between the two countries, which had been cooperating on Macedonian reforms, gradually broke down due to the struggle for dominance in the Balkans.

Russia took the lead in proposing judicial reform in Macedonia and actively pushed for its implementation. Austria-Hungary, however, showed little enthusiasm toward the Russian proposal. This was due not only to the structural conflicts between the two countries in the Balkans but also to the growing rivalry between Austria-Hungary and Serbia over Bosnia-Herzegovina, which diminished Macedonia's importance in Austria-Hungary's foreign strategic plans. The Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1878 had prevented Serbia from expanding westward, leaving Serbia with no option but to temporarily recover its claim over the two provinces (Glenny 2012, p. 148). However, after the coup d'état of 1903, Serbia moved toward a diplomatic course of confrontation with Austria-Hungary, seeking Russian protection and gaining support from its neighbors for the new government. This intensified the rivalry between Austria-Hungary and Serbia over Bosnia-Herzegovina. Additionally, Austria-Hungary hoped to make concessions to the Ottoman Empire regarding Macedonian reforms in order to secure greater rights and interests in the future. Furthermore, Germany's stance on Macedonian reform influenced Austria-Hungary's foreign policy. On one hand, Germany wanted Austria-Hungary to give more control to the Ottoman government and not pressure it further (GP 1927, 22. Band, S. 404-407). On the other hand, in light of the agreements among Britain, France, and Russia, Germany realized that it was isolated and could neither break the Franco-Russian alliance nor restore its traditional friendship with Russia. To change this situation, Germany supported Austria-Hungary's Balkan policy, thereby allowing Austria-Hungary to pursue a more active foreign policy. Finally, the drawbacks of the Austro-Hungarian dual model of rule became increasingly evident and hindered the implementation of its foreign policy, weakening its position in the Macedonian judicial reform. It can be said that the establishment of dualism became a permanent obstacle to systematic change in the empire (Roshwald 2001, p. 12).

In January 1907, Austria-Hungary and Russia jointly submitted a draft of judicial reform to the Ottoman government. The latter expressed its willingness to cooperate but indicated that a longer waiting period was needed before

implementation. Austria-Hungary welcomed the Ottoman government's attitude as a favorable opportunity to enhance Ottoman autonomy. Russia, however, argued that a delay in judicial reform might provoke discontent among the Christian majority in Macedonia and that the reform program should be implemented immediately (Zaitsev 1995, pp. 55-57). In June, Russia presented Austria-Hungary with a final plan for the reorganization of the judicial system. The plan completely rejected Austro-Hungarian attempts to maintain Austro-Russian dominance over Macedonian judicial reform and instead adopted the British view of co-management by the Great Powers. Austria-Hungary modified the Russian plan by suggesting that the Ottoman government should be given full powers to choose the officials responsible for judicial reform (Zaitsev 1995, pp. 59-61), but Russia maintained its position that if Austria-Hungary did not give way on the question, it would then be referred to the ambassadors of the Great Powers in Constantinople for a joint decision (Zaitsev 1995, pp. 61-63). In addition, Russia actively sought the support of Britain to put pressure on Austria-Hungary. Britain, taking into account its global strategic interests and France's role in mediating Anglo-Russian relations, indicated that it would stand by Russia and seek to move their relationship toward an entente (GP 1927, 22. Band, S. 419; DDF 1950, 2^e Série, Tome 11, p. 235).

Russia's collaboration with Britain, France, and Italy on Macedonian reforms heightened Austro-Hungarian apprehension about Russian expansion in the Balkans. In early 1908, Austria-Hungary proposed the Novi Pazar Railway as a means to advance its interests in the region. Once completed, this railway would greatly support Austria-Hungary's dominance in the Balkans (May 1938). Furthermore, the proposal marked the end of years of Austro-Russian cooperation in pressuring the Ottoman government to implement reforms in Macedonia (Schurman 2008, p. 7). The shift from Austro-Russian cooperation to confrontation over the Macedonian issue reinforced Austria-Hungary's desire to expand its vested interests in the Balkans, and the major change in the Dual Alliance resulting from the Macedonian reforms further strengthened Austria-Hungary's resolve to pursue a more proactive diplomacy.

Shift in Primacy: The Changing Dynamics of the German-Austrian Alliance and Austria-Hungary's Growing Confidence

In 1879, Germany and Austria-Hungary signed the Treaty of Alliance. For Germany, Bismarck's real aim was to prevent Austro-Russian conflict by ensuring Austria-Hungary's dependence on Germany, thereby avoiding the mutual destruction of the two autocracies (Roberts 2001, p. 72). The Dual Alliance, established in 1879, was not intended to prepare for a military conflict with Russia; on the contrary, its purpose was to demonstrate political power, draw Tsarist Russia toward Germany and Austria-Hungary, and thus secure peace in Europe (Hildebrand 1989, p. 91). It was the result of a proactive diplomacy in which Germany sought to establish a European state system under its control (Bridge and Bullen 2005, p. 212). For Austria-Hungary, the Dual Alliance was aimed directly at Russia and served essentially as an anti-Russian tool (Simpson and Jones 2015, p. 378). After the conclusion of the alliance, Germany always played the dominant role. However, as Austria-Hungary actively promoted Macedonian reforms, Germany supported it at many critical moments for the sake of maintaining alliance stability. Germany's gradual "entrapment" by Austria-Hungary reinforced the latter's determination to boldly pursue an expansionist Balkan policy.

In the first place, in the face of Austro-Italian conflict over Macedonian reforms, Germany initially sought to maintain the stability of the Dual Alliance and coordinate differences within the Triple Alliance to prevent the two alliances from falling apart. To achieve this, Germany proposed a compromise plan: supporting Italian occupation of Monastir while satisfying the Austro-Hungarian demand to exclude Albania from the gendarmerie reform. However, Germany's attempts to accommodate both sides did not alleviate the differences between Austria-Hungary and Italy. The famous Austro-Serbian "Pig War" of 1906-1909 enabled Italy to gain some influence in Belgrade and expand its influence in the Balkans (Tallon 2012, p. 33). Additionally, Italy frequently coordinated its

actions with Britain, France, and Russia during the Macedonian reform process, making it less dependent on the Triple Alliance than in the past and potentially able to abandon the alliance at any time. Italy had told Germany that it would remain loyal to the Triple Alliance in spirit and rejected the French proposal to leave the alliance, but it would not strain Franco-Italian relations, as this would not be in its own interests (Bülow 1931, p. 57). The shift in Italy's position and attitude made Germany realize that the Triple Alliance was now clearly less important than the Dual Alliance. In view of this, Germany became increasingly inclined to support the Balkan policy pursued by Austria-Hungary.

In the second place, Germany's severe external circumstances increased its dependence on Austria-Hungary. After the establishment of the Franco-Russian Alliance, Germany realized that it risked being caught in a two-front attack by France and Russia. To escape from this unfavorable situation, Germany exploited the conflicts between Britain and Russia and between Japan and Russia, making numerous attempts to restore the traditional friendship between Germany and Russia. Therefore, in the Macedonian reforms, Germany consistently supported the principle of Austro-Russian leadership, intending to maintain the stability of the 1897 Austro-Russian entente and reestablish the Three Emperors' League. However, as Austro-Russian differences over Macedonian reforms intensified, Britain, France, Russia, and Italy often acted in concert, especially after the establishment of the Triple Entente, which led Germany to largely accept the existing European power structure. To avoid isolation, the Dual Alliance became the only thing Germany could rely on at this time. German Chancellor Bülow analyzed that the world was full of hostility, hatred, and envy toward Germany: British dislike and envy of Germany had not been eliminated; France still harbored a vengeful mindset and wished to revive its European hegemony; the tendency toward anti-German democratic revolutions in Russia was on the rise; Italy remained an uncertainty; and Austria-Hungary was grappling with its own internal problems (Bülow 1931, pp. 218-219). This unfavorable international environment forced Germany to firmly maintain the solidity of the Dual Alliance, fearing abandonment by its ally. Furthermore, Germany's long-standing political, economic, and military penetration of the Ottoman

Empire was being challenged by Austria-Hungary's active Balkan policy. Since the Congress of Berlin, German-Turkish relations had grown and strengthened as Germany realized that the Ottoman Empire was a necessary ally, without this partner, Germany could neither compete with Britain and Russia in the Orient and Asia nor reap its desired benefits (Watson 1917, p. 127). Therefore, when the Great Powers pushed for Macedonian reforms, Germany often created obstacles to the reforms in order to safeguard the interests of the Ottoman Empire and minimize its losses. France commented on Germany's behavior in the Macedonian reforms, stating that Germany's reluctant support for the Austro-Russian reform program was clearly aimed at winning the goodwill of the Ottoman Empire, yet its behavior was not driven by sympathy for the empire but merely by the desire to maximize its own gains (DDF 1935, 2^e Série, Tome 6, pp. 153-154). As Austria-Hungary's policy toward the Ottoman Empire became more assertive, Germany ultimately chose to temporarily sacrifice the interests of the Ottoman Empire to meet the needs of its ally.

In the end, Austria-Hungary took advantage of Germany's predicament and decided to pursue an eastern policy guided by itself rather than by Germany, intending to revive imperial prestige (Watson 1911, p. 174). The Macedonian reforms made Austria-Hungary realize that it could pursue an active foreign policy in the Balkans without undue fear of opposition from Germany. Because Austria-Hungary did not share Germany's acute sense of external crisis and because of its long-standing friendly relations with Britain and France, it enjoyed favorable conditions for the smooth implementation of its foreign policy. For example, when Austria-Hungary witnessed the friendly collaboration among Britain, France, Russia, and Italy on the issue of Macedonian judicial reform, it tried hard to persuade Germany to support the Anglo-Russian proposal in order to secure Russia's backing on the future question of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Austria-Hungary told Germany that rejection of the Anglo-Russian proposal by the Ottoman Empire would produce the most serious consequences and endanger its sovereignty, and that it would be wise to accept the proposal in a friendly manner (GP 1927, 22. Band, S. 450). As a result, Germany found itself confronted by the other five Great Powers over the Macedonian reforms,

placed in the awkward position of either insisting on the Concert of Europe or maintaining friendly relations with the Ottoman Empire (GP 1927, 22. Band, S. 453-455). Ultimately, after weighing the pros and cons, Germany chose to sacrifice the interests of the Ottoman Empire to satisfy the demands of Austria-Hungary.

The German policy of firmly supporting Austria-Hungary at the expense of German-Russian amity and German-Turkish friendship became an important factor that further stimulated Austria-Hungary's quest for regional hegemony. In early 1908, when Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister Aehrenthal proposed the Novi Pazar Railway as a means of expanding the empire's influence in the Balkans, the British ambassador to Austria-Hungary, Cartwright, commented that Aehrenthal's main motivation was to boost national pride and promote the imperialist spirit of the Dual Monarchy (BDFA 1991, vol. 34, p. 276). When Austria-Hungary announced the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cartwright again observed that Aehrenthal's policy aimed to reduce the empire's reliance on Germany and maintain its position as a leading European power. He believed that increasing the empire's prestige could help ease tensions and conflicts within the Dual Monarchy (BDFA 1991, vol. 34, pp. 303-304). Even Bülow acknowledged that there was no need for Germany to directly push Austria-Hungary into a hostile camp, as the two countries were bound by their alliance and would always stand together on the Bosnian question. Germany would never abandon Austria-Hungary (Bülow 1931, p. 332). However, Austria-Hungary's proactive foreign policy ultimately drew Germany into Balkan affairs. When the Bosnian Crisis erupted, Germany's fear of being abandoned by its ally outweighed its fear of being implicated, leading to even stronger support for Austria-Hungary's foreign policy. This further solidified the primary and secondary roles of the two countries within the alliance.

Conclusion

The Macedonian reforms served as a crucial arena for the diplomatic games of the Great Powers. Austria-Hungary intervened actively due to its particular

geopolitical interests in the Balkans. Throughout the reform process, the differences between Austria-Hungary and Italy over the occupation zones further strained an already contradictory alliance relationship; the competition for regional hegemony between Austria-Hungary and Russia turned their previously cooperative relationship into one of division; and the divergence in strategic interests between Germany and Austria-Hungary caused a shift in the primary and secondary roles within their alliance. Against the backdrop of strong German support and the perceived threat of Russian and Italian expansion in the Balkans, Austria-Hungary decisively adopted a new offensive policy. The shifting relationships between Austria-Hungary and the other Great Powers played a crucial role in its eventual annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In addition, the situation of the Ottoman Empire was also slowly changing as the protagonist of the Macedonian reforms. In July 1908, the Young Turks revolted from Macedonia with the goal of establishing a constitutional government. This patriotic movement aimed to overthrow an already ossified and incompetent ruler and replace him with a more capable government that could defend the empire from dangerous threats (Lewis 1961, p. 207). The new Turkish government posed a threat to Austria-Hungary, as Aehrenthal feared that the Young Turks would invite representatives elected by the inhabitants of Bosnia-Herzegovina to the Turkish parliament. This would make it difficult for Austria-Hungary to continue its occupation of the two provinces. As a result, Austria-Hungary accelerated its annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in response to the rapidly changing circumstances.

The Bosnian Crisis ended with the German ultimatum to Russia and the subsequent recognition of the annexation by Russia and Serbia. However, rather than bridging the gaps among the Great Powers, the seemingly peaceful resolution of the crisis only worsened the situation in the Balkans.

Firstly, the settlement of the Bosnian Crisis upset the balance of power in the Balkans. Serbia believed that Bulgaria's acquisition of full independence and Greece's acquisition of Crete (which was proclaimed annexed to Greece in 1908)

had broken the balance of power among the three countries, while Austria-Hungary's fait accompli of annexing Bosnia-Herzegovina and the establishment of a constitutional government in the Ottoman Empire seemed destined to permanently destroy Serbian plans for expansion in all directions. It can be said that the winter of 1908–1909 was the lowest point for Serbian fortunes (Forbes et al. 1915, p. 120). To change this unfavorable situation, Serbia on the one hand expressed its pro-Russian intentions and hoped to use Russian power as a counterweight to Austria-Hungary. On the other hand, it endeavored to reach an agreement with Bulgaria on the division of Macedonia. In April 1910, the monarchs of Serbia and Bulgaria visited Russia at the same time and held intimate talks with the Tsar, which created the conditions for Russia to mediate the differences between the two countries over their interests in Macedonia. In March 1912, the two countries signed a treaty of alliance, reaching a consensus on the partition of Macedonia. The conclusion of the Serbo-Bulgarian alliance gave impetus to cooperation among the Balkan states. A treaty was signed between Greece and Bulgaria in May 1912, and Montenegro concluded agreements with Serbia and Bulgaria in September 1912. Thus, the Balkan states formally established an alliance against the Ottoman Empire. The formation of the Balkan League marked an important change in the regional political landscape: the small states' quest for regional hegemony began to challenge the influence of the traditional regional Great Powers, Austria-Hungary and Russia, which in turn affected their relations with the Great Powers.

Secondly, the outcome of the Bosnian Crisis fully exposed Russia's weaknesses. As a result of the defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, Russia was momentarily incapable of organizing a strong countermeasure against Austria-Hungary. Even before the Annexation Crisis, Guchkov, the leader of the Russian Octoberist Party, acknowledged that Russia lacked a comprehensive plan to revitalize its military power (Herrmann 1992, p. 220). Aehrenthal also asserted before the annexation plan was implemented that Russia would not be able to undertake major foreign operations for a considerable period, given its poor financial situation, the ongoing transformation and reform of the army and naval administrations, the need to replace strategic materials lost in the Russo-Japanese War, and the slow

progress in fleet reconstruction (Herrmann 1992, p. 225). Russia's powerlessness before the Bosnian Crisis exacerbated its predicament after the crisis. Britain commented on Russia's dilemma, stating that Russia's interests in the Balkans were of a more serious and urgent nature than its interests in other distant parts of the world. If Russia were to fall from its present position as the protector and the defender of the Slav race, and allow Austria-Hungary to usurp the functions that it was now exercising, it would have to submit to a total absorption of Serbia in the Austrian Empire, to an occupation of the Sandjak of Novi Pazar, to the incorporation of an autonomous Albania, and to the eventual descent of Austria-Hungary to Salonica, with all the resulting consequences. Austria-Hungary's position would be supreme in the Near East, to the entire detriment of the Muscovite Empire (BD 1933, vol. 9, part 1, p. 531). In response to this dilemma, from 1909 onward Russia implemented a new military reform program, increased its defense spending, and restored its military power, making itself a significant force within the Triple Entente and a growing threat to Germany and Austria-Hungary (Herrmann 1992, p. 220). Additionally, Russia drastically adjusted its foreign relations, strengthening ties with Britain and France and actively involving Italy in its efforts to prevent Austria-Hungary from expanding its power in the Balkans. In October 1909, Russia and Italy signed the Racconigi Agreement, in which they agreed to maintain the status quo in the Balkans and, if the status quo became unsustainable, to promote the development of the Balkan states in accordance with the principle of nationality (GP 1927, 27. Band, Erste Hälfte, S. 164). Russia also played a key role in resolving conflicts among the Balkan states and in establishing the Balkan League. After the formation of the Balkan League, Russian Foreign Minister Sazonov exclaimed excitedly, "Well, this is perfect! Five hundred thousand bayonets to guard the Balkans—this would bar the road forever to German penetration, Austrian invasion." (Taylor 1954, p. 484)

In the aftermath of the Bosnian Crisis, both the two military blocs and the Balkan states struggled to reorganize their relations. The struggle for hegemony among the Great Powers and among the Balkan states became increasingly intertwined. As each of the opposing sides took a firm stance, believing that the other harbored potentially offensive motives, the already strained relations

among the Great Powers were likely to be shattered by a single event. The Sarajevo Incident of June 1914 became that particular event which shattered the existing power structure.

Notes

The archives include the following: Gooch, G. P., and Temperley, H. 1928-1933. *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914*. vol. 4, 5, 9. London: His Majesty's Stationary Office. (abbreviated as BD); House of Commons Parliamentary Papers. 1904-1905. *Turkey*, No. 2 (1904), No. 2 (1905), No. 4(1904), *Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of South-Eastern Europe*. London: His Majesty's Stationary Office (abbreviated as ASEE); Bourne, K., and Watt, D. C. 1991. *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print, Part I, from the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the First World War*. Series F, Europe, 1848-1914. vol. 24, 34. Washington D. C.: University Publications of America (abbreviated as BDFA); Lepsius, J., Bartholdy, A. M., and Thimme, F. 1924-1927. *Die Große Politik der europäischen Kabinette 1871-1914, Sammlung der diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes*. 10, 12, 22, 27. Bände. Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte m. b. H. (abbreviated as GP); Ministère des affaires étrangères. 1930-1951. *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1871-1914*. 1^{re} Série (1871-1900) Tome 2, 12, 2^e Série (1901-1911) Tome 3, 4, 6, 7, 11. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale (abbreviated as DDF).

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