

THE WORLD WAR I (1914 – 1918) **(Diplomatic Discourse versus the Paradigm of the International relations)**

Summary

The system of Balance of powers during the XIX century left behind numerous unresolved issues which were increasing their intensity for decades under the influence of the changes caused by the imperialism. Therefore, it is indisputable that the struggle of the Great Powers for allocation of the world territories, expressed by the projections for European and world hegemony, caused the nationalistic ideologies to cross over to their own aggressive transformation which led to the creation of a mass hysteria about economic supremacy between the old and the new states in Europe. This transformation conditioned the falling apart of the system of balance and at the same time, led to the big military clash in 1914, in which the Great Powers crossed their swords on the big chess table. They, stepping onto the international arena, with bigger or lesser capacity depending on the geostrategic positioning, took part in the first complete war clash executed a complete change in the international relations and forever changed the hitherto established rules of diplomatic play. For these reasons, the aim of this research is to show the main aortas which influenced this change on the international political stage.

Key words: Balance of powers, Great Powers, World War I, International relations.

I. Introduction

The World War I, or as it is often called – the Great War, despite its global title, was basically a European conflict. The unresolved issues which were burdening the European imperial powers during the second half of the XIX century, at the end led to a big military conflict among them. This internal European conflict brought out all the contradictions that were gleaming between the old traditional empires which gradually evolved into national states. These national states in the fatal year of 1914 clashed with the newly-founded national industrial entities, mainly after the primary question about the new imperial reallocation in Africa and Asia. In this war, on a secondary level, were also opened the issues which followed as a consequence of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in the Southeastern Europe, as well as the issues of the numerous national and state concepts following the spirit of the western-European and central-European events which were embedded in their own daily-political agendas, and which evidently shared a common characteristics, i.e. widening of their own territorial borders.

As a result of this development of the events, the layout of the forces which started the war in 1914, was assigned into the two camps; in the first one in which took part the nations-leaders of the alliance called The Triple Entente (Great Britain, France and Russia)¹; and the second one, the Central Powers, led by Germany and Austro-Hungary. Within the alliance of the Triple Entente also was included Serbia, while Italy² and Romania ultimately

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¹Taylor, A.J.P., *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848 – 1918*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 1971. p. 427 – 456.

²“Italy had remained neutral at the outbreak of the war but gave in to street demonstrations and entered the war on the Allied side through the secret Treaty of London, signed in April 1915. Britain and France held out as bait territories many Italian nationalists claimed as part of the “Italian Irredenta” (“unredeemed lands”) including the Tyrol in the Alps and Istria along the northern Adriatic Coast. Italian nationalism, as well as the desire of

supported the same. It was not until 1917 to this block will also join Greece, USA and Japan.³ On the other side, the Central Powers' goal was supported by Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire, as a result of the military defeats which led them into the losing side after the end of the Balkan Wars from the year 1912/1913.⁴

Starting from the causes for the war, and to its beginning, this massive military conflict led to a complete transformation of the international order and announced a new era in which nothing anymore could be as it was. Until year 1914, the balance of the powers could successfully hold back the conflicts on a local level, and even though it was provoked a few times, it did not fail. In this sense, the system of the balance of powers had its influence towards the resolving of the disputable issues, with which, on one side were avoided the military conflicts, and on the other side the same were controlled and withheld on the conference tables. Such political constellation in the international relations was governed by the principle of self-control and self-restriction of the Great Powers, which were careful to sustain the maintenance of the established European balance. However, the era of the imperialism and the rising aggressive conquering of the new colonies, prompted by the powerful industrial development which alone was in search of new markets and placement of the industrial products, was met by the new state entities, among which especially Germany was leading in its industrial and economic development. The German economic expansion in a great manner was due to the ownership of the natural resources, and especially the abundance of raw iron and steel. Its expansion and the firm military discipline upon which was built the Second Reich by Otto von Bismarck, was endangering the interests of Britain, France and Russia, and at the beginning of the XX century it opened the dilemmas which seriously jeopardized the European concert and led the European powers into a latent international crisis. Intending to avoid the former experiences with the harsh European conflicts, the European powers tried to shift the gravity of this imperial race outside of Europe. Their interests were breached around the question of the colonial allocation, and as the time passed, they became very sensitive, especially because of the course of the international policy which affected Germany after the replacement of Bismarck in 1890. It became clear that the new German strategy on the international plan in the following decades was characterized by aggressiveness, expansionism and imperialistic demands.

In the colonial sense, Germany aimed towards the territories of the Near East and Middle East, Pacific and northern Africa. Its international logic was also pointed towards an accomplishment of hegemony in Europe by construction of a "Great Middle Europe", which was planned to be implemented by conquering of some parts of the European territories. The members of the pan German league were longing for a middle Europe, in which Germany would dominate and in which would be included the countries of Benelux, Poland, Austria, Hungary, the Balkan peninsula and parts of Switzerland. Such expansionary logic was cordially supported by all the German political parties and it was transformed in the making an official decision for war. Therefore, the war was announced accordingly to the article 68 of the Constitution of the German Empire and the center of the political decision-making was delegated by the hands of the high military command led by the generals Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff. This military maneuver influenced the annulment of the British position of the so called *splendid isolation*, through which for a long period of time it successfully represented a solid catalyst of the European balance of powers, and also intensified the senses of Russia, which was strongly interested about the destiny of the Slavic

powerful Italian businessmen to find new markets in the Balkans, had proved stronger than Italy's prewar commitment to its former allies." Merriman, John, *A History of Modern Europe – From the French Revolution to the Present*, Second Edition, 2004. p. 988.

³"Although the Japanese had no interests at stake in Europe, they hoped to acquire Germanys concessions in China, as well as the German-held islands in the North". Birdsall S. Vial, *Modern European History*, McGraw-Hill, Inc, USA. p. 387.

⁴Taylor, A.J.P., *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe...* p. 533-535.

peoples under the Ottoman rule. The Russian strategy, as we already concluded, strategically aimed towards the exit to the warm seas and the Mediterranean.

The balance of the powers, which nearly one century maintained the relative stability of the European soil, at the end showed its flaws during the four years of the war. Regarding the balance of the powers, the American president Wilson, during the war, he considered that *it represents a bad international concept*, because it granted the Great Powers a possibility to tear apart the countries by their own political conviction, without taking into consideration the interests of the people living in those countries. The second reason why Wilson was against the balance of the powers was contained in the fact that he considered it to be *generator of wars*. If we look at the periodization which marks the development of the balance of powers, we can clearly notice that the Wilson's assertion was correct, which we can see through the differentiation of the five key historical phases which picture the birth, development and the failing of this international system. Here we are pointing out the following: *phase one*: the decisions from Vienna (1815 – 1822); *phase two*: the beginning of the Crimean war (1822 – 1854); *phase three*: the creation of the national states Italy and Germany (1856 – 1870); *phase four*: the Bismarck's system of alliances (1870 – 1890); and *phase five*: the gradual collapse of the balance of the powers (1891 – 1914). In this sense, it is evident that the German policy in the last years before the beginning of the Great War, more intensively was irritating the patience of the powers of the Triple Entente. This was especially evident through its activities in Morocco, where it clashed with the local French ingress during the summer period of the year 1911. After the unsuccessful attempt of Germany to take over this African territory, it was forced to retreat and to take another direction towards the territories of Cameroon. Also, in the last moments before the war outbreak, the German navy conducted a pressure over the German counselor to refuse the proposition of Great Britain for signing a treaty for the fleet. All of the above, along with a series of other factors, in a great manner influenced the consequences which resulted from the system of the balance of powers, step by step to lead to the unavoidable outbreak of the war. In this way, the ideologies of the liberalism and nationalism made fundamental changes over the overall system of the European values, which, throughout the painful and hard challenges, dominantly influenced the changes which happened as their direct consequence and over the international world order.

II. The Great War (1914 – 1918)

It is very clear that the assassination of the archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on 28th of June 1914 was not the reason, but the occasion which was necessary to begin the war. Strategically, the region of Southeastern Europe in 1914 represented the most unstable and at the same time, the most sensitive part of the European soil. On this boundary between the Orthodox Byzantium-Islamic cohesion and the Catholic West, almost constantly during the entire XIX century until the assassination in Sarajevo over the Habsburg heir and his wife in the fatal year 1914, the military clashes were everyday events. This region, for full five centuries represented a strategic terrain upon which the influence and spheres of interests were fighting and over it dominated the Ottoman empire and Austria, and sometime later also the Russian Empire as well. For these reasons, in the full meaning of the word, the region of Southeastern Europe represented a quake area which still was not fully recovered from the military clashes which resulted in the Balkan wars (1912/13) and from the cracks which were left after these wars, not only between the Balkan states, but in the relations between the Great Powers as well.

In this regard, especially Austro-Hungary and Germany were not satisfied from the reinforcement of Serbia. This was caused by the fact that between the Habsburgs and the Serbs smoldered the old animosity around the governance with Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is known that with the decisions from the Berlin congress in 1878 belonged to Austro-

Hungarian sphere of influence. On the other side, since the beginning of the XX century, Germany had the leading position before the rest of the continental states regarding the military industry, therefore the news of the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, for the German Kaiser Wilhelm II represented a firm reason to make the decision and to encourage Austro-Hungary to begin the war at the end of July the same year. At the beginning of the war, Italy was significantly neutral and wanted to remain that way. On 3rd of August 1914 Italy publically announced its neutrality, stating that the Triple Entente is at war aiming to defend itself from the Central Powers, while Austro-Hungary did not offer any serious compensation. As a result of this, Russia offered to Italy the territories of Tyrol, Trieste and Valona as compensation, if it attacks the Habsburg Empire. For Italy this offer from the powers of the Entente was not a good motive, regarding the fact that it considered itself for dominant ruler over the Adriatic. Except for the Great Powers, since the beginning of the war, from the smaller European states were involved only Belgium and Serbia.⁵

Since the beginning of the military actions at the Western front, the situation was discouraging before the strike of the German invasion, while at the Eastern front the Russian troops successfully managed to resist in front of the Austro-Hungarian invasion. The German troops on 3rd of August 1914 attacked Bulgaria, erasing all the surrounding countries to which they previously promised their neutrality. This development of the events activated the British involvement which joined to help France. In this period, the Russian intervention was motivated around the question for the future ruler over the Straits, because the general impression in the camp of the Triple Entente was that the Ottoman Empire will not survive the war. In this sense, it was the key question about the imperial order, which in the beginning years of the war became very questionable. In the block of the Triple Entente, France was pressing towards the disintegration of the Asian part of the Ottoman Empire between itself and Great Britain, while Britain was establishing its firm administration in Egypt, along with the construction of its neutral zone in Persia. Regarding the territories outside of Europe, at the beginning of the year 1916, these two powers signed *The Sykes-Picot Agreement*, according to which Syria belonged to France, and Britain got Mesopotamia. As a result of this separation in the block of the Entente, Russia also joined with a request for an addition of the aforementioned Agreement. Therefore, the Agreement was amended on 16th of September 1916, and in it to Russia the territories of Armenia and Kurdistan were assigned.⁶ Such deployment of the powers, especially at the Near East, left a crack which will become a generator for crises in the Arabian world during the entire century, to this day.

During the year 1915, the forces of the Entente made another attempt to add Italy in their block. This time they promised to Italy a lot more than before. Now in the game play were the territories of South Tyrol, Istria and the entire Dalmatia, as well as the establishing of a complete Italian protectorate over Albania. This proposition was finally accepted by Italy and it officially announced its joining on the side of the Entente on 4th of March, 1915. The official joining of Italy to the Triple Entente was signed with the London Treaty on 16th of April 1915. In the Agreement the future Italian borders in Tyrol, Istria and Dalmatia were predicted as well. In the Article 9 of this Agreement, to Italy was recognized the right to rule with the Adriatic Sea and the undeniable rule over the province of Adalia. Also, according to the Article 13 of the Agreement, Italy was promised compensations in the future colonial allocation as well, in case Great Britain and France to conquer the German colonies.

⁵“Sazonov, however, hoped to bribe Bulgaria into the war by offering her part of all Macedonia, which Serbia had carried off in 1913, and intended to give Serbia the Habsburg lands on the Adriatic in exchange. His negotiations with Italy therefore came to nothing. Nor were his Balkan negotiations any more successful. He offered Serb and Bulgarian territory to Rumania; Rumanian, Turkish, and Serb territory to Bulgaria; and Bulgarian territory to Turkey, if any of them would enter the war. All three held back until a decisive battle had been fought. They would join Russia only when it was obvious that she had won, and then their aid would be unnecessary...” Taylor, A.J.P., *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe...* p. 532-533.

⁶Ibid. p. 543.

Regarding the colonies, Italy was not agile enough during the signing of the Treaty, because to this country of prime importance was the control and the ruling over the Adriatic Sea. Such diplomatic logic of Italy, after Versailles in 1919, besides the other reasons, will become one of the main factors for its stepping down from the block of the Entente and joining with the revisionist block led by Nazi Germany.

In any case, it is evident that by the end of 1916, the Russian Empire's army succeeded to overcome the attacks by the powers of the Central axis. This in a great amount influenced the German will to continue with the insisting to find a solution with which will provide the Russian neutrality at the Eastern front and with that to enable Germany completely to concentrate to the West. The military maneuvers of the Russian troops until the autumn 1916 were basically the only serious asset of the powers of the Entente, and the same would make Russia again a leader of this block, similar to the events during the coalition against Napoleon, if the Zimmerwald movement did not happen, which was led by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, which grew into the Bolshevik revolution, with which all of a sudden the Russian empire retreated from the worldly events and entered into a completely new internal political transformation. With the peace from Brest-Litovsk, the new Russian-Soviet governing structure of the truce, and officially in March 1918 left its hitherto allies alone to end the military clash. "The Bolsheviks formed their principles in the Decree of Peace on 8th of October 1917, in which they pledged for: self-determination of peoples, peace without annexations and contribution for the public in the international agreements and the diplomacy in general. However, even though Lenin insisted on fast-signing of peace with the Central Powers, this did not go easy at all. The peace negotiations started in December 1917, but because of the misunderstandings between the two sides regarding the big territorial exceptions which Russia was supposed to make, they were discontinued. In the meantime, Finland, Ukraine and the area behind Caucasus, announced independence from Russia. The Soviet government recognized the complete autonomy and independence of Finland on 31st of December 1917 and it was ready to do the same in regards to Poland, which was still under the occupation of the Central Powers. Faced with the nationalistic and anti-Soviet movements of the peoples which were until then under the Russian imperial umbrella, the Bolsheviks in January 1918 made an addition to the "Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia", according to which they recognized the right of self-determination of these peoples. After the failure of the peace negotiations in Brest-Litovsk in 1918, Austro-Hungary and Germany started again to advance towards Moscow. This intervention was threatening to destroy the revolutionary government in Russia. In this situation, the Soviet government upon Lenin's endeavoring, decided to accept the highly difficult conditions. With the Peace Treaty from 3rd of March 1918, the government of Soviet Russia had to give up Ukraine, which gained independence, along with Belorussia, the Baltic countries and Poland. To Russia were also set very high military reparations towards the Central Powers".⁷ The development of these events in the block of the Entente was fulfilled with the involvement of the USA, which on 1st of April 1917 officially joined on the side of this alliance. In essence, what moved the American leadership headed by the American president Woodrow Wilson to break the Monroe's doctrine and to enter the world war was prompted by the disclosure of the telegram from Zimmermann in which Germany offered alliance to Mexico, making a promise to return Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. The second moment which influenced the American motivation to enter the war was the endangerment to the English ships by the German submarines. This in a great amount intensified the British diplomacy to surpass its old problems with the USA, because in 1917 it especially feared the threat of the German submarines. Therefore, under the clause of "protection of the seas", the American diplomatic machinery started with intensive preparations to get involved in the war.

⁷More on this topic in: *Povjest svijeta – od pocetka do danas*, 2 izdanje, Naprijed, Zagreb, 1990; and: *Savremeni svet, Ilustrovana istorija sveta, četvrti tom*, Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana, 1983. p. 230.

In any way, the time had come, and USA could no longer stay aside regardless of the fact that the decision of the president Wilson was questionable regarding the Monroe's doctrine, according to which it was forbidden to interfere in the western hemisphere. In its core, the same signified the new phase in the history of the international relations, with which USA stepped into the international stage. For the American president Wilson, the interference of the USA in the war had two meanings. According to his logic, he evaluated that if the alliance of the Entente wins, Russia would secure its final domination over Europe, and in case of victory of the Central Powers, according to him, that would signify the German supremacy which would mean "an indescribable tyranny of militarism" for the future generations on the continent. Both options, for the liberal democratic order upon which rested USA, were unacceptable, and in that sense, it became necessary to take some action.

On 10th of January 1917, after a few months of insisting of the USA to define the "aims of the war", the powers of the Entente for the first time declared their positions regarding this question. But, what was the real interest of the Americans in this manner actually was the question of the "self-determination of the peoples". This concept was fundamentally elaborated and personally inspired by the president Wilson, who in the spirit of the academic logic and liberalism before the Congress of the USA on 8th of January submitted it in the form of the Fourteen Points program. In the reality, the points 3, 4, 5 and 9 have never been conducted, while the rest of the points were more or less implemented with the decisions of the Versailles' system from 1919.⁸

In the meantime, the landing of the American troops on the French shore, for the German military signified the new race against time, in which Ludendorff, as a leader of the supreme German command, tried to perform a maneuver with which he wanted perform the final stroke to the West, counting on the absence of the Russian army, as well as on the actual situation in the camp of the opponent in which on one side stood the demoralized and tired French, English and Italian soldiers and the unprepared and still semi-aware American troops, gradually were landing on the shore of France. For these reasons, in the second half of the year 1917, at first on the North-eastern front, and later at the Caporetto and Cambrai, the Germans as an addition to their defense implemented a new system of offensive action. This system was called *Hutier tactics* and with it was expected to increase the efficiency of the powers of the Central and to deepen the offensive activities towards the opponents.⁹

In March 1918, Germany already had begun its massive attack on France. At the same it was responded by the powers of the Entente led by the French general Ferdinand Foch. In the middle of July the same year, the united armies of France, Great Britain and USA

⁸ In the Fourteen Points which president Wilson brought before the US Congress were defined and elaborated the following principles for regulation of the international relations: 1. The peace treaties should be made publicly; 2. Securing of an absolute freedom of the maritime navigation during war and peace; 3. Abolition of all of the economic sanctions, as much as it is possible; 4. Enabling and taking measures which would enable the decrease of the armaments in the nation-states, in the interest of their own safety; 5. Unbiased regulation of all the colonial areas, equally taking into consideration the interests of the peoples; 6. Evacuation of all the foreign forces from the Russian territory; 7. Evacuation of Belgium and returning of its full sovereignty; 9. Liberation of the entire French territory; 10. Ensuring a complete freedom for autonomous development for the peoples in Austro-Hungary; 11. Evacuation of Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, as well as free access to the sea for Serbia; 12. Autonomous development for the non-Turkish population within the Ottoman Empire and assurance of the free crossing through the Dardanelles; 13. Establishment of free Polish countries with exit to sea and connecting them to Poland, along with the territories inhabited by Polish population; 14. Establishing a League of nations, with aim to provide mutual help, collaboration and interdependence, which will enable a mutual political and territorial independence of the small and of the big states.

⁹ According to Meyer: *Hutier tactics* is titled after the Ludendorff's cousin, the general Oscar von Hutier, who was first to use it. This tactics presumed a new type of attack units which were composed of departments of six or eight people, so called storm-troops, which were trained to use ever possible shelter as the terrain may offer, as well as to sneak and pass by through the strongest positions, which instead of stopping and destroying them, could use them as a breakthrough line to the enemy territory... Mejer, Dž. Dž. *Svet se ruši – povest o velikom ratu – 1914 – 1918*, IK FILIP VIŠNJIC, Beograd, 2015. стр. 513.

countered the attack. This counteroffensive of the powers of the Entente marked the German retreat. The Central Powers in the following autumn already announced the end of their military activities. On 30th of September 1918, Bulgaria was first to sign its capitulation, which was followed by the capitulations of Turkey on 30th of October, Austria on 3rd of November, and finally of Germany, which officially capitulated in Compiègne on 11th of November 1918.

III. The Military Activities on the Balkan

The overture of the Great War was played on the Balkan. Therefore, it is not an accidental observation that the beginning of the armed catastrophe, which was the war from 1914-1918, happened exactly in this region. In both Balkan wars, besides the Balkan countries and the Ottoman Empire, the interests between the Great powers undoubtedly clashed as well. The results of these wars contributed to the deepening of the gap between the Balkan countries, especially between Serbia and Bulgaria. The results of the Second Balkan War for Bulgaria were dire, on the account of the territorial gain for Greece and Serbia. The outbreak of the war for the defeated Bulgaria meant a new chance to even the old score with its former Balkan allies. In geostrategic terms, it is very clear that the region of South Eastern Europe also served as a testing ground for the future armed clash between the Great Powers. In addition to that speaks also following events, which very soon after evoked the big contradictions between the Balkan countries. After the peace conference in Bucharest, for a moment it seemed that the cloud of war finally passed over the recently reconciled area, when all of a sudden, at the end of June 1914, from Sarajevo the new ordeals of the war hung upon the Balkan peoples.

With the beginning of the war in the summer of 1914, on the still vulnerable Balkan terrain appeared the contradictions between the Balkan countries. Serbia, under the pressure of Austro-Hungary, leaned towards the Russian protection, while Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire found their compensations from the previous territorial losses in the block of the Central Powers. In this sense, the Russian diplomacy significantly failed, because it was offering everything to everyone and in the end did not gain any trust from the Balkan countries. The question of the involvement of the Ottoman Empire was of a great significance here. This became especially acute at the moment when Great Britain offered the Greek troops to attack Constantinople, which opened the old Greek tendencies for ascension of the Byzantine Empire. Actually, with the development of the military activities, the powers of the Entente regarding the region of the Southeastern Europe, as a main determinant had the Straits. As many times before, Constantinople had an especial geostrategic significance and for these reasons it was very important to secure this area, especially from the Russian, and in a smaller amount from the German domination. For these reasons, "the Agreement about Constantinople and the Straits represented the most important 'secret agreement' which was signed between the allies during the war".¹⁰ Among the other things, with it the attention of the Russian involvement in the war was retained, especially after the military defeats which the Russian army sustained during the second half of 1914. As a result of this agreement, the Central forces during the 1915 offered to Russia the rule over Constantinople, if she decided to sign a separate peace with them. Russia refused this offer because at that moment the outcome of the war was especially uncertain and did not give any guarantees that the Central Powers will win, which in many aspects would affect the situation in the post-war

¹⁰ "...There was a great outcry when the Bolsheviks published it in 1918; the allies, it was said, were pursuing selfish imperialist aims under a smoke-screen of ethical principles... The agreement followed inevitably from the British expedition to the Dardanelles. It was essential to dispel the Russian suspicion that, in Grey's words, 'Britain was going to occupy Constantinople in order that when Britain and France had been enabled, by Russia's help, to win the war, Russia should not have Constantinople at the peace...' Taylor, A.J.P., *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe...* p. 542.

deployment of the powers, and in the general imperial order in which Russia, led by Czar Nicholas II, had a significant interest.

Regarding the Balkan front, Serbia during the second half of 1914 made two especially significant strokes to its ideological opponent Austro-Hungary. The first defeat of the Habsburgs happened during the battle of Cer (15th–19th of August) and the second one with the battle of Kolubara (3th – 15th of December). These two defeats temporarily protected Serbia from the Austrian occupation.¹¹ In the meantime, the Central Powers successfully managed to win over to their side the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria.¹² This alliance enabled them to influence the closing of the Straits, which caused a real economical and social catastrophe in Russia. After this followed the Battle of Gallipoli in the following year 1915, whose outcome was fatal for the forces of the Triple Entente, with which additionally was disabled the flow of the industrial supplies in Russia. This increased the internal resentment in the country and it had an immense influence over the further development of the events in the country.

Regarding Bulgaria, it had two possibilities at the beginning of the war. According to the first, forces of the Entente offered the territories up to the Enos-Media line, accordingly to the former decisions of the Peace conference in London in 1912. Regarding Macedonia, in this offer was included the bigger part of the Macedonian territory, but for the same territorial expansion was discussed only in case if Serbia, after the war, had an opportunity to expand towards Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Greece to Asia Minor. Regarding the second possibility, it came by the side of the Central Powers, which to Bulgaria promised the entire geographical Macedonia. This offer was more specific and it was favoring the internal ambience in the country, but taught from the previous experiences, Bulgaria did not decide for either of the given options. At the beginning of 1915 it again became a subject of interest to both of the warring blocks. “At the beginning of August 1915, the British diplomacy informed the Bulgarian government that its forces are ready to occupy Macedonia, aiming Bulgaria to be sure that after the war ends, the territories which belong to Bulgaria will be returned, under the condition if it does not unite towards the German block. Unlike the Entente, Berlin and Vienna had a better offer for Sofia again. The Bulgarian leadership on 6th of September 1915 signed a Treaty for Friendship and Alliance between Bulgaria and Germany, which required Germany to help Bulgaria in case of foreign threats. In return, Bulgaria was obliged to take actions with all of its forces against its neighboring country, in case it attacks Germany.”¹³ In geographical terms, Germany did not border with any of the neighboring countries of Bulgaria, and for this reason it was clear that this clause was referring to Serbia. The same was confirmed by the Secret agreement between Bulgaria and Germany for war against Serbia, in which Germany guaranteed to Bulgaria to help with the annexation of the Macedonian territory which with the decisions of the Bucharest peace treaty belonged to Serbia. Also, in this agreement it was anticipated that in case Greece, without being challenged to attack Bulgaria, its allies or Turkey, Germany agrees to Bulgaria to annex the territories which belonged to Greece as well, which were given to Greece with the Bucharest Peace Treaty.¹⁴ The same day the secret agreement between Bulgaria and

¹¹ Wolff, Robert Lee, *The Balkans in Our Time*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1956. p. 97.

¹² According to Vanche Stojchev: „...On the 3rd of September 1915 was signed the Bulgarian-Turkish Treaty, and immediately after that, on 6th of September 1915 in the castle Pless in Upper Silesia, Bulgaria signed with Germany and Austro-Hungary three agreements: 1. Treaty for friendship and alliance; 2. Secret convention, and 3. A military convention, and with that became a member of the Central Powers. After these agreements Bulgaria gained expansion in Thrace, and from Germany was promised to get the two zones in Macedonia, both the disputed and the undisputed, according to the Serbian-Bulgarian Treaty from 13th of March 1912. If Greece performs an attack against Turkey, then Bulgaria will gain the territories which with the Bucharest Treaty belonged to Greece.” Стојчев, Ванче, *Воена историја на Македонија*, Скопје, 2000. p. 597.

¹³ Јовановски, Далибор, *Љубомир Милетиќ (1863 – 1937)*, Скопје, 2015. p. 154.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 155.

Austro-Hungary was signed, which confirmed the previously-agreed between Bulgaria and Germany. Therefore the decision was made and the Bulgarian military machinery was on the move to fulfill the agreement mentioned above with the Central Powers. As a result of these happenings, Bulgaria on 14th of October 1915 declared war to Serbia. As a response to the Bulgarian mobilization and the declaration of war, the forces of the Entente expressly during the following days responded in the same manner i.e. declared war to Bulgaria. The Bulgarian supreme command, immediately after the announcement of the war was stationed in Kyustendil from where it coordinated the movement of three army controls. The first army was aimed towards the Serbian border, the second towards Central Macedonia, and the third was stationed in Dobruja. On 15th of October 1915 the second Bulgarian army entered in Macedonia, aiming to cut the railroad Skopje-Thessaloniki as fast as possible and to prevent the retreat of the Serbian army to Greece. The second task of the second Bulgarian army was to prevent the progression of the forces of the Entente to Serbia.¹⁵ During the following three years, until the final capitulation of Bulgaria, its military activities were completely concentrated on the Macedonian terrain. Essentially, the military occupation which was performed by the Bulgarian army on the territory of Macedonia, which with the decisions of the Bucharest treaty of 1913, was divided between Greece and Serbia, pointed out to the unresolved territorial aspirations between the Balkan countries, which on the account of the Macedonian national question, developed their own agendas. In this sense, Bulgaria as a loser in this military-political strategy, its own discontent built upon the construction of the ethno-political myth according to which its final goal was to merge the entire ethnographical territory of Macedonia to the Bulgarian legal-state body.

On its part, Greece during the first three years of the war was neutral regarding the military blocks. During the war, it allowed the forces of the Triple Entente to use the Lemnos Island as a military base from which the attack of Gallipoli was organized in 1915. Also, at the very beginning of the war, Greece occupied Northern Epirus, while Albania was under the Italian occupation. During the retreat of the forces of the Triple Entente from Gallipoli, Thessaloniki was turned into a military base, which caused the short term change of the Greek prime minister Eleftherios Venizelos by the Greek king Constantine I. Venizelos, wishing to show the Greek neutrality as a balance for the allied activities on the Greek territory, offered and surrendered to the Central Forces the Fort Roupel. In the summer of 1916 the Thessaloniki front was opened, where the allied army forces of France and Great Britain performed together against the Central Powers. In August 1916, the Bulgarian army suppressed the forces of the Entente, while conquering the towns of Kavala, Serres and Drama. This development of events prompted the forming of the Temporary government for national defense of Greece in Thessaloniki. The establishment of this Temporary government was led by Venizelos and his supporters. In the meantime, the French and Greek soldiers clashed in Athens, which in a certain sense meant an occupation of Greece by the forces of the Entente. Under the French attack, the Greek soldiers were suppressed to the island Peloponnese, while the Greek navy was temporarily revoked and put under the protection of the French troops. This led to abdication of the Greek king Constantine I from the throne in June 1917 and on his place stepped his second son Alexander. On the terrain, Venizelos took over the control of the entire country and influenced the new Greek king to take part in the war. Officially, Greece declared war to the Central forces on 30th of June 1917.

Already in the autumn 1918, the forces of the Entente reorganized their troops which were stationed in Thessaloniki and dealt a strong defeat to Bulgaria. After this defeat, Bulgaria asked for truce, which enabled the forces of the Entente through Dobruja to ingress on the Romanian territory. Romania during 1916, was occupied by the Central Powers, and this reinforcement encouraged the Romanians to join the troops of the Entente and to fight together against Germany and Austro-Hungary. It was becoming more and more clear that

¹⁵Стојчев, Ванче, *Воена историја на Македонија*...р. 597 – 598.

the result of the military turmoil is more certain and it was going to the advance of the block which was led by the Triple Entente.

IV. Conclusion

Germany under the leadership of the firm army dictatorship has encouraged and flared the military clash which grew into a world war, and four years later came out it defeated. The imperialist German military project backfired in 1918, and a new phase of the political development begun at that moment, which under the dictation of the victorious forces of the war asked for fundamental and fast democratic transformation of the country. With the signing of the unconditional capitulation on 11th of November 1918, in Berlin broke out the November Revolution, in which was overthrown the emperor Wilhelm II. Already on 11th of February 1919 was announced the Weimar Republic, lead by the president of the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany, the chancellor Friedrich Ebert. Proclaimed as the only culprit for the war, the newly established Republic was faced with the attempt of establishment of the democracy on the internal plan, while being exposed to enormous military reparations and to the public international shame and condemnation in a time when it was trying with all of its powers to accomplish the conditions dictated by the countries that won the war. This in a great amount affected the development of the events which traced the path which brought Adolf Hitler to the stage in 1933.¹⁶

Regarding the remaining members of the Central Powers, their destiny was resolved with the Versailles system of international treaties.

Starting with the changes on the Balkan region which occurred as a result of the World War I, most affected in the territorial sense was Bulgaria, whose ambitions to create hegemony with an exit to the Aegean Sea, South Dobruja and Macedonia; with the war defeat they were seriously undermined. This ambitious plan, which carried its own genesis since the time of the creation of the preliminary Treaty of San Stefano in 1878, in Bulgaria was experienced as the biggest national disaster and therefore all the hopes of the Bulgarian international policy in the period between the two world wars will be aimed towards the bettering of the possibilities which would lead to revision of the Neuilly peace treaty in 1919.

Opposite of the defeated Bulgaria, in 1918 appeared the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.¹⁷ Starting from the states' interest to preserve the country's borders, its policy was aiming towards the collaboration with the neighboring Balkan countries, without losing the account of the constant pressure by the Italian irredentism of the Adriatic sea, as well as the Bulgarian revisionism at the east.

Regarding Greece, under the firm diplomatic guidance of Venizelos at the end of the war, it came close to accomplishing its grand nationalistic tendencies. The first step to

¹⁶Историја на правото, трет дел, група на автори, 2-ри Август, Штип, Skopje, 2011. p. 208 – 215.

¹⁷Wolff, Robert Lee, *The Balkans in Our Time...*,...the most important wartime development was the growth of a program for unity among the southern Slavs. Alexander (Prince Alexander Krageorgevich from Serbia) proclaimed the Yugoslav ideal in 1916, and a Yugoslav Committee operating in London commanded the support of many Croats and Slovenes as well as Serbs. In July 1917 on Corfu, the Serbian Premier Pashich and the Croatian President of the Yugoslav Committee, Dr. Ante Trumbich, signed an agreement providing that all south Slavs should join in a new kingdom under Alexander Krageorgevich. Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, and Montenegrins would have a degree of autonomy to be determined by the new constitution. Radich, leader of the Croatian Peasant Party, supported the decision, with some reservations. He would have liked to see the Bulgarians in the new state, and he would have preferred the republican form of government. The Italians, to whom the secret Treaty of London (1915) had promised much of Dalmatia, as a price for entry into the war on the allied side, found themselves faced with determined south Slav opposition. At a Congress of Oppressed Nationalities at Rome, including Czech, Polish, Rumanian, and Yugoslav delegates, the Italians in the spring of 1918 informally agreed to recognize Yugoslav self-determination. Still the Yugoslavs felt hurried into proclaiming their new state in order to forestall Italian territorial claims. After Croatian and Montenegrin bodies had acted, King Alexander became King of the new state of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes on December 4, 1918." p. 98.

accomplish the goal was the obtaining of Smyrna, which for them represented a ricochet to Constantinople. These possibilities which looked as if they were within the reach, soon became only one big adventure, especially after the heavy defeat which Greece sustained as a result of the Greek-Turkish war from 1919-1922, with which extinguished the hopes to realize the *Megali Idea*.

The end of the Great War resulted with over 10 million human casualties and over 20 millions of injured people. Its beginning and its results speak in favor of the thesis that in this war escalated all the hidden passions and strivings of the countries for a final mutual battle. Or, as will be stated by Nye: "In 1914, war was thought to be inevitable, a fatalistic view compounded by the social Darwinist argument that war should be welcome because it would clean the air like a good summer storm".¹⁸ At the end, it became completely clear that against all the old unresolved issues between the Great Powers, such as the colonies in Africa, Alsace, Lorraine etc, appeared the new rivalries, even more seriously and firmly, which after the war were not only economical and strategic, but now they gained a serious ideological dimension. In this sense, during the entire XX century, on the big geostrategic map of the world, will clash, at some moments will come closer, and most often will act as frozen one against each other, the two great powers, USA and Soviet Russia. This state in the international relations will last until the fall of the iron curtain in 1989 and the same in a new guise will continue with its development until today.

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¹⁸Nye, Joseph S. Jr. – Understanding International Conflicts – An Introduction to Theory and History; Longman, 2003; p. 83.