

# **Deciding for War Across Time: An Analysis of Civil-Military Relations (1870-1914)**

**By**

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## **1. Introduction**

The intellectual aspiration of the paper is to cast light on the decision making process before the entry of one state into a war situation. The majority of conflicts across history have been regarded as “catastrophic” by the losers (especially if they have started the war). However in many cases the winners have also characterized their victory as “pyrrhic” or “incomplete”. According to mainstream theory victory in war can be either: 1) The “tactical victory” which aims to prevail in the battlefield and destroy the military apparatus of the opponent, 2) the “political-military victory”; associated with the victory in a limited duration war and 3) the “grand strategy victory” associated with the complete change of status quo and with regime change imposed by the victor to the defeated.<sup>1</sup> However, the crucial issue is who decides war? For centuries the answer was obvious: it was a single emperor or monarch. However as the political institutions have evolved to parliamentary democracies the answer to the question was that the elected government decided of war or peace. In addition the evolving doctrine has argued that democracies do not fight (each other) or even if they do; this occurs for a relative small time period with limited human losses. It has also been suggested that only dictatorships (autocratic regimes) continue to have a tendency to interstate and intra state violence.<sup>2</sup> A third stream of thought points out that most conflicts are not accidental but pre-planned many years ago by various secret societies (Masonic lodges, Illuminati etc).<sup>3</sup> Thus the question remains: who plans and executes a war? Are these answers satisfactory? We shall attempt to provide an answer by analyzing the developments of the 1870-1914 period and the July-August 1914.

## **2. The 1870-1914 period**

The eruption of World War I is nowadays considered as the outcome of the long process of the 1870-1914 period. Very briefly the period is divided in two sub-periods: a) the 1870-1890 and b) the 1890-1914.

### **2a. The 1870-1890 period**

In the first period the German foreign policy under Kaiser Wilhelm I and Reich-chancellor Bismarck followed the balance of power doctrine. Thus by 1890 the main German aim was to achieve the status of Great Power (Grossmacht). In the second period (1890-1914) the German policy under Wilhelm II and Reich-chancellors Leon von Caprivi and Hoenne (1890-1900), Bertrand von Billov (1900-1909) and

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<sup>1</sup> See: William C. Martel: “Victory in War Foundations of Modern Military Policy”, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> See: Niall Ferguson: “The cash nexus. Money and power in the modern world”, Penguin books, 2001, pp: 348-368 and 392-407.

<sup>3</sup> See: James McConnachie & Rubin Tudge: “The Rough Guide to Conspiracy Theories”, Rough Guide limited, London, 2013.

Bethmann Hollweg (1909-1914) aimed to achieve the status of World Power (Weltmacht), with peaceful methods.

In the first period (1870-1890) Bismarck was aware that Germany was still a fragile power and time was needed to develop its economy and status. The central aim of German foreign policy was to isolate France and nullify the possibility of an emerging anti-German alliance in Europe. Thus in 1873 Germany established with Austria-Hungary and Russia the "Pact of Three Emperors" (Dreikaiserbund). Bismarck aimed to terminate the Austrian-Russian dispute in the Balkans and Eastern Europe. He pointed to Russia that it would be better to expand in Asia and abandon the dream of destroying the Ottoman Empire; thus gaining access to the Sea, by following a Pan-Slavism policy aiming to protect all Slavic populations. In exchange he promised that Austria-Hungary would abandon also the dreams of Balkan domination and concentrate its efforts in the Alps region in Venice, Trieste and Isonzo. With the Austrian-Russian dispute frozen he was certain that in case of a new French-German war the two states would remain neutral. He also did not want to allow any French-Italian rapprochement. Thus he supported Italian claims in the Mediterranean and in North Africa. Finally Britain at that time was under the "Splendid Isolation Doctrine" following the policy of non-intervention in European affairs. Thus during 1873-1875 France was completely isolated. In 1875 France decided to increase defence spending and Germany threatened with invasion. It was just a bluff since the German press was directed by Bismarck to create a psychological warfare against the French public opinion. However both Russia and Britain pointed out that any further change of European status quo was not accepted.<sup>4</sup> It was the first sign that the French isolation could be terminated. During July 1875-1876 the Serbs and the Bulgarians of the Ottoman Empire rebel and Serbia and Montenegro declare war to the Ottomans. In April 1877 Russia returns to the protector of Slavs doctrine and declares war to the Ottoman Empire. By January 1878 the Russians threaten Constantinople and by March 1878 the Treaty of St. Stephan is signed which creates a Great Bulgaria. In addition Romania, Serbia and Montenegro all gain full independence and finally Russia gains control of vast Caucasus areas.<sup>5</sup> The sudden change of the Balkan status, in favor of Russia had ramifications for all Powers. The St. Stephan Treaty was never implemented. Between 13 June-13 July 1878, in the Palace of Radziwill in Berlin it was cancelled. Bulgaria was reduced from 176,000 sq. km. to 96,000 sq. km. Romylia was becoming semi-autonomous and Thessaly was given to Greece. Bosnia-Herzegovina was given to Austria-Hungary and Cyprus was given to Britain.<sup>6</sup> The German newspaper Berliner Tageblatt (15 July 1878) commented that Austria has a nest of Slavs ...Italy and France are empty handed ...the honest broker [Germany] played the cards in such a way as to avoid the establishment of any anti-German coalition.<sup>7</sup> Between 1878-1882, the Second System of Balance of Power, is established by Bismarck. Germany supported the French expansion in North Africa (in Tunisia in 1881) thus continuing the strains between France and Italy, the former

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<sup>4</sup> See: Jean Dumont: "The First World War" History periodical, issue 74, August 1974, pp. 20-43.

<sup>5</sup> Germany was totally inert during 1875-1878 period. In December 1876 Bismarck stated that: "The Balkans do not deserve the bones of any Pomeranian grenadier". See: M.Glenny: "The Balkans 1804-1999. Nationalism War and the Great Powers", Granta Books, London 1999, p. 143.

<sup>6</sup> See: M.Glenny: "The Balkans 1804-1999. Nationalism War and the Great Powers", Granta Books, London 1999, p. 147.

<sup>7</sup> See.: M.Glenny: "The Balkans 1804-1999. Nationalism War and the Great Powers", Granta Books, London 1999, p. 146.

“Pact of Three Emperors” (Dreikaiserbund) remained but in October 1879 a secret treaty is signed with Austria-Hungary alone which points out that in case of a Russian attack both countries would assist each other. On May 20<sup>th</sup> 1882 the Triple Alliance is formed between Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy against France. However the system was again tested in France and in the Balkans. A new French-German crisis erupted in 1887 when the Germans captured a French spy in the borders. France ordered a partial mobilization and although the crisis was resolved diplomatically it was obvious in German eyes that France remained a threat. The second crisis evolved during the 1882-1887 period. An open conflict occurred between Bulgaria and Serbia in 1885 and Bulgaria invades Serbia with 50,000 men. Austria warned Bulgaria of possible intervention and the Bulgarian Army was forced to retreat. At that time the King of Bulgaria was Alexander Battenberg, a nephew of the Russian Emperor. Thus the Bulgarian invasion was regarded as an indirect Russian attempt to re-establish the Treaty of St. Stephan. As a result in 1886, the Bulgarian King had to change its cabinet which the nationalists accused as Russian pawns and in 1887 he was forced to resign with the Parliament electing a new King Ferdinand of Sax Coburg a pro-Austrian prince, who reduced the Russian influence in the country. Bismarck realizes that the Austrian-Russian dispute in the Balkans can have negative impact and he does not want any deterioration of the Russian-German relations. Thus in June 1887 and in spite of the Austrian-German secret pact of 1879 he signs a secret agreement with Russia against Austria-Hungary. Under this treaty if a French-German war erupts Russia had to remain neutral. In exchange Germany would accept a stronger Russian role in the Balkans against Austria and Turkey. However a year later Germany and the Ottoman Empire sign the Berlin-Baghdad railway the investment started in 1888 and it would by 1893 it reached Ankara. By 1914 it was expanded across the Arab lands of the Ottoman Empire and it was expected to reach Baghdad and the region of Kermanshah in Persia. It was also expanded to Damascus-Medina by 1908. The Deutsche Bank, as the main investor had rights for a 99 year period.<sup>8</sup> In addition bilateral trade increased; thus German exports to Ottoman Empire in 1888, were 11.7 m. Marks and by 1893 there were 40.9 m. (an increase of almost 350%). German imports increased from 2.3 m. to 16.5 m. (an increase of 75%).<sup>9</sup> Germany also took control of fishing industry and secured exclusive rights for oil drills in the regions of Tiger and Euphrates rivers. An affiliate was set up under the name “Baghdad-Eisenbahn-Gesellschaft” in which the profits would be distributed as follows: The revenues up to 4,500 francs per km. of railway line were given to the company. Any revenues between 4,500 and below 10,000 francs were given to the Ottoman government. Finally revenues above 10,000 francs were distributed between the Ottoman government and the Company in a 60:40 ratio.<sup>10</sup> However Russia was startled with the German penetration in the Ottoman Empire and started to make second thoughts about the secret 1887 Treaty. Bismarck realizes the danger and decides to create a British-German alliance. He uses Italy at the beginning in order to achieve his goal. Thus he supports a closer Italian-British cooperation in the

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<sup>8</sup> For the Germans Anatolia had immense importance as a source of raw materials (chrome, lead, copper, nickel, iron-ore, coal and oil. See: E.M. Earle: “The Great Powers, and the Baghdad Railway: A study in Imperialism”, New York, Russell and Russell, 1966, p. 13-17.

<sup>9</sup> See B. Berberoglu: “Turkey in crisis. From state capitalism to neo-colonialism”, Greek edition, Kyriakides Brothers, Thessalonika 2000, p. 52.

<sup>10</sup> See Hew Strachan: “The First World War” (Vol.I: To Arms), Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 663.

Mediterranean and as an exchange he requests from London a joint alliance directed against Russian influence in Europe and in central Asia, which borders with the Crown Jewelry, India. These efforts were never completed since in 1888 the death of Kaiser Wilhelm I, leads in June 15<sup>th</sup> the 29 year old new German Emperor Wilhelm II. At the beginning Wilhelm II and Bismarck co-exist but after different assessments over domestic and foreign policy Bismarck was forced to resign on March 18<sup>th</sup> 1890 and he was replaced by the new Chancellor Von Caprivi. Bismarck was chancellor from September 23<sup>rd</sup> 1862 and during this period he managed to unite the 25 from the 39 German kingdoms and principalities creating the Second German Reich. (The remaining provinces were inside Austria-Hungary in order to achieve a broader nexus between the two states). He acted in such a way which

1. Took advantage of the Austrian-Russian dispute over the Ottoman Empire and promised to both empires Balkan land but in reality he set up the economic entry of Germany in the Ottoman Empire via the BBB railway, which was completed after his death.
2. By balancing the Austrian-Russian dispute he managed to avoid an alliance between France and Russia.
3. He managed to partially fulfill the goals of small Balkan states (Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria) in such a way as to gain influence across them but at the same time penetrate in the Ottoman Empire.
4. He took advantage of the Italian-French dispute and thus managed to control the Austrian-Italian differences by creating the Triple alliance and avoiding a French-Italian alliance.
5. He managed to avoid any direct British intervention in the politics of continental Europe by exploiting the British doctrine of “Splendid Isolation” and he never threatened British mainland or colonies. The British neutrality was achieved although he managed to obtain between 1884 and 1890 colonies which were four times the space of German! He also attempted to establish a German-British alliance against Russia.
6. Before his death on July 30<sup>th</sup> 1898, Bismarck prophetically pointed out: “I shall not live to see the Great War. But you will see it and it will come from the East”....These words demonstrate that he was aware that the balance of power could not last for ever. He may have also realized that after him the German foreign policy would follow a dangerous path, which could eventually destabilize the European continent.

## **2b. The 1890-1914 period**

During 1871-1890 Germany created alliances around her even if these were in many cases contradictory. The first error of the new Emperor occurred in 1889, when the Kaiser made an official visit to Ottoman Empire and declared that the Berlin-Baghdad railway was the major aim of German policy in Anatolia. This as already stated created concerns in Russia. However this time Great Britain was also concerned . The Middle East was important for Britain for two reasons: The first was the potential oil reserves of the region which at the time were not discovered but they were under search. Secondly the Suez Canal was an important gateway to the Empire in the Far East. Any German entry in the Middle East could eventually jeopardize Suez and this was something that Britain could not tolerate. However at that time Britain was still far away from France and Russia. The second error of German policy, under Chancellor Caprivi, was not to renew the “Three Emperors Pact”, although Russia

proposed to remain. For Caprivi the “Three Emperors Pact”, is “a weapon in the hands of Russia to destroy the Triple Alliance”.<sup>11</sup> The German decision in the Russian eyes is a new German policy which allows Austria-Hungary to penetrate in the Balkans and marginalize Russian interests. This development was associated with another development. Germany would stop the import of cheap Russian agricultural products. This decision was in reality a domestic affairs development. In 1890 Germany had three major social classes: The first was the wealthy Prussian Junkers which owned extensive land and properties. These were actually the old high class society from the feudal age. The second main social class were the industrialists and the bankers directly the outcome of the industrial revolution. The third class were the poor industrial workers and the small peasants. The Junkers wanted high food prices in order to have high profits and demanded the termination of the import of cheap Russian food products. This perspective created a night-mare to the industrialists; since any increase of food prices would force the syndicate workers to demand higher salaries. The low classes would also request higher salaries thus objected to this policy. In order to balance the demands the government decided to terminate Russian imports thus the Junkers were satisfied. In exchange the industrialists would secure high profits from the new Naval Orders which needed huge quantities of coal, steel and iron, and the working classes would receive a social state policy with pensions, an eight hour working day and free medical care and education. This was a social system which satisfied all classes but it had foreign policy ramifications. Russia needed cash in order to built its Siberian railway. Britain had no wish to provide this sum, since Russia can threat Persia (Iran) and Afghanistan the border of India. Only France was willing to finance large scale investments in Russia and thus France becomes pivotal for St. Petersburg. Facing a political and economic deadlock Russia realizes that France is the only power which can turn to it and provide a way out of the deadlock. France from the first time since 1870 is able to break the diplomatic deadlock and grasps the chance. Thus in 1891 a military alliance between Russia and France was signed which is ratified by 1893. According to the Treaty if France was invaded by an member of the Triple Alliance then Russia would intervene militarily. The same would occur if Russia was invaded.

Thus during the 1890-1893 period, in the first five years of Wilhelm II reign the first major change in the international system occurs. However Germany considers (correctly) that the Triple Alliance is stronger compared to the French-Russian one.

Britain at the time remains neutral since there are still major differences between British and Russian interests in central Asia, Iran and China and also major differences between Britain and France on Africa. As Kissinger (1994) remarks the British foreign policy had to answer the following dilemmas:

What would happen if Russia and France jointly decided to press Britain in Africa Afghanistan and China?

What would happen if Germany joined the French-Russian alliance and pressed Britain in south Africa?

Under these developments the British politicians started to reconsider the policy of the “Splendid Isolation”.<sup>12</sup> In 1893 Britain was certainly the greatest European power but it had to make a choice which alliance served the British interests? Germany was facing a similar problem. Would the British lion become an ally or an adversary?

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<sup>11</sup> See: Jean Dumont: “The First World War” History periodical, issue 74, August 1974, pp. 20-43.

<sup>12</sup> See: H. Kissinger: “Diplomacy”, Simon & Schuster 1994, p. 185.

The developments of the 1895-1904 period across Europe, Africa, America and Asia would change the international system. A nexus of accidental developments would trigger change. Both Germany and France attempted to draw the neutral Britain in their alliances. The first attempt towards Britain was made by Germany. In 1895 Wilhelm II pointed out that if Britain needed allies she had to abolish the neutral policy of isolation and provide security guarantees of Continental European type.<sup>13</sup> Thus Germany offered an alliance to Britain in her own terms. Kissinger (1994) points out that Germany should have asked for British neutrality in case of a European war but instead requested an open military alliance which Britain could not provide. This made Britain suspicious about the real German plans, which could seek global domination.<sup>14</sup>

In 1895, Germany was still an admirer of Britain. Its huge territorial expansion, colonies naval and economic power made Britain a model country for Germany. However in that same year the Kaiser pointed out that: "From the German Empire a global empire emerged. Everywhere ...the German people and German goods, German science, German industry reach beyond oceans. The value of German products transported by sea is of thousand millions. Gentlemen you have the duty to assist me in integrating the "greater" German Reich with the mother country".<sup>15</sup> This doctrine of German expansion triggered British concerns.

By 1896, Kaiser provoked Britain by sending a telegram to Paul Kruger, the leader of the Boers in Transvaal. Britain was already at war with the Boers during 1880-1881 with the First Boer War. In 1896 the Boers under Kruger, followed an anti British policy and attacked the local British forces of 88,000 men. For Britain the Second Boers War was a major problem. During 1899-1902 strong British military intervention ended the conflict.<sup>16</sup> However the Kaisers stance created another shadow in the German-British relations. But again Britain did not consider Germany an enemy. After all in July 1898 France and Britain had a dispute / crisis in Egypt (Fashoda Incident) and the disputes with Russia remained. In addition during the Second Boers War the French press condemned the British colonial policy as oppressing versus the liberal policy of France. Thus the Kaisers Telegram had no long term effect. However in March 1897 the German Admiral Tirpitz in a memorandum to Kaiser pointed out that: "For Germany, the most dangerous adversary today in the sea is England...our fleet must be between Heligoland and Thames". In 1898, Germany introduces the "First Naval Law". This introduced a seven year construction programme for the German Navy. According to the plan by 1905 the German fleet would have 19 dreadnoughts with heavy guns, 12 heavy and 30 smaller cruisers, 8 armored ships and other small vessels.<sup>17</sup> Two years later in 1900 Germany introduces the "Second Naval Law" and in 1901 Kaizer states: "The future of Germany lies in the sea". The British reaction was instant: "The Ocean can have only one leader".<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> See: H. Kissinger: "Diplomacy", Simon & Schuster 1994, p. 183.

<sup>14</sup> See: H. Kissinger: "Diplomacy", Simon & Schuster 1994, p. 183.

<sup>15</sup> See: A. Repaci: "Wilhelm II and the dream of Pangermanism", History periodical, issue 106, April 1977, pp. 34-41.

<sup>16</sup> See: J. H. Le Mai: "The Boers War", in the volume Parnell: "History of the 20<sup>th</sup> century", Gold Press, Athens 1974, volume 1, p. 21-27.

<sup>17</sup> See: L. V. Martin: "The Naval Antagonism starts", in the volume Parnell: "History of the 20<sup>th</sup> century", Gold Press edition, Athens 1974, volume 1, pp. 180-186.

<sup>18</sup> See: Jean Dumont: "The First World War" History periodical, issue 74, August 1974, pp. 20-43, p. 29-30. .

In Africa the British and the German interests clash. However Britain receives disappointing messages not only from Germany but from the French / Russian side as well. There are major disputes with France in Egypt, Sudan, Madagascar and Nigeria.<sup>19</sup> In 1893 in Asia another crisis erupts in Siam with France. With the Russians disputes continued. In 1896 the Russians planned to invade and occupy Constantinople due to perish of Christian population, between 1892-1896, (which continued until 1902). France supports Russian plans as long as Russia supports the French attack in Germany in order to re-occupy the Alsace Lorraine regions and perish British influence in Egypt.<sup>20</sup> Britain again saves the Ottoman Empire from the Russian threat but in 1897 a new crisis erupts due to the Greek-Turkish war. However Britain has conflicts with the USA as well. The US and British interests clash in Samoa in 1880, in Venezuela during 1895-1896. After the US-Spanish war of 1898 the US conquer the Philippines, Cuba and Puerto Rico. Between 1893-1902, Britain is pressed from all other major powers and has no idea with which she has to ally.<sup>21</sup> Finally in 1902 Britain signs an alliance with Japan and the “Splendid Isolation” is over. According to the Treaty both Britain and Japan agreed that if one of them was engaged in war in China or Korea with another power the other would remain neutral. However if one of them was attacked by two Powers the other would intervene. It was obvious that the Treaty was against Russia and France, but Britain was changing its mood towards Germany as well. By 1900 the balance of power was still in favor of the German-Austrian alliance.

TABLE 1: BALANCE OF POWER 1900 CONTINENTAL EUROPEAN POWERS

	France	Russia	Dual Entente	Germany	Austria-Hungary	Dual Central Powers	Italy	Triple Alliance
Population (in m.)	39	133	<b>172</b>	56	46.7	<b>102.7</b>	32.2	<b><u>134.9</u></b>
Defence spending (in m. \$)	139	204	<b>343</b>	168	68	<b>236</b>	78	<b><u>314</u></b>
Naval & Military personnel	715,000	1,119,000	<b>1,834,000</b>	524,000	385,000	<b>909,000</b>	255,000	<b><u>1,164,000</u></b>
Coal Production (in m. tones)	33.4	16.2	<b>49.6</b>	149.5	39	<b>188.5</b>	0.5	<b><u>189</u></b>
Steel Production (in m. tones)	1.5	2.2	<b>3.7</b>	6.3	1.1	<b>7.4</b>	0.11	<b><u>5.51</u></b>
Iron Production (in m. tones)	5,448	6,001	<b>11,449</b>	12,793	1,894	<b>14,687</b>	247	<b><u>14,934</u></b>
Energy consumption	47.9	30	<b>77.9</b>	112	29	<b>141</b>	5	<b><u>146</u></b>

<sup>19</sup> See: Thomas Pakenham: “The Scramble for Africa”, Abacus books, London, 1992.

<sup>20</sup> See: A.J. Taylor: “Great Britain and France 1898-1904” in the volume Parnell: “History of the 20<sup>th</sup> century”, Gold Press editionç, Athens 1974, volume 1, pp. 103-111.

<sup>21</sup> At the time the British cabinet was split with some ministers supporting an alliance with Germany and others with France. See: H. Kissinger: “Diplomacy”, Simon & Schuster 1994, p. 185-186 and A. Repaci: “Wilhelm II and the dream of Pangermanism”, History periodical, issue 106, April 1977, pp. 34-41, especially p. 39.

(m. tones of coal)								
Shipping (m. tons)	1,029	975	<b>2,004</b>	1,942	-	<b>1,942</b>	948	<b><u>2,890</u></b>

Sources: 1) P. Kennedy: "The First World War and the International Power System", in the volume: S.E. Miller (ed.): "Military Strategy and the Origins of the First World War", Princeton University Press, 1985, pp: 7-40, 2) P. Kennedy: "The Rise and Fall of Great Powers", Fontana Press, 1989, p. 257-259, 3) R.B. Mitchell: "International Historical Statistics-Europe 1750-2000", Palgrave 2003, 4) V. Kremmydas: "Introduction to the Economic History of Europe", Gnosi editions, Athens 1989, p. 343.

The data of Table 1 demonstrate that in 1900 the French-Russian alliance had a population of 172,000,000 and under arms 1,834,000 (1.06% of the population). However the economic foundation was weak. Coal production was 49,600,000 tones, steel production was 3,700,000 tons, iron production was 11,449,000 tones. The Triple Alliance on the other hand had a total population of 134,900,000 and under arms 1,164,000 (0.86% of the population). However it had a complete economic advantage with 189,000,000 tons of coal, 5,510,000 tons of steel, 14,934,000 tons of iron.

At that time Paris seeks to destabilize the Triple Alliance and the French effort is partially successful. In 1898 France seeks to improve economic and political relations with Italy and a new trade agreement is signed. In 1900 a second agreement is signed over colonial affairs. According to this Italy has the upper hand in Libya whereas France in Morocco. Then in 1902 Italy and France sign a secret treaty which points out that in case of French-German war Italy will remain neutral and in 1904 the French president makes an official visit in Rome and cements the new Italian-French relationship.<sup>22</sup> Germany monitors these developments with concern.

In addition France seeks an alliance with Britain. The first talks begin in 1903. On April 8<sup>th</sup> 1904, the two states finally sign the Entente Cordiale. This first agreement resolves economic and colonial matters. Britain recognizes that Morocco, Madagascar, Gambia and the regions east of Niger river are all in the French sphere of influence, and France recognizes the British influence in Egypt, and Sudan. Other disputed territories (Siam, Hebridean islands) were partially divided between the two powers.<sup>23</sup> However 1904 was important also for another reason that of the Russian-Japanese war which will finish in 1905 with the defeat of Russia and the capture of Port-Arthur, Manchuria and Mukden by Japan. In addition the Russian fleet is perished in the battle of Tsushima. The Japanese victory completed previous victories with the capture of Curilles islands (1875), the Korean Peninsula (1876), the victory against China (1894). Japan had also occupied the islands of Riukyuu (1879), Bonin (1880), Pescantores (1895), and Formosa (1895). These victories created an immense market for Japanese products and in 1899 Japan partially modified the trade agreements of 1853 with the Western Powers in favor of her interests. The US started to worry from the Japanese expansion. In addition the Russian-Japanese war and the Russian revolution of 1905 made both France and Germany to believe that Russia seized to be an important military and naval power. The Kaizer himself asked the question: "What did France achieve?" and the answer was "nothing". In 1905 it

<sup>22</sup> See: Jean Dumont: "The First World War" History periodical, issue 74, August 1974, pp. 20-43, p. 30.

<sup>23</sup> See: A.J. Taylor: "Great Britain and France 1898-1904" in the volume Parnell: "History of the 20<sup>th</sup> century", Gold Press editionç, Athens 1974, volume 1, pp. 103-111.



seemed that the attempt of France to regain power was perished. The French-Russian alliance proved un-successful; the French-British treaties had only economic and colonial importance and were not a military threat to the Central Powers. In addition the possibility of an understanding between Russia and Britain seemed impossible since Japan, Britain's main ally had been at war with Russia. Thus any French dreams of a potential British-Russian rapprochement seemed impossible. For Germany British reluctance to join the French-Russian alliance was associated with the strength of the new German navy and thus, the situation, was perfect for another crisis with France. This was to be a completely wrong assessment. The next French-German crisis started in Morocco.

According to the British-French treaty of April 8<sup>th</sup> 1904 Morocco was under the French influence. In the end of January 1905 a French mission reaches the capital of Morocco and proposes to the Sultan various political and economic reforms. The Sultan rejects the French proposals and Germany has the chance to intervene. In March 1905 the Kaiser himself goes to Tangiers and declares that the local Sultan is free and Morocco should be free to allow the entry of all foreign goods in the country. He also points out that Germany has legitimate interests in the country. As a result the crisis with France is immediate. Meanwhile the German High Command is ready for a pre-emptive war with France since the Russian power was minimized in the 1904-1905 war. However Chancellor von Bylov and foreign secretary von Holstein did not want a war all they wanted was an international conference believing that France would be humiliated. Practically this would perish the French-British agreement of April 8<sup>th</sup> 1904 and it would dissolve any future British-French potential cooperation.<sup>24</sup>

On June 6<sup>th</sup> 1905 the French Prime Minister accepted the German proposal for an international conference over Morocco but immediately all powers (Britain, USA, Spain) pointed that they would support France. The conference occurred in the Spanish town of Algehira between January 16<sup>th</sup> – April 7<sup>th</sup> 1906 and three sides were created. The first was Britain, France, Russia and Spain. The second was the US, Austria-Hungary and Italy and the third was Germany herself. Thus British-French relations remained strong and for the first time Britain and Russia were on the same side.<sup>25</sup> Finally in 1907, after immense French effort, the British-Russian relations are normalised. Russia accepts the British influence in Afghanistan and Britain accepts Russian influence in Turkmenistan. Iran is split in two zones one Russian and one British. Thus the Triple Entente is established.<sup>26</sup>

On January 15<sup>th</sup> 1906 the British Foreign Minister Sir Edward Grey and the British Defence Minister (at that time it was Secretary of War) Richard Haldane authorized secret Military Conversations with the French Generals. The talks were associated with the potential military assistance which Britain could provide to France in case of war. It was decided that a British Expeditionary Force would be transported to the Continent; however the Committee of Imperial Defence did not inform the British Parliament not even the Prime Minister or the Cabinet about the plans.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> See: D.S. Watt: "The first Morocco crisis", in the volume Parnell: "History of the 20<sup>th</sup> century", Gold Press editions, Athens 1974, Vol. 1, pp. 145-150.

<sup>25</sup> See: D.S. Watt: "The first Morocco crisis", in the volume Parnell: "History of the 20<sup>th</sup> century", Gold Press editions, Athens 1974, Vol. 1, pp. 145-150, especially p. 149.

<sup>26</sup> See: Jean Dumont: "The First World War" History periodical, issue 74, August 1974, pp. 20-43, p. 30 -31.

<sup>27</sup> See: David Owen: "The Hidden Perspective. The Military Conversations 1906-1914", Haus Publishing Ltd, London, 2014, p. 212.

During 1908-1914 many crises erupt. On October 6<sup>th</sup> 1908 Austria annexes the provinces of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which is partially inhabited by Serbs. The previous day Bulgaria declared complete independence from the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans requested reparations from Austria-Hungary and Austria accepted the request by granting 2 million sterling and accepting the construction of a railway line across Novi Pazar so that the Ottoman Empire continue to have some access to the Adriatic. Russia was aware of the Austrian moves. The Austrian Foreign Minister Airenthal had informed his Russian counterpart Isvolvsky about the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Russians accepted this by taking the promise from Austria that Vienna would allow the change of the Dardanelles Straits status, so that the Russian fleet could have access to the sea. However after the annexation Vienna had no desire to support the Russian plans. Russia cannot act since the defeat from Japan is still fresh. In January 1909, Austria-Hungary has the assurance of Germany that if a Russian-Austrian war erupts Germany will participate. This commitment would be fatal. With the support of Berlin Austria believes that a more aggressive policy in the Balkans is a real possibility. On February 27<sup>th</sup> 1909 Russia informed Serbia that there could be no support on the Bosnia issue and therefore Serbia had to accept the fiat accompli of annexation. By March 31<sup>st</sup> 1909 Serbia recognized that Bosnia was part of the Habsburg Empire. Italy reacts since it sees the annexation as a threat to the Adriatic and demands Montenegro to become an Italian satellite. Austria accepts the Italian demands and provides also economic concessions to Italy but immediately uses Albania as a force to press Italy. Albania demands that the Albanians who live in Montenegro must join the fatherland; thus pressing Italy.<sup>28</sup> The 1908 Bosnia crisis is considered by the Central Powers as another victory. The Austrian foreign minister points out that the port of Thessalonika is next. However in reality Vienna and Berlin fail to realize that their ally Italy is dissatisfied; Russia remains inert but St. Petersburg realizes that only the alliance with France and Britain can guarantee the Russian security. In addition the Slavic populations of the Balkans especially the Serbs see Austria as an aggressor and dream the liberation of the lands which are under Austrian rule.

In 1911 two more crises will occur. The first is the Second Crisis of Morocco. In January 1911 French citizens were assassinated and in April France sent 20,000 soldiers who occupied Casablanca and other towns. Germany on July 1<sup>st</sup> 1911 send also troops in order to protect the German citizens and firms which activated in the country. On July 20<sup>th</sup> Germany officially informed France that she will accept the French influence in the country only if Congo is annexed by Germany. France rejects the German proposal having the diplomatic support of Britain. After intense negotiations on November 4<sup>th</sup> 1911 a deal is reached. Germany accepts Morocco as a French protectorate and also gives to France a territory of 6,450 square miles from the German Cameroon. In exchange France gives to Germany all the south Cameroon a territory of 107,270 square miles.<sup>29</sup> This crisis is again considered by Berlin as a triumph. Germany accepted an existing status (that of Morocco) and gave 6,450 sq. miles of territory but received 107,270 sq. miles of territory. In reality this crisis is another proof to Britain that Germany seeks the status of the Global Power; thus Britain and France are coming even closer.

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<sup>28</sup> See: B. Smit: "The European crisis 1908-1909. The crisis of Bosnia", in the volume Parnell: "History of the 20<sup>th</sup> century", Gold Press editions, Athens 1974, Vol. 1, pp. 223-229.

<sup>29</sup> See: N. Medlicot: "The Agadir crisis", in the volume Parnell: "History of the 20<sup>th</sup> century", Gold Press editions, Athens 1974, Vol. 1, pp. 404-408.

The second crisis of 1911 is the Italian-Turkish war which started on September 29<sup>th</sup> and typically finished on October 15<sup>th</sup> 1912. The Ottomans were defeated and were forced to surrender to Italy Cyrenaica, Tripolis and the Dodecanese islands. The official termination of the Italian-Turkish war (30 September 1912) occurred when the First Balkan War had already begun with Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro fighting against the Ottoman Turkey. The war will deprive the Ottoman Empire from all its European territories with the exemption of Eastern Thrace. The Second Balkan War will follow against Bulgaria. The outcome of the two wars was a triumph for Greece which doubled its size and controlled the Aegean and for Serbia which made gains in the south. Albania was created as a state and Romania also increased its size.

The outcome of the Balkan wars is disappointing for Germany. To illustrate in his book 'I Believe' Dr. Friedrich von Keller a German diplomat of the legal department commented: "The momentum weakness of Austria forced her not to intervene and via Novi-Pazr (Turkish road between Serbia-Montenegro ending to Austria) to occupy Thessalonica. We lost a unique opportunity to have this port of the East in our hands. However the Macedonian territories which were taken from Turkey ...will be taken again because they are valuable to us. Both Thessalonica and Trieste must be the naval bases of the united and great German Empire in the Mediterranean".<sup>30</sup>

Meanwhile between 8-11 February 1912 the British Defence Minister visited Berlin. He had an hour private meeting with the German Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg. The main British request was associated with the development of the German Navy. The British insisted that if a British-German alliance was to occur a precondition was a reduction a German naval armaments. The German Chancellor was willing to reduce the German naval strength but both Admiral Tirpitz and the Kaiser rejected these plans. As a result the Chancellor pointed to the Kaiser: "to cause a war ourselves so long as ... our vital interests are not involved, that I would regard as a sin against Germany even if we could expect victory. But that too is not the case, at least on sea". After this the Kaiser agreed to make changes in the Navy Law.<sup>31</sup> The secret German-British talks continued and by March 14<sup>th</sup> 1912 a secret draft treaty was made. Under the provisions of the Treaty: "England will make no unprovoked attack upon Germany and pursue no aggressive policy towards her. Aggression upon Germany is not the subject and ...England is now...nor will she become a party to anything that has such an object".<sup>32</sup> For a moment it seemed that a new alliance between Britain and Germany could change the international relations. By March 19<sup>th</sup> 1912 the German side replied to the British draft proposal. For the German the British wording was a sign of conditional neutrality but Berlin wanted absolute neutrality from Britain. This request, however, could not be accepted by London. By the end of March any prospects of British-German rapprochement were perished.<sup>33</sup> It was obvious that the two sides could not find a common ground. The complete British support to France and Russia against Germany and her allies would have profound

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<sup>30</sup> See: F. N. Grigoriadis: "The First World War", History periodical, issue 5, November 1968, pp. 14-26 especially p. 17.

<sup>31</sup> See: David Owen: "The Hidden Perspective. The Military Conversations 1906-1914", Haus Publishing Ltd, London, 2014, p. 145.

<sup>32</sup> See: David Owen: "The Hidden Perspective. The Military Conversations 1906-1914", Haus Publishing Ltd, London, 2014, p. 154-155.

<sup>33</sup> See: David Owen: "The Hidden Perspective. The Military Conversations 1906-1914", Haus Publishing Ltd, London, 2014, p. 168.

effects. Both Paris and St. Petersburg would feel that they could pursue any foreign policy objective and with any means as long as they had British support. Thus Britain instead of being a balancer of the system transformed itself into a direct participant of continental European affairs. It was obvious that any future crisis would drag both sides in a conflict, with unimaginable consequences. The balance of power with the entry of Britain in the Entente and the exit of Italy from the Central Powers is demonstrated in Table 2.

TABLE 2: BALANCE OF POWER 1914 CONTINENTAL EUROPEAN POWERS

	France	Russia	Dual Entente	Britain	Triple Entente	Germany	Austria-Hungary	Dual Central Powers
Population (in m.)	39.6	167	<b>206.6</b>	46.4	<b><u>253</u></b>	67	49.9	<b><u>116.9</u></b>
GDP (in billion \$)	6	7	<b>13</b>	11	<b><u>24</u></b>	12	3	<b><u>15</u></b>
Defence spending (in m. \$)	197	441	<b>638</b>	384	<b><u>1,022</u></b>	442	182	<b><u>624</u></b>
Naval & Military personnel	910,000	1,300,000	<b>2,210,000</b>	532,000	<b><u>2,742,000</u></b>	891,000	444,000	<b><u>1,335,000</u></b>
Coal Production (in m. tones)	27.5	31.9	<b>59.4</b>	270	<b><u>329.4</u></b>	244.7	48.3	<b><u>293</u></b>
Steel Production (in m. tones)	2,802	4,466	<b>7,268</b>	7,971	<b><u>15,239</u></b>	13,810	2,611	<b><u>16,421</u></b>
Iron Production (in m. tones)	11,252	7,660	<b>18,912</b>	15,107	<b><u>34,019</u></b>	20,505	2,281	<b><u>22,786</u></b>
Energy consumption (m. tones of coal) for 1913	62.5	54	<b>116.5</b>	195	<b><u>311.5</u></b>	187	49.4	<b><u>236.4</u></b>
Shipping (m. tons) for 1913	2,201	974	<b>3,175</b>	18,696	<b><u>21,871</u></b>	5,082	-	<b><u>5,082</u></b>
Railway network length in km.	37,400	62,300	<b>99,700</b>	32,623	<b><u>132,323</u></b>	61,749	22,981	<b><u>84,730</u></b>

**Sources:** 1) P. Kennedy: "The First World War and the International Power System", in the volume: S.E. Miller (ed.): "Military Strategy and the Origins of the First World War", Princeton University Press, 1985, pp: 7-40, 2) P. Kennedy: "The Rise and Fall of Great Powers", Fontana Press, 1989, p. 314, 3) R.B. Mitchell: "International Historical Statistics-Europe 1750-2000", Palgrave 2003, 4) V. Kremmydas: "Introduction to the Economic History of Europe", Gnosti editions, Athens 1989, p. 343, 5) R. Cameron: "A Concise Economic History of the World. From Pre-Historic Times to the Present", Oxford, 1997, p. 206.

From the data of Table 2 we can see that the introduction of Britain to the Entente proved critical. To illustrate the Dual Entente (Russia and France) had a total GDP of \$13 billion as opposed to the \$15 billion of the Central Powers and this could change only with the British participation. Across all economic indicators the Dual Entente had complete inferiority. Coal production was 59,400,000 tons as opposed to 293,000,000 tons of the Central Powers. Steel Production was 7,268,000 tons as opposed to 16,421,000 tons of the Central Powers. Iron production was 18,912,000 tons as opposed to the 22,786,000 tons of the Central Powers. It was only the British participation which changed this economic disparity in favor of the Entente. In addition the British strength included the vast resources of the Empire. In 1914 British colonies were 13,692,252 square km and controlled the 24.9% of total global lands. The colonies had a population of almost 500 million. During the war India, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa, Egypt and other colonies would contribute immense quantities of raw materials and 4,314,000 men for the Armed Forces. Thus total British strength was overwhelming.

### **3. The July-August Crisis of 1914.**

Some months after the end of the Balkan wars on June 28<sup>th</sup> 1914 Serb conspirators murdered the heir of the Austro-Hungarian throne and his wife in Sarajevo. After this incident a month of unsuccessful diplomatic engagements terminated to a war situation. The “crisis management” of the era is extremely helpful even for the current world. The Kaiser noted in his memoirs: “After the arrival of the news of the assassination ...I abandoned the visit to Kiel...and went back home...upon my arrival at Potsdam I found the chancellor and the Foreign Office in conflict with the Chief of the General Staff; General von Moltke was of the opinion that war was certain ...whereas the other two stuck firmly to their view that things would not get to such a bad pass, that there would be some way of avoiding war...this dispute was steadily maintained. Not until General von Moltke announced that Russia had ... posted red mobilization notices did a light break upon the diplomats...”<sup>34</sup> The Germans always blamed the Russian mobilization of July 29<sup>th</sup> 1914 as the cause of the war. However on June 29<sup>th</sup> the developments which occurred after a month were not expected. Immediately after the assassination a bilateral Serbia-Austro-Hungarian crisis erupted and at that time there was no evidence that this would end to a world war. According to one source: “The last days of June, and the first week of July, were on the surface, comparatively calm. An outpouring of sympathy for Austria and its monarchy followed the initial shock of the assassination. In a parliamentary address on 30 June, Prime Minister Asquith, stated that Emperor Franz Joseph and his people have always been our friends. He spoke about the abhorrence of the crime and the profound sympathy of the British Parliament. In France President Poincare expressed his sincere condolences”. However after the assassination the Serbian media attacked Austria. As the British ambassador to Vienna Sir Maurice de Bunsen pointed out: “Serbian newspapers behave shamefully and virtually elevating the assassins to martyrs”.<sup>35</sup> This was something that Austria could not tolerate. Thus on July 5<sup>th</sup> the Austrian Emperor wrote a letter to the Kaiser pointing out that Austria would take decisive action against Serbia; a clear innuendo for war. On that day the German Kaiser told the Austrian ambassador that Austria could rely on Germany’s full

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<sup>34</sup> See: Ex Kaiser William II: “My Memoirs 1878-1918”, Cassell & Co. 1922, p: 240-242.

<sup>35</sup> See: G. Docherty & Jim Macgregor: “Hidden History. The secret origins of the First World War”, Mainstream Publishing, London, 2013, p. 253-254.

support. However at that time the German Emperor had been informed by his chancellor Bethmann Hollweg that “Britain would not involve herself in a Balkan crisis nor would Russia if it came to the point”. The following day Monday July 6<sup>th</sup> after repeating his own judgement to a number of military officers ...the Kaizer departed on the imperial yacht... for his annual cruise in Norwegian fjords. He was to be absent for three weeks...”.<sup>36</sup> Few days later Germany continued to believe that it had made the right decision. According to one source: “On 9 July the German ambassador to London, Prince Lichnowsky, was repeatedly assured by [British Foreign Minister] Grey that Britain had entered into no secret obligation that would come into play in the event of a European war...Grey said [that] he would be willing to persuade the Russian government to adopt a more peaceful and conciliatory attitude towards Austria”.<sup>37</sup> In the eyes of Germany any conflict between Austria and Serbia would remain local since the Entente would not interfere and short since Austria had complete superiority over Serbia. Between 9 and 19<sup>th</sup> of July an internal debate occurred in Austria-Hungary between the Austrian and the Hungarian officials as to what should be the Austrian response to Serbia. It was decided that an ultimatum should be handed to Serbia with tough requests. The turning point of the crisis was considered to be the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July 1914 when Vienna requested the compliance of Serbia with ten requests. The Austrian telegram would expire in 48 hours (by 18:00 o clock of July 25<sup>th</sup> 1914) and it requested the following:

- 1) The Serbian government had to close all the media which were engaged in anti-Austrian propaganda
- 2) The Serbian government had to terminate the operations of the NARODNA OBRANA (=National Defence) Organization
- 3) All school books should be re-written without any negative remark to Austria-Hungary
- 4) All officers and civil servants with anti-Austrian beliefs had to be made redundant
- 5) The Serbian authorities had to accept the participation of Austrian officials in the above procedures
- 6) A mixed legal inquest with Serbian and Austrian judges related to the assassination had to be made
- 7) The authorities had to arrest immediately majors Tankovich and Tsiganovitz as two of the main accountable individuals for the murder
- 8) The Serbian personnel in the Austrian-Serbian borders had to tighten the control and minimize any smuggling operations
- 9) The official Serbian diplomatic language was unacceptable and had to change
- 10) The Serbian government had to notify the Austrian government on the acceptance of the above demands.<sup>38</sup>

The Serbian government accepted all the Austrian demands with the exemption of number 6 which violated the Serbian constitution. The Serbian government pointed out that she was eager to engage to additional negotiations with Austria for a peaceful resolution under the auspices of the Hague convention of March 31<sup>st</sup> 1909. The Kaiser

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<sup>36</sup> See: John Keegan: “The First World War”, Pimlico, London, 1999, p. 60-61.

<sup>37</sup> See: G. Docherty & Jim Macgregor: “Hidden History. The secret origins of the First World War”, Mainstream Publishing, London, 2013, p. 259.

<sup>38</sup> See: S. Skodras: “History of the First World War”, Volume A, Kekrops editions, 1969, p. 60-61 and 102.

pointed to the Austrian Emperor that there was no need for further escalation (July 27th).

However, the Austrian ambassador departed from Belgrade and the break of the Austrian-Serbian diplomatic relations was a reality. In addition both countries ordered mobilization. On July 28<sup>th</sup> 1914 Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia having the support of Berlin. This was becoming a bilateral local conflict. At that day Berlin requested from Russia not to intervene in the local Balkan conflict.

Meanwhile between July 20-23<sup>rd</sup> the French President Poincaré had made an official visit to Russia and had discussed the crisis with the Russian side. The French had stressed that they would support Russian action in the Balkans and thus on July 24<sup>th</sup> when Serbia was facing the Austrian ultimatum Russia had started secretly the partial mobilization of 1,100,000 men, in the military districts of Odessa, Kiev, Moscow and Kazan and also the mobilization of Baltic and Black Sea fleets.<sup>39</sup> Russia declared that she will protect Serbia. On the weekend of 25-26 July the German ambassador in London requested urgent meetings in the Foreign Office asking for British intervention and requesting that London should not allow any Russian mobilization. During 24-29 July Germany received 28 intelligence reports which suggested that Russia had started its mobilization. The Danish Foreign Minister stated that Russia was mobilizing across Austrian and German borders. Being in the dark Berlin requested the intervention of Britain and the clarification of Russian intentions.<sup>40</sup> On July 29<sup>th</sup> Russia publicized its partial mobilization of the 13 Army Corps and in that day the Russian Emperor send a telegram to the Kaiser pointing out that Germany should interfere and stop the Austrian attack on Serbia. In that same day the Kaiser requested from Russia to abandon any mobilization plans. On 22:30 of that day (July 29th) the Russian emperor ordered the termination of the army mobilization contrary to its Army wishes. However by 15:00 o'clock of the next day (July 30) the Russian Emperor had ordered again full military mobilization under the pressure of the foreign minister and the military. On July 31<sup>st</sup> the Russian side informs Berlin that the mobilization cannot be stopped. On that same day the French Cabinet ordered full mobilization. In that day the British Foreign minister told to the Russian ambassador that Britain would intervene in case a European war erupted. This was exactly the opposite to what was stated to the German ambassador earlier.<sup>41</sup>

That was a turning point that Germany could not ignore. On August 1<sup>st</sup> Germany declares full mobilization and declares a war situation with Russia. On that day London says again to the German ambassador that has no plans to intervene, but next day (August 2) London demanded from Germany to respect the Belgian neutrality. On August 3 at 13:05 Germany declared war on France and on the night of the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> of August German forces invaded Belgium. On August 4<sup>th</sup> Britain declared war on Germany...

#### **4. Conclusion**

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<sup>39</sup> See: G. Docherty & Jim Macgregor: "Hidden History. The secret origins of the First World War", Mainstream Publishing, London, 2013, p. 280. Others point out that the Russian decision was made on the 25<sup>th</sup> of July. See: S. Skodras: "History of the First World War", Volume A, Kekrops editions, 1969, p. 99.

<sup>40</sup> See: G. Docherty & Jim Macgregor: "Hidden History. The secret origins of the First World War", Mainstream Publishing, London, 2013, p. 288-289.

<sup>41</sup> See: S. Skodras: "History of the First World War", Volume A, Kekrops editions, 1969, p. 149.

The crisis management of June-July 1914 is extremely helpful since we can understand the human error factor in case of international crisis. Both Austria and Russia had played a key role in the crisis. The crisis could have been resolved if the Austrian side had accepted the Serbian answer and had not started a war against Serbia. Germany had given a blank cheque to Austria for a bilateral war not for a broader conflict. However Russia and the other Entente Powers had used the Serajevo incident in order to wage war against the Central Powers.