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The treaties of Locarno (1925) are often seen as being the "high point" in the diplomatic relationship between Britain, France and Italy and their former wartime foe, Germany. They have been described as the real peace settlement at the end of the First World War, at which the German delegation was placed on equal footing with those from other nations, in notable contrast to the Paris Peace Conference six years earlier. That said, several generations of historians have been increasingly critical about the significance and the long-term legacy of the treaties, seeing them as failures, as features of 1920s European international history that promised much but which did not live up to expectations. Much of the narrative has focused on the dynamics of the personal relationship between the respective foreign ministers from Britain, France and Germany, Austen Chamberlain, Aristide Briand and Gustav Stresemann. Another strand has been concerned with the failure of the treaties of Locarno to prevent the outbreak of war in Europe in September 1939, to contain the territorial ambitions of the fascist dictators who chose to operate outside the terms of the treaties.

In October 2024, an international conference entitled *Centenary of the Locarno Treaties and Collective Security Policy in Europe: Reality – Reflection – Reassessment – Re-establishment?* was held in Pilsen, co-organized by the German Historical Institute Warsaw, Charles University Prague, Philipps-University Marburg, and the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen. The conference was intended to commemorate the significance of the Locarno Conference for collective security in Europe in the 1920s. The conference brought together experts in modern and economic history, international relations, and political science, and over the course of two days, there were some very interesting contributions, both from keynote speakers (Erik Goldstein, whose lecture dealt with Locarno and British Grand Strategy, and Peter Jackson, who spoke about French strategy and diplomacy between the two world wars), as well as in the form of classic conference contributions covering a wide range of topics, including, for

example, the policy of the British dominions and the Locarno Conference (Jaroslav Valkoun), the policy of Poland and Józef Piłsudski on the issue of collective security (Jerzy Gaul), the impact of the Locarno Agreements on Franco-Hungarian relations (Krisztián Bene), and the question of the Locarno Pact and its impact on the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (Srđan Mićić).

Based on mutual agreement, a special issue of the international scientific journal West Bohemian Historical Review was published, bringing together 11 articles based on the conference, which offered a variety of perspectives not only on the important conference on collective security, but also on broader aspects of European politics in the interwar period.

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The Impact of the Locarno Treaties on Franco-Hungarian Relations during the Interwar Period

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This study explores the shifting nature of Franco-Hungarian relations in the interwar period, with particular attention to the impact of the Locarno Treaties. While France and Hungary had been on opposing sides during the First World War, early postwar attempts at rapprochement failed, and the Treaty of Trianon entrenched their antagonism. The signing of the Locarno Treaties in 1925 initially reinforced this division, but in the second half of the 1920s a cautious thaw began. France, increasingly concerned by German revisionism, viewed Hungary as a potential partner, while Hungarian elites sought to balance their diplomatic orientation. Yet the French refusal to support Hungarian revisionist claims, combined with France's weakened position in Central Europe, led to a renewed estrangement by the mid-1930s. This article argues that the Locarno framework, while encouraging some superficial improvement in bilateral relations, ultimately failed to foster lasting cooperation, as deeper structural and strategic contradictions between the two states prevailed.

[Locarno Treaties; Franco-Hungarian Relations; Interwar Diplomacy; Revisionism; Central Europe]

Introduction

The interwar period marked a complex and often contradictory phase in Franco-Hungarian relations. Following their adversarial positions in the First World War, the diplomatic landscape of the early 1920s was defined by deep mistrust and strategic divergence.[2] France emerged from the war with a network of Central and Eastern European allies – Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes – whom it supported politically and militarily in order to contain

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2 G-H. SOUTOU, *La Grande Illusion. Comment la France a perdu la paix 1914–1920*, Paris 2019, pp. 305–368.

Germany and Bolshevik Russia.[3] Hungary, severely weakened and territorially diminished by the Treaty of Trianon, found itself diplomatically isolated and hostile to this French-sponsored order.[4]

The 1925 Locarno Treaties, which cemented the Western European security system, appeared at first to deepen this marginalisation.[5] However, the long-term consequences of Locarno were more ambiguous. As Germany began to reassert its presence in Central Europe, France reconsidered its strategic options, leading to a cautious rapprochement with Hungary.[6] Hungarian leaders, notably Prime Minister István Bethlen, were receptive to these overtures, motivated both by pragmatic concerns about German dominance and the hope of loosening the post-Trianon status quo.[7]

This article examines the Franco-Hungarian relationship from the end of the First World War through the late 1930s, analysing the diplomatic, economic and cultural dimensions of their interactions. It argues that the rapprochement encouraged by the Locarno framework ultimately failed, as the structural contradictions in their foreign policy goals – particularly regarding territorial revision – proved insurmountable.

Franco-Hungarian Relations before 1918

In the decades leading up to the First World War, Franco-Hungarian relations were primarily determined by the larger diplomatic architecture of Europe, rather than any direct bilateral agenda. Hungary, as an integral part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, was bound to Germany through the Triple Alliance, while France, seeking to counter German power, was firmly aligned with Russia and later with Britain. Within this framework, Hungary was rarely treated as a sovereign foreign policy actor. Instead, French policymakers viewed the Dual Monarchy as a whole – often through the prism of its partnership with Germany – and paid relatively

3 S. BERSTEIN (ed.), *Ils ont fait la paix. Le traité de Versailles vu de France et d'ailleurs*, Paris 2018, pp. 209–228.

4 M. ORMOS, *Magyarország a két világháború korában (1914–1945)*, Debrecen 1998, pp. 369–386.

5 M. ORMOS – I. MAJOROS, *Európa a nemzetközi küzdőtéren*, Budapest 1998, pp. 313–316.

6 N. JORDAN, The Reorientation of French Diplomacy in the Mid-1920s: The Role of Jacques Seydoux, in: *The English Historical Review*, 117, 2002, pp. 884–888.

7 S. BETHLEN, The Danube States and the Tardieu Plan, in: *Political Science Quarterly*, 47, 1932, pp. 352–352.

little attention to the internal political dynamics between Austria and Hungary.[8]

Nevertheless, this relative neglect did not imply total indifference. Events in Hungary occasionally piqued the interest of French diplomatic circles, particularly when they appeared to signal a potential divergence from Vienna's foreign policy course. One such moment came during the Hungarian constitutional crisis of 1905–1906, when a coalition of opposition parties challenged the imperial government's pro-German orientation. In Paris, this raised hopes – however fleeting – that Hungary might assert greater political independence and even contemplate a reorientation toward the Entente. The prospect of prying Hungary away from the Germanic bloc appealed to some French observers who viewed the Monarchy's internal fissures as an opportunity to weaken the alliance system of the Central Powers. However, the reality proved disappointing. The Hungarian opposition, despite its early momentum, failed to bring about any lasting shift in foreign policy or state structure. Imperial authority was soon reasserted, and the Monarchy's alignment with Germany remained unshaken. For France, this dashed any remaining illusions about Hungary's capacity or willingness to act autonomously within the framework of Austro-Hungarian diplomacy.[9]

As a result, French attitudes toward Hungary began to harden. Among political elites, journalists, and scholars, a dominant narrative took shape that cast the Hungarian ruling class as a reactionary force – deeply conservative, hostile to national minorities (particularly Slavs), and rigidly committed to the preservation of the imperial system. Hungarian politicians' repeated declarations in favour of maintaining the territorial integrity of the Monarchy, even as nationalist movements gained traction across Central Europe, only reinforced French suspicions. In this context, Paris saw little strategic or moral value in cultivating direct relations with Budapest.[10]

8 I. MAJOROS, Magyarország, a magyarság 19. századi képe Franciaországban, in: M. BODÓ (ed.), *Magyarország-kép Franciaországban*, Budapest 2022, pp. 188–189.

9 Z. GARADNAI, Magyarország a Rajna túloldaláról nézve: A francia közgondolkodás, világháborúk, forradalmak: győztesek és vesztesek (1900–1956), in: M BODÓ (ed.), *Magyarország-kép Franciaországban*, Budapest 2022, pp. 230–231.

10 G. KECSKÉS D., Paradigmaváltás Párizsban: Franciaország Kelet-Közép-Európa politikájának átalakulása az első világháború idején, in: I. NÉMETH (ed.), *Az első világháború, 1914–1918: Tanulmányok és dokumentumok*, Budapest 2014, pp. 187–189.

Yet despite this diplomatic distance, the First World War brought French and Hungarian forces into direct, if episodic, military contact. This military dimension of Franco-Hungarian relations during the war has long been underestimated. While it is true that the two countries were separated by geography and lacked a shared border, their respective armed forces clashed in several theatres, from the Adriatic Sea to the Balkans, from the Dardanelles to northern France. These engagements were usually mediated through larger coalition operations – France fighting alongside Britain, and Hungary as part of the Austro-Hungarian effort within the German-dominated Central Powers.[11]

Hungarian troops were involved in supporting German operations on the Western Front, particularly through the deployment of Austro-Hungarian heavy artillery units during the sieges of fortified cities like Namur, Maubeuge, and Antwerp. These contributions, though small in scale, were part of broader efforts to bolster the German war effort in France and Belgium. Later in the war, as the Central Powers faltered under Allied pressure, Hungarian units were once again sent westward to aid in desperate defensive actions.[12] Elsewhere, in the Adriatic, the Austro-Hungarian navy engaged French and British forces in repeated clashes – most notably during the Battle of the Otranto Straits in 1917, where Admiral Miklós Horthy's fleet achieved temporary success against the Allied naval blockade.[13] The air war also saw Hungarian and French pilots confront each other, particularly on the Italian front, where both nations deployed growing air contingents. And in the eastern Mediterranean, Austro-Hungarian artillery units supported Ottoman forces during the failed Entente assault on the Dardanelles, in which French troops suffered heavy losses.[14]

Perhaps more surprisingly, Hungarian nationals also served in the French armed forces. Archival research now makes it possible to identify at least 263 individuals born in the Kingdom of Hungary who enlisted

11 K. BENE, Francia–magyar katonai kapcsolatok Szarajevótól Trianonig, in: B. RESS – J. BALI – L. KULCSÁR et al. (eds.), *Ibolyától krizantémig 1867–1920*, Budapest 2021, pp. 224–230.

12 T. BALLA, Magyar katonák a Nagy Háború nyugati frontján, in: I. GYÁNTI – L. KULT (eds.), *Tanulmányok Ódor Imre emlékére*, Pécs 2018, pp. 46–55.

13 J. SZIJJ (ed.), *Magyarország az első világháborúban. Lexikon A–Zs*, Budapest 2000, pp. 507–508.

14 L. OLASZ, A Császári és Királyi Légjáró Csapatok az I. világháborúban, in: *Belvedere Meridionale,* 29, 2017, pp. 5–19.

in the French military, often in the Foreign Legion. While many of these volunteers were ethnic minorities – especially from Czech, Slovak, or German backgrounds – a portion were Hungarian by nationality. Their motivations were diverse: some were driven by ideological opposition to the Monarchy, others by economic necessity or a desire to escape internment conditions in France.[15] Whatever their reasons, their presence complicates the binary image of absolute enmity between France and Hungary.

All these encounters – whether as adversaries on the battlefield or as individuals fighting for the opposing side – reveal a deeper and more textured reality. The Franco-Hungarian wartime relationship was not solely one of antagonism. It was also marked by fragmented but meaningful contact, both martial and human, across a range of geographies and experiences.

By 1917, however, France's official stance toward Hungary had grown increasingly adversarial. The collapse of the Eastern Front following the Bolshevik Revolution deprived France of its Russian ally and heightened the need for new partners in Central and Eastern Europe. At the same time, the enduring threat of a German resurgence led French leaders – particularly Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau – to embrace the dismantling of Austria-Hungary as a key postwar objective.[16] The establishment of the *Comité d'études* in 1917, tasked with envisioning a new European order, confirmed this shift in thinking.[17] Its recommendations favoured the recognition of Slavic and Romanian national claims and called into question the legitimacy of Hungary's historical frontiers.[18]

This change in strategic posture was reinforced by effective lobbying from exile politicians – especially Czechs and South Slavs – who convinced many in Paris that the breakup of the Monarchy would serve the cause of peace, democracy, and French security. The emerging consensus among French policymakers was that Hungary's post-imperial claims could be disregarded, especially if this facilitated the creation of

15 K. BENE, Hasznos ellenségek? A francia hadsereg magyar tagjai az első világháborúban, in: G. BÖHM – D. CZEFERNER – T. FEDELES (eds), *Pécsi Tudományegyetem Bölcsész Akadémia 3.*, Pécs 2019, pp. 34–60.

16 KECSKÉS D., *Paradigmaváltás Párizsban*, pp. 189–197.

17 O. LOWCZYK, *La fabrique de la paix. Du Comité d'études à la conférence de la paix, l'élaboration par la France des traités de la Première Guerre mondiale*, Paris 2010, pp. 17–34.

18 E. BOULINEAU, Un géographe traceur de frontières: Emmanuel de Martonne et la Roumanie, in*: L'Espace géographique*, 30, 2001, pp. 358–369.

strong anti-German buffer states in the region. Hungary was no longer seen as a viable interlocutor or regional partner. Instead, it was cast as a vanquished power whose borders could be redrawn in the service of a new Central European order dominated by Slavic and Romanian allies.[19]

The absence of meaningful wartime diplomacy, combined with the trauma of defeat and the reality of postwar occupation, ensured that Franco-Hungarian relations would begin the interwar period in a state of mutual estrangement and enduring grievance. The diplomatic marginalization and military sidelining of Hungary throughout the war – and particularly during the postwar settlement – ensured that Franco-Hungarian relations would begin the interwar period under a cloud of mutual suspicion and resentment.[20] In Hungary, France would long be remembered not as a distant wartime adversary, but as the architect of a national tragedy.[21]

The Treaty of Trianon and the Collapse of Trust

The Treaty of Trianon, signed on 4 June 1920, marked a pivotal rupture in Hungarian history, not only reshaping the country's borders but also leaving a deep psychological wound that endures in Hungarian collective memory. To understand the background of the treaty – and its place in Franco-Hungarian relations – it is necessary to recall the political upheaval and military collapse that followed Hungary's defeat in the First World War.

Hungary, part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy since the Compromise of 1867, entered the war under the reign of Emperor Franz Joseph, later succeeded by Charles IV. The Central Powers' defeat led to a series of armistices in the autumn of 1918.[22] On the home front, the military collapse triggered a revolutionary wave: the Aster Revolution of October 28–31, 1918, swept away the old order. The revolutionaries, supported by returning soldiers, demanded Hungary's independence from Austria. Emperor Charles, recognizing the inevitability of change, appointed Count

19 J-A., DE SÉDOUY, *Ils ont refait le monde 1919–1920. Le traité de Versailles*, Paris 2017, pp. 92–98.

20 KECSKÉS D., *Paradigmaváltás Párizsban*, pp. 204–207.

21 M. ORMOS, Bűnbakkeresés/szerecsenmosdatás – a nyugati világban (20–21. század), in: Gy. GYARMATI – I. LENGVÁRI – A. PÓK et al. (eds.), *Bűnbak minden időben. Bűnbakok a magyar és az egyetemes történelemben*, Pécs, Budapest, 2013, p. 79.

22 T. HAJDU, A padovai fegyverszüneti és a belgrádi katonai egyezmény, in: I. ROMSICS (ed.) *Magyarország az első világháborúban*, Budapest 2010, pp. 175–176.

Mihály Károlyi as prime minister. Károlyi soon declared the Hungarian Democratic Republic on 16 November 1918.[23]

However, the new republic proved short-lived. Amid growing foreign pressure and territorial demands by Hungary's neighbours, Károlyi's government resigned in March 1919. In its place, a Soviet-style regime – the Hungarian Soviet Republic – was proclaimed under the leadership of Béla Kun.[24] Kun's government, in a bid to reclaim lost territories, created a Red Army and launched military operations, particularly in Slovakia. Though initially successful, the Hungarian forces were decisively repelled by a Romanian counteroffensive, leading to the collapse of the communist regime by August 1919.[25]

What followed was a restoration of the Hungarian Kingdom, paradoxically reestablished without a reigning monarch. The country became a regency under former Austro-Hungarian admiral Miklós Horthy. Despite initial efforts by the exiled Charles IV to reclaim the throne, Hungarian political elites – fearing regional instability and international backlash – prevented his return. By 1921, the Habsburg dynasty was formally dethroned. Under Horthy's regency, Hungary was summoned to Paris in late 1919 to negotiate peace.[26] The Hungarian delegation, led by Count Albert Apponyi, arrived in January 1920. However, the delegation was given no real opportunity to negotiate: confined to their hotel under police guard, they were effectively excluded from the drafting process. Apponyi was permitted a single speech, delivered on 16 January, in which he contested the draft treaty and defended Hungary's territorial integrity using ethnic maps and demographic statistics to argue that the proposed borders violated the Wilsonian principle of national self-determination.[27]

Despite Apponyi's efforts, the peace terms remained unchanged.[28] Some Allied leaders – especially from Britain and Italy – expressed reservations about the severity of the settlement. Yet it was the French

23 M. NÁNAY, Az őszirózsás forradalom és közvetlen előzményei, in: L. GULYÁS (ed.), *A trianoni békediktátum története hét kötetben. Trianon Nagy Háború alatti előzményei, az Osztrák–Magyar Monarchia bukása 1914–1918*, Szeged 2019, pp. 496–504.

24 M. ORMOS, *Padovától Trianonig 1918–1920*, Budapest 1984, pp. 205–227.

25 I. RAVASZ, *Magyarország és a Magyar Királyi Honvédség a XX. századi világháborúban 1914–1945*, Debrecen 2003, pp. 31–34.

26 I. ROMSICS, *Magyarország története a XX. században*, Budapest 2001, pp. 132–141.

27 M. ÁDÁM – M. ORMOS (eds.), *Francia diplomáciai iratok a Kárpát-medence történetéről 1919–1920*, Budapest 2004, pp. 184–193.

28 K. KAPRONCZAY, A trianoni békeszerződés egyik aláírója: Benárd Ágoston, in: *Valóság,* 61, 2018, p. 19.

government, firmly aligned with the interests of Hungary's neighbours (notably Romania and Czechoslovakia), that resisted any substantive modification. Instead, French Prime Minister Alexandre Millerand issued an annexed "cover letter" to the treaty, expressing vague assurances that France would support later bilateral agreements aimed at correcting some of the treaty's most egregious ethnic and economic injustices. These promises, however, had no binding legal status.[29] Armed with these reassurances, Hungarian representatives Alfréd Drasche-Lázár and Ágost Benárd signed the Treaty of Trianon on 4 June 1920 at the Grand Trianon Palace in Versailles.[30]

The consequences of the treaty were catastrophic. Hungary lost two-thirds of its prewar territory, shrinking from 325,411 to 93,028 square kilometres. It was deprived of all access to the sea, most of its mineral wealth, and five of its ten largest cities. Approximately 3.3 million ethnic Hungarians found themselves outside the new national borders, effectively transformed into minorities overnight. Romania acquired eastern Banat, southern Máramaros, the Partium, and Transylvania – over 100,000 square kilometres of land inhabited by five million people, including 1.66 million Hungarians. Czechoslovakia gained Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia, with 3.5 million inhabitants, including 880,000 Hungarians. The border adjustments paid little heed to the principle of self-determination, despite its rhetorical prominence in Wilsonian discourse. Strategic and economic considerations prevailed. While the new, drastically reduced Hungary became more ethnically homogeneous – 88.4% of its population now identified as Hungarian – this was scant consolation for what was widely seen as a national dismemberment.[31]

The political fallout was swift and enduring. All Hungarian political parties and most of the population, including ethnic Hungarians in the successor states, rejected the treaty and called for its revision. Thus, the Treaty of Trianon was not merely a diplomatic document; it became a national trauma, the defining political and emotional event of 20th century Hungarian history. It continues to shape Hungary's foreign relations, internal politics, and collective memory.[32]

29 M. ZEIDLER, *A revíziós gondolat*, Budapest 2001, p. 31.
30 P. BIHARI, *Kérdések és válaszok az első világháborúról*, Budapest 2013, p. 74.
31 I. ROMSICS, *A trianoni békeszerződés*, Budapest 2007, pp. 145–162.
32 G. EGRY – K. IGNÁCZ – P. KONOK – B. SIPOS, *Kérdések és válaszok a Horthy-korról*, Budapest 2015, pp. 61–62.

In sum, the Treaty of Trianon represented more than just a punitive settlement: it was the institutional expression of a strategic rupture between France and Hungary. The political trust that might have allowed for rapprochement in the immediate postwar years was decisively broken, setting the stage for a decade of mutual suspicion and limited interaction.

The Period of a Cautious Approach (1920–1925)

The period between 1920 and 1925 marked a complex and transitional phase in Franco-Hungarian relations, shaped decisively by the post-war settlement and the broader reconfiguration of Central and Eastern Europe. While France emerged from the First World War as one of the principal architects of the new European order, Hungary was cast in the role of a defeated and dismembered state, forced to accept the harsh terms of the Treaty of Trianon in June 1920. This asymmetrical relationship formed the backdrop to the difficult and often strained diplomatic interactions of the early 1920s.

From the French perspective, Hungary's irredentist aspirations and revisionist propaganda posed a potential threat to the fragile stability of the new European system. France had committed itself to defending the integrity of the successor states – particularly Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania – which had received significant territorial gains at Hungary's expense. As a result, Hungary was perceived in Paris not merely as a vanquished adversary but as a potential destabilizer of the peace. This perception translated into a deliberate policy of diplomatic isolation. France maintained only minimal official relations with Hungary in the immediate post-Trianon years, preferring to channel its political and military support toward the so-called Little Entente alliance.[33] Created with French encouragement in 1921, the Little Entente was a trilateral pact between Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia, explicitly aimed at containing any revisionist moves by Hungary. France played a key role not only in facilitating the alliance but also in providing it with diplomatic backing and, later, military guarantees. For Hungary, this amounted to a strategic encirclement that severely limited its room for manoeuvre on the international stage.[34]

Yet the story of Franco-Hungarian relations during this period is not one of unremitting hostility or complete rupture. The Hungarian

33 M. ORMOS, A francia politikusok magyarságképe, in: *História*, 20, 1998, pp. 25–28.
34 M. ÁDÁM, *A kisantant és Európa 1920–1929*, Budapest 1989, pp. 39–92.

leadership, particularly under Prime Minister István Bethlen from 1921 onward, gradually pursued a strategy of cautious reintegration into the international community. Bethlen's foreign policy aimed to rehabilitate Hungary's international image, moderate its revisionist rhetoric, and cultivate pragmatic relations with the Western powers, including France.[35]

One important development in this regard was Hungary's admission to the League of Nations in 1922. Though largely symbolic, this step marked a formal end to Hungary's diplomatic quarantine and was tacitly accepted by France, despite initial reservations. Moreover, the French government, while still fundamentally committed to the status quo, began to recognize the limitations of permanent isolation as a viable long-term policy toward Hungary.[36]

At the same time, economic considerations began to play a more significant role in bilateral relations. Hungary, grappling with the consequences of war, dismemberment, and inflation, sought foreign loans and investment. France, though cautious, showed some interest in economic engagement, especially through private investors and banking circles. While French capital remained less influential than that of Britain or the United States in Hungary during this period, these early contacts laid the groundwork for more substantial economic ties in the late 1920s.[37]

Culturally, the two nations maintained a level of mutual curiosity and elite exchange, even in the absence of close political alignment. French intellectuals and journalists continued to monitor developments in Hungary, albeit often through the prism of the Trianon settlement and the dangers of nationalism. Conversely, many Hungarian elites still looked to France as a model of cultural prestige and political modernity, even if official relations remained cool.[38]

In sum, the period between 1920 and 1925 was characterized by a tense coexistence. France viewed Hungary as a revisionist power to be contained, while Hungary sought ways to escape its diplomatic isolation and gain recognition from the Western powers. Though profound political differences persisted, signs of cautious engagement – particularly after 1922 – hinted at the potential for a gradual normalization of relations.

35 G. KECSKÉS D., Egy befolyásszerzési kísérlet anatómiája. Franciaország Kelet-Közép-Európa politikája az 1920-as években, *Külügyi Szemle*, 14, 2015, pp. 106–107.
36 M. ZEIDLER, Magyarok a Nemzetek Szövetségében, in: *Limes*, 21, 2008, pp. 252–254.
37 I. ROMSICS, A brit külpolitika és a „magyar kérdés", 1914–1946, in: *Századok*, 130, 1996, pp. 297–298.
38 GARADNAI, pp. 233–234.

This delicate balancing act would continue into the second half of the decade, setting the stage for a more complex and nuanced phase in Franco-Hungarian diplomacy.

Locarno and Its Diplomatic Implications

The signing of the Locarno Treaties in October 1925 marked a turning point in the postwar European order, but one whose implications for Central and Eastern Europe – and Hungary in particular – were ambiguous from the outset. While heralded in Western Europe as a triumph of reconciliation and security, Locarno was received in Budapest with cautious optimism tempered by geopolitical scepticism. The absence of any comparable security guarantees for Eastern Europe underscored Hungary's marginal position in the new diplomatic architecture and exposed a critical flaw in France's regional strategy.[39]

At its core, the Locarno framework centred on the Western powers. Germany, France, and Belgium mutually guaranteed their borders, while Britain and Italy pledged to uphold this arrangement. Germany's reintegration into the League of Nations and the spirit of détente that followed created the impression of a more stable continent. However, Germany refused to extend similar guarantees to its eastern neighbours, leaving Czechoslovakia and Poland vulnerable and the entire Central European security system exposed.[40]

For Hungary, the Locarno Treaties had a dual significance. On the one hand, they offered an indirect opportunity: if Western borders were now settled and protected, the eastern frontier – drawn at Trianon and not covered by any equivalent multilateral guarantees – might one day be revised. Indeed, Hungarian political elites interpreted the asymmetry of the Locarno framework as a potential opening for future diplomatic manoeuvring. The lack of a formal commitment to the territorial status quo in Eastern Europe weakened the legal and moral authority of the Trianon system.[41]

On the other hand, the Locarno agreements further entrenched Hungary's isolation in the short term. France's primary focus remained on its

39 P. O. COHRS, The First "Real" Peace Settlements after the First World War: Britain, the United States and the Accords of London and Locarno, 1923–1925, in: *Contemporary European History*, 12, 2003, pp. 22–31.

40 ÁDÁM, *A kisantant*, pp. 233–235.

41 A. IRK, A keleti Locarno és a trianoni békediktátum, in: *Jogtudományi Közlöny*, 61, 1926, pp. 81–82.

western frontier and its relationship with Germany, and its commitments to the Little Entente continued to take precedence over any rapprochement with Hungary. As a result, Hungary remained excluded from regional security arrangements and economic cooperation initiatives spearheaded by France.[42]

The French government, for its part, failed to grasp the longer-term implications of Locarno for its Eastern European allies. By refusing to push for equivalent security guarantees in the East, France unintentionally undermined the very alliance network it had built after the war. The Little Entente countries viewed the Locarno system with increasing suspicion, fearing abandonment. Hungary, meanwhile, saw in it the first glimmer of diplomatic flexibility in an otherwise rigid peace settlement.[43]

Despite these undercurrents, Franco-Hungarian relations remained largely stagnant in the immediate aftermath of Locarno. Political dialogue was minimal, economic ties were weak, and cultural exchange was still in its infancy. It was not until the late 1920s that the two countries began to tentatively explore a thaw in relations – a shift driven less by the spirit of Locarno itself than by new geopolitical pressures and internal recalibrations in both Paris and Budapest.[44]

Nonetheless, the symbolic and legal implications of the Locarno Treaties remained significant. They opened a conceptual space in which Hungary could imagine, and later pursue, revisions to the Treaty of Trianon. At the same time, Locarno revealed France's limited capacity – or willingness – to maintain a consistent policy in both Western and Eastern Europe. This inconsistency would become increasingly apparent as the economic crisis deepened, and Germany reasserted itself in Central Europe.

Franco-Hungarian Rapprochement (1926–1932)

By the late 1920s, a cautious thaw in Franco-Hungarian relations began to take shape, driven by shifting geopolitical concerns and mutual recognition of the limits of isolation. On the French side, the increasing assertiveness of German foreign policy under Gustav Stresemann raised concerns in Paris about the stability of Central Europe. On the Hungarian

42 KECSKÉS D., *Egy befolyásszerzési kísérlet,* pp. 110–111.

43 J-P. NAMONT, La Petite Entente, un moyen d'intégration de l'Europe centrale?, in: *Bulletin de l'Institut Pierre Renouvin*, 15, 2009, pp. 49–52.

44 G-H. SOUTOU, Réflexions sur l'échec de la sécurité collective et ses raisons, in: *Transversalités*, 30, 2011, pp. 178–186.

side, political leaders – particularly Prime Minister István Bethlen – recognized the dangers of overreliance on Germany and sought to diversify Hungary's international relations. Although France had spent much of the early 1920s supporting the Little Entente and maintaining a policy of distance from Hungary, the atmosphere began to change following the stabilization of Hungary's domestic political situation and its reintegration into the international community. The growing French interest in the Danube basin and Hungary's pragmatic foreign policy under Bethlen converged in a series of diplomatic and cultural overtures. While France did not abandon its alliance commitments to Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia, it became increasingly open to limited rapprochement with Budapest, particularly in cultural and economic affairs.[45]

The visit of Prime Minister Bethlen to Paris in 1929 was a symbolic and substantive milestone. While it did not result in any dramatic breakthroughs, it marked the first serious diplomatic engagement between the two countries since the signing of the Treaty of Trianon. Bethlen's meetings with senior French politicians, including Foreign Minister Aristide Briand, created a more favourable atmosphere for dialogue and paved the way for modest but meaningful cooperation in the cultural and economic spheres. This period also witnessed France's growing willingness to receive Hungarian officials and public figures, such as Kuno Klebelsberg, Minister of Religion and Public Education, whose policies had a strong francophile orientation.[46]

One of the most significant outcomes of this period was the expansion of cultural ties. The number of Hungarian students studying in France increased dramatically – from just two in the academic year 1921–1922 to over 300 by 1930–1931. In December 1929, a French-language newspaper, Gazette de Hongrie, began publication in Budapest, serving both as a vehicle for cultural diplomacy and as a signal of Hungary's openness to French influence. That same year, a Hungarian Cultural Institute (Institut Hongrois) was established in Paris, though its operations were constrained by the deepening economic crisis and remained limited to educational coordination. French interest in Hungarian culture and history also expanded, and institutions such as the Institut Français

45 ORMOS – MAJOROS, *Európa*, pp. 315–316.

46 I. TÓTH, Nyugat-Magyarország és Burgenland a német külpolitikában (1922–1939), in: *Századok,* 138, 2004, p. 1341; I. ROMSICS, Bethlen István külpolitikája 1921–1931, in: *Századok,* 124, 1990, pp. 608–611.

in Budapest became increasingly active in promoting intellectual and artistic exchanges.[47]

Economic relations also received renewed attention. France's Plan Tardieu, launched under Premier André Tardieu in 1932, aimed to stabilize and integrate the economies of the Danube basin. Though primarily conceived to reinforce the position of France's allies in the Little Entente, the plan also extended to Hungary, which was offered the possibility of a large loan to support its financial recovery.[48] The former Austro-Hungarian territories had once constituted an economically coherent and self-sufficient bloc, and the disintegration of that system had left the region fragmented, unstable, and vulnerable to external shocks. Bethlen argued that the economic reintegration of the Danubian states – through preferential trade agreements, limited customs arrangements, and mutual support – was essential not only for their prosperity but also for the broader peace of Europe.[49] The French side, particularly under Briand and Tardieu, saw economic cooperation to counterbalance German influence and to project stability into a geopolitically sensitive region.[50]

However, these overtures never materialized into binding commitments. The Tardieu Plan, while ambitious in scope, was undermined by shifting domestic politics in both countries. In Hungary, the resignation of Bethlen and the appointment of Gyula Gömbös as prime minister in October 1932 signaled a new era in foreign policy – one that would increasingly prioritize alignment with Germany and Italy. Gömbös's authoritarian tendencies and ideological affinity with the fascist regimes in Rome and Berlin curtailed any further development of the rapprochement with France.[51] In France, Tardieu's political defeat and the economic pressures of the Great Depression curtailed the resources and political will necessary to sustain deeper engagement in Central Europe. The French government, distracted by domestic instability and the consequences

47 I. ROMSICS, Francia-magyar kulturális kapcsolatok és a párizsi Magyar Intézet a két világháború között, in: Gy. JUHÁSZ – Gy. Cs. KIS (eds.), *Magyarságkutatás. A Magyarságkutató Intézet évkönyve*, Budapest 1989, pp. 191–196.

48 J. BARIÉTY – C. BLOCH, Une tentative de réconciliation franco-allemande et son échec (1932–1933), in: *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 15, 1968, pp. 433–465.

49 BETHLEN, *The Danube States*, pp. 356–362.

50 G. GODEFFROY, Entre Mitteleuropa et Paneuropa: le projet d'Elemér Hantos dans l'entre-deux-guerres, in: *Bulletin de l'Institut Pierre Renouvin*, 22, 2016, pp. 72–73.

51 L. SZÉKELY, Gömbös külpolitikai koncepciójának alakulása, in: *Valóság*, 5, 1962, pp. 84–86.

of the economic crisis, reverted to a more cautious and reactive Central European policy.[52]

Nonetheless, the late 1920s represent a brief period in which Franco-Hungarian relations were marked by a degree of pragmatism and mutual interest. The shared concern over Germany's ambitions created space for diplomatic manoeuvring, and both countries appeared willing – at least temporarily – to compartmentalize their differences over the postwar settlement. Cultural diplomacy, student exchanges, and mutual economic interests offered new, if fragile, foundations for cooperation. Yet, as subsequent developments would demonstrate, the structural contradictions between France's alliance commitments and Hungary's revisionist agenda were too great to sustain a durable partnership.

The Breakdown of Cooperation

Despite tentative signs of improved relations in the late 1920s, Franco-Hungarian cooperation proved to be short-lived. By the early 1930s, the combination of France's internal weaknesses, Hungary's strategic realignment, and the broader geopolitical shift toward German ascendancy in Central Europe brought the modest rapprochement to an abrupt end.

The turning point came in October 1932, with the rise of Gyula Gömbös to the Hungarian premiership. Gömbös represented a new generation of right-wing nationalist politicians who openly embraced authoritarian governance and revisionist foreign policy. He regarded Germany and Italy as Hungary's natural allies in the campaign to overturn the territorial settlement imposed by the Treaty of Trianon. As such, his appointment marked the abandonment of István Bethlen's cautious and balanced diplomacy in favour of a more assertive – and ultimately risk-laden – strategy of alignment with the fascist powers.[53]

Gömbös's foreign policy left little room for continued engagement with France. While French diplomats were aware of Hungary's interest in territorial revision, they were categorically unwilling to support any changes to the postwar borders, especially if these came at the expense of France's Central European allies. The contradiction between Hungary's geopolitical goals and France's alliance system, particularly with the Little

52 G. DAVIES, André Tardieu, les Modérés and the Politics of Prosperity: 1929-1932, in: *Histoire@Politique*, 6, 2012, 106–110.

53 P. PRITZ, A Hitler-Gömbös találkozó és a magyar külpolitika 1933 nyarán, in: *Valóság*, 21, 1978, pp. 36–46.

Entente, had always existed; under Gömbös, it became unbridgeable.[54] Moreover, Gömbös's open admiration for Mussolini's regime and his desire to emulate the Italian model of authoritarian modernization reinforced French concerns about Hungary's new direction.[55]

At the same time, France was increasingly incapable of projecting influence in Central Europe. Political instability at home, including a series of short-lived governments, a fractured parliamentary system, and social unrest, limited the scope of French foreign policy. The economic devastation of the Great Depression further constrained France's ability to maintain its regional presence.[56] Though the Briand Plan of 1930 had called for a system of European federal economic cooperation, it failed to gain traction, especially among revisionist states like Hungary. Briand's death in 1932 removed one of the few French statesmen committed to long-term engagement in Central Europe.[57]

France's reliance on the Little Entente – a bloc with its own internal rivalries and fragile cohesion – proved to be a strategic liability. French policy lacked flexibility, and its exclusive commitment to the postwar order alienated states like Hungary that were seeking revision. Without strong regional partners or a coherent vision for Central European integration, France found itself unable to compete with the growing economic and political attraction of Germany. France never developed a comprehensive alternative to German influence, limiting its presence to the preservation of existing alliances and sporadic cultural initiatives.[58]

Indeed, Germany's rise in the region was decisive. While France could offer little beyond diplomatic platitudes, Germany provided Hungary with concrete economic benefits and the prospect – however tentative – of territorial revision. Trade between the two countries expanded significantly in the 1930s, and German political influence grew accordingly. The 1934 Hungarian-German economic agreement further deepened

54 Gy. RÉTI, Gömbös és a római hármas egyezmény, in: *Történelmi Szemle*, 36, 1994, pp. 135–165.

55 P. PRITZ, Gömbös Gyula első kormányának külpolitikája, megalakulásától Gömbös németországi útjáig, in: *Századok*, 112, 1978, pp. 49–53.

56 F. GAZDAG, *Franciaország története*, Budapest 2011, pp. 20–25.

57 R. MARCOWITZ, Vers une Europe unie? Aristide Briand, Gustav Stresemann et la coopération franco-allemande dans l'entre-deux-guerres, in: *Allemagne d'aujourd'hui*, 59, 2020, pp. 20–26.

58 M. ÁDÁM, Magyarország és a kisantant a második világháború előtti években (1936–1937), in: *Századok*, 96, 1962, pp. 502–552.

these ties, binding Hungary to the German economic sphere through mechanisms such as clearing arrangements and export quotas. By the mid-1930s, Hungary had effectively reoriented itself toward Berlin, a development facilitated by shared ideological affinities, anti-Communism, and mutual frustration with the Versailles-Trianon system.[59]

French officials, aware of these shifts, made some last-minute efforts to re-engage Hungary. Cultural exchanges continued – albeit on a reduced scale – and some economic discussions were revived. The *Gazette de Hongrie* remained in circulation, and institutions like the *Institut Français in Budapest* attempted to maintain a presence in Hungarian intellectual life. However, these gestures could not compensate for the strategic vacuum left by French diplomacy in the region.[60] Hungary's drift toward the Axis powers was already well underway, and by the time of the Rome Protocols (1934) and the Hungarian-German economic agreement (1934), it was clear that the Franco-Hungarian détente had collapsed.[61]

Ultimately, the failure of Franco-Hungarian cooperation was not merely the result of diplomatic missteps or missed opportunities. It reflected deeper structural asymmetries in their respective foreign policy goals. France sought to preserve the status quo; Hungary aimed to overturn it. As long as these aims remained irreconcilable, the prospect of meaningful partnership remained elusive. The interwar period thus closed with both countries locked into opposing visions for the future of Central Europe – a division that would only deepen as the continent moved toward another catastrophic conflict.

Conclusion

The interwar history of Franco-Hungarian relations reveals the complex interplay between strategic interests, geopolitical shifts, and the enduring legacy of postwar treaties. While the 1925 Locarno Treaties are often celebrated as a milestone of Western European diplomacy, their repercussions in Central Europe were far more ambivalent. For Hungary, Locarno presented both a perceived opportunity and a renewed confirmation

59 I. MURBER, Az Anschluss és a magyar külpolitika a két világháború között, in: *Századok*, 149, 2015, 180–201.

60 H. DE MONTETY, A Nouvelle Revue de Hongrie, a magyar külpolitikai gondolkodás tükre, in: P. PRITZ (ed.), *Magyar külpolitikai gondolkodás a 20. században*, Budapest 2006, pp. 124–137.

61 ORMOS – MAJOROS, *Európa*, pp. 359–360; I. NÉMETH, A Wilhelmstrasse és Magyarország. Válság és kiút (1930–1934), in: *Valóság*, 60, 2017, pp. 18–49.

of exclusion: an opening for potential revision of its borders, but also a reminder that its position in the European security system remained precarious.

In the decade that followed, a cautious and pragmatic rapprochement emerged between Budapest and Paris. Cultural initiatives flourished, economic talks began, and diplomatic overtures hinted at the possibility of normalization. Figures such as István Bethlen advocated for a rebalancing of Hungary's foreign relations, recognizing that a policy of total dependence on Germany would be both strategically and economically risky. France, in turn, began to reconsider the utility of a purely alliance-driven approach in Central Europe, especially as the limitations of the Little Entente became increasingly apparent.

Yet this window of opportunity ultimately closed without producing a durable shift in bilateral relations. The underlying asymmetries between the two powers – Hungary's revisionist aspirations versus France's commitment to the postwar order – proved insurmountable. The rise of Gyula Gömbös, the growing appeal of German economic and political power, and France's internal instability all contributed to the collapse of the rapprochement. By the mid-1930s, Hungary had moved decisively into the German and Italian orbit, a realignment that would shape its role in the Second World War and beyond.

The Locarno Treaties, though not directed at Hungary, nonetheless played a crucial role in setting this trajectory. By failing to extend its guarantees to Eastern Europe, the Locarno system inadvertently encouraged a sense of diplomatic fluidity in the region – one that revisionist states like Hungary were eager to exploit. At the same time, Locarno exposed the contradictions in French foreign policy: the desire for stability clashed with the unwillingness to adapt to the changing strategic realities of the interwar period.

In retrospect, the brief Franco-Hungarian détente of the late 1920s and early 1930s stands as a missed opportunity. While genuine efforts were made on both sides, the structural contradictions of the European order, compounded by economic crisis and ideological radicalization, prevented the formation of a sustainable partnership. The failure of this rapprochement serves as a reminder of the fragility of diplomacy in an era defined by the tension between revisionism and status quo, and of the limits of good intentions in the absence of shared strategic vision.

Józef Piłsudski's Attitude towards Locarno and Collective Guarantee Pacts in the Light of the Polish Raison d'État (1925–1935)

Jerzy Gaul[1]

The security of the Polish state occupied an important place in Józef Pilsudski's concept of raison d'état, who saw its military, political and civilizational dimensions. France and England, signatories of the Treaty of Versailles, guaranteed the western border of the Republic of Poland, and mutual ties were strengthened by belonging to Western civilisation. Germany did not want to come to terms with the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles and sought to revise its eastern borders. In Rapallo, Germany reached an agreement with Soviet Russia, despite its differences in civilisation, political system and ideology. In Locarno, Germany undertook to respect the inviolability of the borders with France and Belgium in the Rhine Pact, leaving the course of the border with Poland open.

The different status of Germany's western and eastern borders disturbed the balance in Central Europe. The restoration of state security became a matter of Polish raison d'état. As the alliance with France loosened, Piłsudski opted for bilateral agreements: with the USSR in 1932 and Germany in 1934, taking care to maintain an equal distance from them. The weakness of the policy of neutrality consisted in considering only ad hoc interests, without the bond of common values, because Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia, destroying civilizational standards, plunged into barbarism.

Poland's security in the long run was at risk because it had no reliable allies and was not a superpower. In 1934, along with Poland's isolation, the concept of the Eastern Pact was established. The Machiavellian concert of Western powers, with the participation of the USSR, according to Piłsudski the greatest enemy, was to guarantee the security of the eastern border of France at the price of the right to march Soviet troops through Polish territory. Pilsudski's opposition coincided with the refusal of Nazi Germany, which further weakened the position of Poland, still stuck in the Locarno trap.

[Locarno; Poland; Collective Security; Józef Pilsudski]

Piłsudski and Locarno

The Polish raison d'état in Józef Piłsudski's view was determined by the security of the state and the inviolability of its borders. The Polish

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raison d'état[2] was based on the conviction that the greatest enemy of Poland, which belongs to the West, was Russia – the representative of the East.[3] However, this did not mean that he disregarded Germany and its revisionist policies.

At the time of the conclusion of the Locarno Agreement on 16 October 1925, the former Chief of State Piłsudski had no direct influence on the foreign policy of the Republic of Poland.[4] He considered Locarno "to be a particularly bad and dangerous international system for the future in its concept" because it created "a legal form to perpetuate the dangerous imbalance between the west and the east of Europe".[5]

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2 Józef Piłsudski developed the concept of the Polish raison d'état at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. J. GAUL, Józef Piłsudski wobec wyborów do parlamentu austriackiego oraz działalności polskich posłów socjalistycznych IX kadencji (1897–1900), in: *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 75, 2018, pp. 901–911; J. GAUL, Przez zaborczą Austrię do niepodległej Polski. Wojskowy, polityczny i cywilizacyjny wymiar polskiej racji stanu 1867–1918, in: *Przegląd Wschodni*, 15, 2019, pp. 235–271; J. GAUL, Józef Piłsudski a ziemie zachodnie Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej w kontekście traktatu wersalskiego (1918–1922), in: A. GULCZYŃSKI (ed.), *Czas wolności – czas przemian. Traktat Wersalski i rok 1919 w zachodniej Polsce*, Poznań 2019, pp. 233–262; J. GAUL, Józef Piłsudski a polska racja stanu (grudzień 1922 – maj 1926), in: *Miscellanea Historico-Archivistica*, 27, 2020, pp. 109–146; J. GAUL, Józef Piłsudski a cywilizacyjny wymiar polskiej racji stanu na Wschodzie 1918–1922, in: *Przegląd Wschodni*, 17, 2021, pp. 57–107; J. GAUL, *Trzymajcie się z Zachodem. Józef Piłsudski w poszukiwaniu polskiej racji stanu*, Warszawa 2023; J. GAUL, Przeciw duchowi Wschodu. Nieudane starania Józefa Piłsudskiego i Gabriela Narutowicza w obronie liberalnej cywilizacji zachodniej w II Rzeczypospolitej (1918–1922), in: W. ŁAZUGA – S. PACZOS (eds.), *Wokół Gabriela Narutowicza pierwszego prezydenta Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, Poznań 2024, pp. 43–74. On the reference of Piłsudski's concept to the Western and Polish tradition of thinking about politics, see A. RZEGOCKI, *Racja stanu a polska tradycja myślenia o polityce,* Kraków 2008, pp. 139–149, 308–311.

3 J. BRATKIEWICZ, *Eurazjatyzm na wspak. Polscy tradycjonaliści przeglądają się w zwierciadle Eurazji i udają, że to nie oni*, Kraków 2021; GAUL, *Trzymajcie się z Zachodem*, pp. 106–109, 241–261.

4 H. RÖSSLER – E. HÖLZLE (Hg.), *Locarno und die Weltpolitik 1924–1932*, Göttingen, Zürich, Frankfurt 1969; H. HAGSPIEL, *Verständigung zwischen Deutschland und Frankreich? Die deutsch-französische Aussenpolitik der zwanziger Jahre im innenpolitischen Kräftefeld beider Länder*, Bonn 1987; M. K. KAMIŃSKI – M. J. ZACHARIAS, *Polityka zagraniczna II Rzeczypospolitej 1918–1939*, Warszawa 1987, pp. 92–100; J. KRASUSKI, *Tragiczna niepodległość. Polityka zagraniczna Polski w latach 1919–1945*, Poznań 2000, pp. 132–134; H. BATOWSKI, *Między dwiema wojnami 1919–1939- Zarys historii dyplomatycznej*, Warszawa 2001, pp. 120–122.

5 J. BECK, *Ostatni raport*, Warszawa 1987, p. 29; J. BECK, *Wspomnienia o polskiej polityce zagranicznej 1926–1939*, oprac. A. M. CIENCIAŁA, Warszawa, Kraków 2015, p. 57;

Piłsudski did not renounce his negative opinion about Locarno either. In February 1926, he believed that the negotiations in Locarno revealed the reluctance of Western countries to guarantee Polish borders.[6] For the pragmatic Piłsudski, who treated the League of Nations and pacifist slogans as a passing fad, Locarno, and especially the "spirit of Locarno," were irritating. Piłsudski claimed that one could not criticize the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Aleksander Skrzyński for signing the agreement because he could not have done otherwise, but his great mistake was that "he believed in the signed agreement and in the effectiveness of the security it is supposed to give to Poland"[7]. Piłsudski was also highly critical of collective security systems, including the League of Nations, because he feared that it was a tool to pursue the interests of the great powers.[8]

Bilateral Pacts and Poland's Superpower Policy 1932–1935

After he made the coup' état in May 1926 Piłsudski had in his hands the foreign policy of Poland. What solutions did Piłsudski consider to be the best for the security of the country neighboring Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia? Instead of guarantee pacts, Piłsudski preferred bilateral agreements, which culminated in an agreement with the USSR in 1932[9] and a pact of January 1934 with Germany.[10] The Republic of Poland entered a new stage of foreign policy, referred to as the "policy of balance." It was based on Piłsudski's assumption that at a time of international crisis in Europe and conflicting interests of the superpowers, Poland should first of all strive for the best possible relations with its great neighbors – Germany and the USSR. It was about not cooperating with any of these

K. KAWALEC, Piłsudczycy wobec Rapallo i Locarno. Z rozważań nad genezą przewrotu majowego, in: J. DEGLER (ed.), *Idea Europy i Polski w XIX–XX wieku. Księga ofiarowana dr. Adolfowi Juzwence, dyrektorowi Zakładu Narodowego i. Ossolińskich, z okazji 60-lecia urodzin*, Wrocław 1999, pp. 69–76.

6 Interview in "Kurier Poranny", 19 Februar 1926, in: J. PIŁSUDSKI, *Pisma zbiorowe*, Vol. 8, Warszawa 1937, pp. 290–293; ibidem, vol. 9, p. 57.

7 J. GAWROŃSKI, *Moja misja w Wiedniu 1932–1938,* Warszawa 1965, p. 394.

8 S. SIERPOWSKI, *Liga Narodów w latach 1919–1926*, Wrocław 2006; W. BALCERAK, *Liga Nadziei. Z dziejów Ligi Narodów*, Warszawa 2011; H. KISSINGER, *Dyplomacja*, Warszawa 2016, pp. 232–262; J. GAUL, Józef Piłsudski wobec Ligi Narodów, in: *Miscellanea Historico-Archivistica*, 31, 2024, pp. 125–148.

9 KAMIŃSKI – ZACHARIAS, p. 164.

10 P. LOSSOWSKI (ed.), *Historia dyplomacji polskiej, Vol. IV, 1918–1939*, Warszawa 1995, pp. 461–47-.

countries against the other. Piłsudski believed that Polish participation in multilateral agreements was possible only on the condition of the participation of Germany and the USSR, which was impossible at that time. Breaking this rule threatened armed conflict on the Polish western or eastern border.[11]

But, according to Piłsudski, the policy of neutrality guaranteed peace only temporarily because "sitting on two stools" could not last forever. He thought that Poland would be threatened first by Soviet Russia, although he did not underestimate the threat from Germany. In March 1934, he predicted that good relations with them could last only another four years.[12] The greatest concern was the restoration of the Rapallo Agreement between Germany and Russia.[13]

On France's and the USSR's Initiative on the Eastern Pact

A negative consequence of Poland's independent and superpower policy was the deterioration of relations with Poland's main Western allies, especially France. The Soviet authorities tried to take advantage of this situation. From the summer of 1933, they initiated a rapprochement with France, by offering a bilateral alliance. Weakened France ignored the interests of Warsaw, and in the absence of the possibility of an agreement with Germany, it sought rapprochement with Soviet Russia. On October 20, 1933, French Foreign Minister Joseph Paul-Boncour proposed to the USSR that the Franco-Soviet non-aggression pact of 1932 be supplemented by a pact of mutual assistance. Later, there was a proposal for Soviet Russia to join the League of Nations and conclude a regional agreement, including, in addition to France and the USSR, also Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Finland. The adoption of this proposal on 19 November 1933 by the USSR marked the birth of the concept of the Eastern Pact, although its concretization did not take place until the spring of 1934.[14] Was it possible to reconcile East

11 M. KORNAT, *Polityka równowagi 1934–1939. Polska między Wschodem a Zachodem*, Kraków 2007.

12 K. ŚWITALSKI, *Diariusz 1919–1935*, Warszawa 1992, pp. 660–661.

13 BATOWSKI, pp. 107, 135, 188.

14 Ibid., pp. 218–222; J. JURKIEWICZ, *Pakt Wschodni. Z historii stosunków międzynarodowych w latach 1934– 1935*, Warszawa 1963, pp. 58–61; S. GREGOROWICZ, *Polsko-radzieckie stosunki polityczne w latach 1932–1935*, Wrocław 1982, pp. 177–219; S. GREGOROWICZ – M. J. ZACHARIAS, *Polska – Związek Sowiecki 1925–1939*, Warszawa 1995, pp. 119–124; A. M. BRZEZIŃSKI, *Zagadnienie bezpieczeństwa zbiorowego w Europie w polityce*

Locarno with the Polish policy of maintaining a balance between its two main neighbors – Germany and Russia?

During a conference on 12 April 1934 with the participation of Polish generals and Foreign Minister Józef Beck and Deputy Foreign Minister Jan Szembek, Piłsudski decided that the current negative line of proceedings should be continued on the Eastern Pact. Stabilization in Eastern Europe was primarily the work of Poland and therefore excluded its participation in any international political action that could jeopardize peace. Therefore, Poland refused to accept the concept of mutual assistance proposed in the draft of the Eastern Pact, if it were to come from the USSR, considered still the most dangerous neighbor.

Foreign Minister Louis Barthou, who was a signatory of the Polish French alliance in 1921, could not imagine the Eastern Pact without Poland and therefore made unsuccessful efforts to win over Marshal Piłsudski during his visit to Warsaw on 22–24 April 1934.[15] The discrepancies between Poland and France were also expressed during the conversation on June 4 in Geneva. Minister Barthou justified the French position with the need to find a way to relieve France of its obligations under the Rhine Pact in the event of a conflict. Specifying the meaning and scope of the North-East Pact, he described it as "Eastern Locarno".[16] The agreement was to cover the Baltic states, the USSR, Poland, Czecho-

zagranicznej Francji (1919–1939), *Łódź* 1992, pp. 104-106; M. KORNAT – M. WOŁOS, *Józef Beck. Biografia*, Kraków 2020, p. 321.

15 Unsigned note on the visit of the French Minister of Foreign Affairs in Poland, 4, 1934, S. ŻERKO – P. DŁUGOŁĘCKI (eds.), *Polskie dokumenty dyplomatyczne 1934* (hereafter *PDD* 1934*)*, Warszawa 2014, No. 138, pp. 331–332; BECK, *Wspomnienia*, pp. 102–104; *Diariusz i teki Jana Szembeka (1935–1945)* (hereafter *DTJS*), Vol. I, London 1964, pp. 156–159. See JURKIEWICZ, pp. 60-61; *Historia dyplomacji polskiej, Vol. IV*, pp. 475–476; S. GREGOROWICZ, Koncepcja paktu wschodniego na tle stosunków polsko-sowieckich 1934–1935, in: *Międzymorze. Polska i kraje Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, pp. 321–331; W. MATERSKI, *Na widecie. II Rzeczpospolita wobec Sowietów 1918–1943*, Warszawa 2005, pp. 447–449; W. JĘDRZEJEWICZ – J. CISEK, *Kalendarium* życia Józefa *Piłsudskiego 1867–1935, Vol. 4, 1927–1935*, Kraków, Łomianki 2007, pp. 357–358; M. KORNAT, Józef Piłsudski o stosunkach międzynarodowych i zadaniach polskiej polityki zagranicznej, in: D. JASTRZĘBSKA-GOLONKOWA – A. NIKZENTAITIS – W. SULEJA et al. (eds.), *Bez emocji. Polsko-litewski dialog o Józefie Piłsudskim*, Warszawa 2020, p. 95; D. JEZIORNY, "To Avoid Incurring All Uncertain and Ill- Defined Responsibilities". Poland and the Eastern Pact of Mutual Assistance (1934–1935), in: *The International History Review*, 2024, DOI: 10.1080/07075332.2024.2418575, p. 3.

16 Ch. HÖLTJE, *Die Weimarer Republik und das Ostlocarno-Problem 1919–1934. Revision oder Garantie der deutschen Ostgrenze von 1919*, Würzburg 1958, pp. 2–7.

slovakia, and Germany. The Moscow government omitted Germany in this combination in its first projects, while the French government understood that the condition for the success of the "East Locarno" was the participation of Germany. Minister Beck stated to Bartou that the description of the pact as "Eastern Locarno" was not well received in Poland. Poland has worked for eight years to restore the balance on the western border and will take care to maintain it. Piłsudski's supporters linked their fears of the possibility of accepting Germany's demands for the legalization of their armaments with the project of concluding the Eastern Pact, which could become compensation for France's concessions in the field of armaments.[17]

The Polish position on the Eastern Pact was greatly influenced by Minister Beck, which was increasingly relieving the seriously ill Marshall Piłsudski. Beck, who did not hide the fact that, as in 1925 in Locarno, the new multilateral treaty did not secure Polish interests. During a meeting on 2 July 1934 with Prime Minister Leon Kozłowski and the Marshal's closest associates (former prime ministers Aleksander Prystor, Walery Sławek and Kazimierz Świtalski), Beck pointed to the unpleasantness with the French, as they were striving for "a pact guaranteeing the current status of France in the east," which would also include the Baltic states, Germany, and the Czechoslovak Republic, in return for which Russia would guarantee the eastern French borders. Beck stated that this combination did not suit Poland because it was another creation of a "large consortium," this time Russian French, in order to "push Poland lower". He stated firmly that "the whole problem will not succeed without us, because Russia, not neighboring Germany, can only, with our participation, give some kind of guarantee to the French borders".[18] Beck cared about Polish interests, but he did not say a word about the threat to European values, so important in the perspective of participation in the pact of the USSR, a representative of the Eurasian civilization. Beck believed that France was ready to sacrifice political assets for illusions of security, and in his opinion, the most important value was the military superiority of the West and intransigence towards Germany.[19]

17 Delegate's to the League of Nations note from the conversation between the Polish and French foreign ministers, 4 June 1934, *PDD* 1934, No. 164, pp. 390–394; JURKIEWICZ, p. 67; *Historia dyplomacji polskiej, Vol. IV*, p. 479; KORNAT – WOŁOS, pp. 321–322.

18 ŚWITALSKI, pp. 663–664. See KORNAT – WOŁOS, p. 330.

19 KAMIŃSKI – ZACHARIAS, pp. 186–187.

On 5 July 1934, Beck informed French ambassador in Warsaw Jules Laroche of Poland's position on the Mutual Assistance Pact. He considered the Eastern Pact to be a new attempt at the political organization of Eastern Europe. He also emphasized the lack of ties with Romania and Turkey, which previously cooperated with Poland in attempts to put this part of Europe in order. Beck raised objections to Lithuania's participation in the proposed treaty and stressed that Poland "cannot give any guarantee to this country," having no normal relations with it. He also considered the participation of Czechoslovakia, associated with the Danube basin, to be a controversial issue. He pointed out that the proposed pact was of a "league" nature, although neither Germany nor Russia belonged in this time to the League of Nations. In conclusion, he stated that the Polish government "cannot submit even *une adhesion de principe* to the projects submitted to it, which raise so many doubts and contain so many ambiguities".[20]

The struggle to adopt the Eastern Pact project was closely watched by the British authorities. On 6 July 1934, the English envoy in Warsaw, William Erskine, sent to London a report on his talks with Beck and Laroche. Erskine became convinced that Poland did not want to belong to the eastern Locarno, but it did not intend to irritate Paris with an outright refusal, choosing the tactic of procrastination in the hope that the Germans would refuse first.[21] In a memorandum drawn up in July 1934 by the Foreign Office, the main arguments put forward by Poland were listed. The most important three boiled down to Piłsudski's statement that he avoided unnecessary obligations, as he believed that an additional pact would not be an additional guarantee of security. The Eastern Pact would add an additional obligation for Czechoslovakia and the Baltic states without an equivalent benefit. Poland saw a threat through the transit of Soviet and German troops through its territory as a result of an attack on itself or Germany.[22] The Polish authorities, headed by Minister Beck, did not abandon consultations with the Baltic states, with little effect.[23]

The struggle between France and Germany for influence on the Polish

[20] BECK, *Ostatni raport*, pp. 79–80; A note from the Beck-Laroche conversation of 5 July 1934, *PDD* 1934, No. 192, p. 451. See KORNAT – WOŁOS, p. 322.

[21] JEZIORNY, *British diplomacy*, pp. 172–173; JEZIORNY, *To Avoid Incurring All Uncertain*, pp. 4–5.

[22] JEZIORNY, *British diplomacy,* pp. 225–226.

[23] BECK, *Ostatni raport*, pp. 80–83; *Historia dyplomacji polskiej*, Vol. 4, p. 483; JEZIORNY, *To Avoid Incurring All Uncertain*, pp. 8–9.

position on the Franco-Soviet plans for pacts continued. On 13 July 1934, the Austrian envoy Maximillian Hoffinger reported from Warsaw that France had used all its influence, all its economic baits, and pressure to modify the negative position of the Republic of Poland. Hoffinger emphasized the aspect of prestige, which played a very important role in the exaggerated sensitivity of Polish great-power. The fear of losing the international importance of the Polish state played a great role in the negative assessment of the Eastern Pact.[24] The importance of prestige in Beck's politics was discussed by Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Edvard Benes, who accused him of presenting himself as a representative of a superpower with which everyone would like to cooperate.[25]

French attempts to exert pressure on Poland met with a strong reaction from Piłsudski. He believed that the negative sides of the Eastern Pact precluded a change in Poland's position. He considered reservations and threats to be a bluff of little importance. Poland's position between the two powers forced caution and putting the policy of neutrality in the first place in order to avoid friction in relations with Germany. This was accompanied by the Marshal's conviction that after joining the Eastern Pact, Poland would be exposed to participation in a war waged on its territory in the name of the interests of Germany or Soviet Russia, without additional security guarantees.[26] It would therefore be a repetition of the events of World War I, when on the Eastern Front heavy fighting between the Russian and Central Power armies took place mainly in the Kingdom of Poland and Galicia.

The constant lack of an official response from Poland to the French proposal irritated Paris. What methods did Poland use to avoid revealing its position too early? The Austrian envoy in Warsaw believed that the Polish government considered the Żyrardów scandal and the involvement of French owners in financial fraud as a convenient pretext to avoid answering the Eastern Pact. Despite this, the French envoy Laroche counted on Piłsudski, who did not want to allow the initiative to be in the hands of Paris only but also ruled out breaking off all contacts with France.[27]

24 Bericht Hoffingers betreffend Polen und die Paktpläne, Warschau, 13 July 1934, Nr. 85/Pol/1934, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (ÖStA), Archiv der Republik (AdR), Auswärtige Angelegenheiten (AA), Österr. Vertretungen im Ausland 1. Republik, Österreichische Gesandtschaft Warschau, Kt. 80, K. 209–211.

25 JEZIORNY, *British diplomacy,* p. 453.

26 KAMIŃSKI – ZACHARIAS, pp. 180–182.

27 Bericht Hoffingers bezüglich Polens Antwort auf den Ostpaktvorschlag (Kopie),

In a report of 10 August 1934, Foreign Ministry counsellor Feliks Frankowski from the embassy in Paris reported that Soviet propaganda claimed that Poland had broken away from the alliance with France and was striving for rapprochement with Germany. According to Frankowski, the aim of Soviet diplomacy was to persuade the public opinion that Poland stands in solidarity with Germany and that therefore there is no other counterweight to France from the other side of the "Germanic world" than Soviet Russia. In this way, the Soviets renewed the old traditional Franco-Russian alliance and broke up the Franco-Polish alliance, seeking to isolate Poland.[28]

The consequence of the French plan was the admission of the Soviet Union to the League of Nations on 18 September 1934. This meant breaking the position of Poland as a barrier between Germany and Russia. Poland did not see any improvement in security since the Soviet Union was becoming one of the guarantors and the Franco-Soviet alliance diminished the role of Poland as an ally of France.[29]

Beck's tactics towards the USSR's entry into the League of Nations caused a lot of controversy in diplomatic circles. The Austrian envoy in Warsaw, Hoffinger, was tormented by the question about the benefits derived by Poland from these rather laconic declarations. Why did they seem sufficient to Beck to refrain from hindering the USSR's entry into the League of Nations and its appointment as a permanent member of the Council? Why did Poland not try to use its advantageous position to win a permanent seat on the Council of the League of Nations, which it had long sought? Hoffinger unjustifiably suspected that the published notes did not reflect the entire content of the talks and that there could have been a confidential agreement on Russia's support for Poland in obtaining a mandate in the Council at the right time.[30]

29 August 1934, ÖStA, AdR, NPA, AA, Gesandtschaft Rom–Quirinal, Kt. 18. Zl. 57259–13. Zob. J. GAUL, Józef Piłsudskis Politik gegenüber der Sowjetunion im Lichte der Berichte der österreichischen Diplomaten in der Zeit von 1926 bis 1935, in: *Österreichisch-polnische militärische Beziehungen im 20. Jahrhundert. Symposium 6. November 2009, Acta Heeresgeschichtliches Museum*, Wien 2010, pp. 161–163; J. GAUL, Pokój czy wojna? Polityka Józefa Piłsudskiego wobec Związku Sowieckiego w świetle raportów dyplomatów austriackich 1926–1935, in: *Studia Humanistyczno-społeczne*, 6, 2012, p. 50.

28 Report of the Counsellor of the Embassy in Paris on French opinions on Poland, Paris, 10. August 1934, *PDD* 1934, No. 218, pp. 504–505.

29 KRASUSKI, pp. 216–217.

30 Bericht Hoffingers betreffend Polen und der Eintritt der USSR in den Völkerbund, Warschau, 25 September 1934, Nr. 123/Pol/1934, ÖStA, AdR, AA, Österreichische Gesandtschaft Warschau, Kt. 80, K. 327–329.

Beck's conduct was determined by the policy of interests resulting from the concept of balance and neutrality. Beck was aware, as were the representatives of many other countries, that "Russia at that time certainly had very few of the qualities that the basic articles of the League Pact required of the members of the League". So why did he agree to the USSR's entry into the League of Nations? Beck decided that it was not worth opposing, because he was too optimistic about assuming that "the League Pact constrained to some extent the aggressive intentions of the countries belonging to this institution". As the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, standing firmly on the basis of the policy of balance and bilateral pacts, he was afraid that direct bilateral agreements would not be treated as something less important than signing the League pact. At a secret meeting of the League, Beck stated that he did not want to make any difficulties in this initiative, but that he had to settle certain matters between Poland and Soviet Russia.[31] Minister Beck rejected any French mediation and negotiated directly with the Soviets in Geneva, the content of which the French knew little.[32] As a conditio sine qua non, he set the condition for the USSR to state by way of an exchange of notes that "regardless of the presence or absence of one of our countries from the League, all bilateral agreements concluded between Poland and the Union of Soviets are inviolable and remain in force", which was confirmed by Moscow on 10 September.[33] After the exchange of notes, it was known that Poland and the USSR would continue to respect mutual agreements and that the basis for future relations would be primarily a non-aggression pact and a pact on the definition of an aggressor.[34] Beck used this to end the matter of the minority treaty in order to prevent a situation in which a representative of the Soviets was to deliberate and speak in internal Polish affairs. He made a declaration on 13 September 1934 stating that

31 BECK, *Ostatni raport*, pp. 75–76.

32 See BATOWSKI, pp. 223–224; JEZIORNY, *To Avoid Incurring All Uncertain*, pp. 6–7.

33 Instruction of the Deputy People's Commissar to the Plenipotentiary Representative of the USSR in Warsaw on the conversation between the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the French Ambassador, 4 September 1934, M. KORNAT (ed.), *Dokumenty do historii stosunków polsko-sowieckich, Vol. III, 1932–1939, part 1, Zbliżenie i rozejście się dróg (lipiec 1932–maj 1935)*, Warszawa 2024, No. 251, pp. 612–613. See BECK, *Ostatni raport*, pp. 75–76; *Historia dyplomacji polskiej, Vol. 4*, pp. 483–484; BATOWSKI, pp. 223–224 JEZIORNY, *To Avoid Incurring All Uncertain*, pp. 6– 7.

34 Letter from the Ambassador in Moscow about a conversation with a senior official of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the USSR regarding publication in the Soviet press, Moscou, 24 September 1934, *PDD* 1934, No. 254, p. 583.

Poland refuses to cooperate with international organizations in the future regarding the application of the rights of national minorities in Poland. Despite the approval of this step by Marshal Piłsudski, it brought the Republic of Poland enormous prestige damage on the international forum.[35]

Hoffinger did not rule out the possibility that Poles were more interested in the visual effect of these small, separate negotiations than in possible practical success. He thought that the open opposition to Russia's entry, initially intended by Beck, seemed inappropriate, given the officially undisturbed friendly relations with Moscow and the fear of being pushed completely into the arms of France. Poland attached importance to negotiations with the Soviets without any foreign interference. In this way, she wanted to show that it is not enough to reach an agreement with the superpowers, but in order to achieve something, it is necessary to talk to Poland separately, because in European politics "nothing could happen without the Poland". In particular, Barthou's exclusion from the talks was intended to show that the center of Eastern policy lay not in Paris but in Warsaw. The tone of the Polish-Soviet declarations was also directed against the French policy of the Eastern Pact, as it confirmed the official Polish position that the Eastern countries had developed a system satisfactory to their region, the value of which should be at least as highly valued as the planned pacts. Hoffinger believed that Beck could derive *satisfaction d'amour propre* from the outcome of the negotiations, because without threatening good relations with Moscow, he showed the Russians and the great powers the importance of Poland's position and recognition for Russia's previous eastern policy at the moment of its inauguration of a new stage of its policy under "the French aegis".[36]

The Soviet authorities tried to take advantage of Polish restraint. Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs Boris Stomonyakov, in a conversation with the ambassador in Moscow Juliusz Łukasiewicz on 19 September 1934, stated that Poland's reluctant position towards the Eastern Pact, like the German one, resulted in the accusation of Poland of pursuing a common policy with Berlin. It is doubtful whether the Soviet dignitary was sufficiently impressed by Łukasiewicz's reply that Moscow surprisingly quickly forgot that Poland had concluded a non-aggression

35 BECK, *Ostatni raport*, pp. 77–78; GAUL, *Trzymajcie się z Zachodem*, pp. 729–732.

36 Bericht Hoffingers betreffend Polen und der Eintritt der USSR in den Völkerbund, Warschau, 25 September 1934, Nr. 123/Pol/1934, ÖStA, AdR, AA, Österreichische Gesandtschaft Warschau, Kt. 80, K. 327–329.

pact with the USSR against the tendencies of the time, especially Paris.[37]

Poland delayed the transfer of its official position on the Eastern Pact project to France until the end of September 1934.[38] In a circular issued on 3 October 1934. Beck emphasized the positive results achieved by Poland in north-eastern Europe in a section that until recently was considered endangered. The Polish-Soviet agreements, the Soviets' agreements with the Baltic States and Finland, and the Polish-German agreements were a sufficient basis for cooperation. Beck recommended that in talks on the Eastern Pact, "it should be emphasized without hesitation that Poland has its own political achievements in Eastern Europe", developed through direct relations with other countries, and did not intend to replace it with any "indirect combinations".[39]

"Certain Polish-German Cooperation"

Can one claim that the action of Polish diplomacy against the concept of the Eastern Pact was agreed upon with Germany? [40] It is hard to deny that both sides held regular consultations through ambassadors in Berlin and Warsaw.[41] During the consultations on the Eastern Pact, Germany's pressure on Poland was constantly increasing. On 27 August 1934, the Polish ambassador Józef Lipski met with Foreign Minister Neurath and Chancellor Adolf Hitler. Neurath wanted "a certain Polish-German cooperation" with discretion to avoid false rumors. On the other hand, Hitler, in a conversation with Lipski, referred "fundamentally negatively" to the Eastern Pact project. He declared that Germany was completely satisfied with the Locarno guarantees without Russia, in whose interest the concept of the Eastern Pact was. He stated again that he changed his policy towards Poland because it was a protection from the East for Europe, and especially for Germany. The Chancellor confirmed that

37 Letter from the Ambassador in Moscow about a conversation with a senior official of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the USSR regarding publication in the Soviet press, Moscou, 24. 9. 1934, *PDD* 1934, No. 254, p. 583.

38 Memorandum of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the French Government on the position of the Polish Government towards the Eastern Pact, 27 September 1934, *Dokumenty do historii stosunków polsko-sowieckich, Vol. III, part 1*, No. 262, pp. 636–639.

39 Circular of the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the Polish position on the Eastern Pact project, Warsaw, 3 October 1934, *PDD* 1934, No. 261, pp. 595–596. JEZIORNY, *To Avoid Incurring All Uncertain*, pp. 10–11.

40 KORNAT – WOŁOS, p. 327; KORNAT, p. 143.

41 HÖLTJE, pp. 226–230; JEZIORNY, *To Avoid Incurring All Uncertain*, p. 7; KORNAT, pp. 143–146.

Germany's accession to the pact would strengthen the Soviets, which he did not want and considered harmful, as well as for Europe. If Poland joined the pact, it would have to revise its position by going to certain bargains with the superpowers. If Poland's position on the pact is also negative, "the only question left is to play the matter tactically". Neurath believed that it would be best to make "the pact go by". He also suggested that the Polish-German agreement on this matter should not be disclosed outside.[42]

On 4 October 1934, Minister Beck informed the German ambassador in Warsaw, Moltke, about the Polish response to the draft of the Eastern Pact. He stated that the progress observed in Europe in recent years on securing peace required Germany's presence in any broader pact. Beck believed that the selection of states in the proposed pact did not correspond to the regional system and in addition included Czechoslovakia. "After the Soviets joined the League of Nations, French pressure on the pact rather decreased, while the Soviets maintained lively activity, looking for some kind of agreement at all costs, even in the form of a bloc that did not include all the countries listed in the draft pact."[43]

France's New Offensive after Barthou's Death

A new phase of negotiations on the Eastern Pact began in October 1934 after the assassination of the French Foreign Minister Barthou. The new minister, Pierre Laval, was a supporter of cooperation with Western countries and the need to reach an agreement with Germany.[44] The change of priorities in Paris policy encouraged French politicians to continue to exert pressure on Poland in order to change its position on the concept of the Eastern Pact.

The new French offensive on the Eastern Pact, which was transformed into an agreement of non-aggression and consultation without obligatory mutual assistance, was received in Poland with clear reserve. After Laroche handed over the French memorandum on November 26, Beck issued

42 Report of the envoy in Berlin on the conversation with the chancellor and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany on the draft of the Eastern Pact, 27 August 1934, *PDD* 1934, No. 231, p. 524–528. See M. WOJCIECHOWSKI, *Stosunki polsko-niemieckie 1933–1938*, Poznań 1980, pp. 142–144; JEZIORNY, *British diplomacy,* p. 255.

43 Foreign Minister's note from his conversation with the German Envoy, 4 October 1934, *PDD* 1934, No. 264, pp. 605–606.

44 BRZEZIŃSKI, pp. 112–124; KORNAT – WOŁOS, p. 326; JEZIORNY, *To Avoid Incurring All Uncertain*, pp. 11–12.

a government communiqué, announcing that it would be studied with all attention corresponding to friendly relations.[45]

In Hoffinger's opinion of 30 November 1934, the communiqué was an attempt to further postpone the matter. The government press was apparently instructed to conduct the deliberations in a form more friendly to France, but without excessive involvement. The leitmotif was still the fact that Poland must be guided only by its own interests in regulating the affairs of Eastern Europe and cannot blindly fit into the concept of an ally. The Austrian envoy assessed that also on the French side, despite flirtations with Moscow, there was a desire to ease relations with Poland. In this sense, it should be understood that the University of Nancy honored the Polish ambassador in Paris, Aleksander Chłapowski, with the title of doctor of law and economics.[46]

The Polish side was not indifferent to criticism and came up with various initiatives to explain its attitude toward the Eastern Pact. Conservative Member of Parliament Janusz Radziwiłł gave an interview in which he criticized the accusations and suspicions expressed in France and also presented a list of Polish complaints. He emphatically emphasized his attachment to the Franco-Polish alliance, as well as to Polish independence and its position as a superpower.[47] The same line of thought was associated with the open letter to French frontline associations sent by Polish veterans through their president, General Józef Górecki, which was published on 16 December 1934 in "Gazeta Polska". Górecki emphasized his attachment to the Franco-Polish alliance, the cornerstone of Polish foreign policy, and rejected the possibility of further treatment of Polish as a satellite.[48] Both studies were previously submitted for consultation by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[49]

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45 Cipher telegram from the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Embassy in Paris about the conversation with the French Ambassador, 26 November 1934, *PDD* 1934, No. 311, p. 725.

46 Bericht Hoffingers bezüglich die neue Ostpaktdemarche Frankreichs und die Haltung Polens, Warschau, 30 November 1934, Nr. 150/Pol/1934, ÖStA, AdR, AA, Österreichische Gesandtschaft Warschau, Kt. 80, K. 397–398.

47 Bericht Hoffingers betreffend polnisch-französische Fühlungnahme, Warschau, 22 December 1934, Nr. 158, ÖStA, AdR, AA, Österreichische Gesandtschaft Warschau, Kt. 80, K. 415–417.

48 Ibidem; *DTJS*, pp. 182–186; M. JABŁONOWSKI, List otwarty kombatantów polskich do kombatantów francuskich z listopada 1934 r., in: *Dzieje Najnowsze*, 20, 1989, pp. 173–190.

49 Bericht Hoffingers betreffend polnisch-französische Fühlungnahme, Warschau,

During the talks held in Geneva on 16 and 19 January 1935, Laval expressed regret that Poland, in the name of its selfish interests, opposed a broader initiative aimed at the general good. Beck, in turn, referred to geographical premises and historical experiences indicating the decisive importance of relations with Germany and Russia for Polish. He also mentioned the situation at the end of the 18th century, when the cooperation of neighboring powers led to the partitions of Poland because it did not receive help from any European country. Beck believed that Poland's main interests depended on good relations with Germany and Russia.[50] Beck's opinion was consistent with Piłsudski's views that in the event of danger, Poland could only count on its own forces, despite the alliance with France. Beck assessed that the Eastern Pact was being "diluted" as a result of more and more new French proposals made to Germany. Beck drew the conclusion that détente between Poland and Germany was the only means to protect Polish interests from the negative consequences of changes in the policy of the Western powers.[51]

The position of the USSR was important for the further fate of the Eastern Pact. Ambassador Łukasiewicz reported from Moscow on October 1934 about a certain calming of the attitude towards Poland. Łukasiewicz believed that the Soviets actions were an expression of tactics aimed at influencing the Polish position on the Eastern Pact but also reflected a rather serious "breakdown of the Soviet government's confidence in our foreign policy".[52] However, this was not entirely the right conclusion, because at the beginning of 1935, Soviet diplomacy still treated the opposition of the Marshal and Beck to the idea of collective security as an argument pointing to Polish-German rapprochement. Accusations were also made of their joint plans for penetration in the East in the event of Japanese aggression against the USSR. Until the last moments of Piłsudski's life, the Soviets did not give up exerting pressure on Warsaw

22 December 1934, Nr. 158, ÖStA, AdR, AA, Österreichische Gesandtschaft Warschau, Kt. 80, K. 415–417; *DTJS*, Vol. I, p. 181; *PDD* 1934, pp. 686–687.

50 *Historia dyplomacji polskiej, Vol. IV*, p. 488; KORNAT – WOŁOS, p. 326.

51 *Historia dyplomacji polskiej, Vol. IV*, p. 488.

52 Report of the ambassador in Moscow to the minister of Foreign Affairs on the negative attitude of the authorities and propaganda of the USSR towards Poland, Moscow, 3 October 1934, *Dokumenty do historii stosunków polsko-sowieckich, Vol. III, part 1*, No. 265, p. 645–646. See GREGOROWICZ, pp. 230–231; *Historia dyplomacji polskiej, Vol. IV*, p. 486.

in order to force it to participate in the Franco-Soviet agreements.[53] However, these efforts were ineffective because, for Piłsudski's supporters, there was no doubt that the Red Army's invasion of Polish territory meant a threat to its independence.[54]

In the face of the impossibility of concluding a multilateral eastern pact on May 2, 1935, France signed a mutual assistance treaty with the USSR, which did not include a military convention. Laval harbored unfounded hopes that Hitler would eventually be more willing to reach a compromise with France. In Beck's opinion, this agreement, unlike the Eastern Pact, will not cause tensions in Polish-German relations and will not contribute to increasing the influence of the USSR in Europe. In addition, Beck assumed that in the future the Franco-Soviet alliance would hinder a possible agreement between Germany and France or the USSR.[55]

Beck no longer hid his decidedly negative attitude to the Eastern Pact and mutual assistance. During talks on 2 April 1935 with Anthony Eden in Warsaw, Beck stated that in the event of cooperation with one of the neighbors, there would be an immediate deterioration of stability on the other border.[56] Eden, a representative of the British school of "balance politics" commenting on the talks with Beck in Warsaw, did not understand the resistance of Poles to joining the Eastern Pact because he naively believed Litvinov's assurances about help from the Russians. Instead, he saw clearly that the goal of Beck's policy was not to get involved on any side, "and yet in the event of the outbreak of war in Eastern Europe, Poland would undoubtedly be drawn into it". According to Eden, Beck overestimated the strength of his country. Eden, on the other hand, harbored illusions about Russia, which, in his opinion, did not seek expansion at that time. However, he turned out to be a realist when he stated that the second neighbor of Poland – Germany – revealed

53 Note of the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs on the conversation with the Polish Ambassador in Moscow on the Eastern Pact, 9 April 1935, *Dokumenty do historii stosunków polsko-sowieckich, Vol. III, part 1*, No. 344, p. 818; JEZIORNY, *British Diplomacy*, pp. 492–492.

54 Note of the Department of International Organizations and the Western Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Polish's attitude to the concept of the Eastern Pact, 15 August 1934, *PDD* 1934, No. 223, pp. 510–512.

55 JURKIEWICZ, pp. 122–123; BATOWSKI, pp. 225–226; KORNAT, pp. 148–149.

56 A note from the conversation between the Foreign Secretary and the British Lord of the Royal Secret Seal in Warsaw, 2–3 April 1935, *Dokumenty do historii stosunków polsko-sowieckich, Vol. III, part 1*, No. 338, pp. 802–8090. See BECK, *Ostatni raport*, pp. 89–92; JEZIORNY, *To Avoid Incurring All Uncertain*, pp.13–14.

such intentions. In the cold calculation of the politics of the relations of power, it did not seem reasonable to him that "a state of medium power should incline towards its more aggressive neighbor, or even pretend to do so". He believed that the Poles could block any initiative for peace, but he was not sure if they would be able to stop the war initiative in their part of Europe.[57] Eden's conclusion, formulated in a telegram to London on 2 April, was unequivocal: "Polish policy is based on good relations with its two great neighbors, and therefore they will not enter into any treaty that would jeopardize relations with one of them. In my opinion, as long as the current regime remains in power, there is no sign of a fundamental change in this attitude."[58]

Eden drew the right conclusions, as evidenced by Piłsudski's instruction of 12 April 1935 to Beck before his departure for Geneva. The Marshal ordered to maintain the current negative position on the Eastern Pact. Stabilization in Eastern Europe was primarily the work of Poland and therefore excluded its participation in any international political action that could jeopardize peace. Therefore, Poland refused to accept the concept of mutual assistance proposed in the draft of the Eastern Pact if it were to come from the USSR, considered the most dangerous neighbor.[59] Beck also expressed this instruction in talks with Laval on 10–11 May 1935 in Warsaw. He emphatically confirmed that Polish policy aimed at "not compromising and diluting the results it has achieved so far by applying the principle of good neighbourliness to its neighbours."[60]

"Poland remains stable. The Eastern Pact is not an option"

Laval's approach to the issue of the Eastern Pact raised the question of Germany's attitude. On 5 December 1934, Lipski reported from Berlin after talks with Neurath that Germany had not changed its negative attitude towards the Eastern Pact. He also added that Neurath ironically

57 A. EDEN, *Pamiętniki 1923–1938, Vol. I, W obliczu dyktatorów*, Warszawa 1970, pp. 132–133.

58 JEZIORNY, *British diplomacy*, pp. 444–445.

59 BECK, *Wspomnienia*, pp. 114–116; *DTJS*, Vol. I, p. 267; JĘDRZEJEWICZ – CISAEK, Vol. 4, p. 401.

60 Notes of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs from three conversations between the leadership of Polish diplomacy and the French Minister of Foreign Affairs visiting Poland, 10–11 May 1935, *Dokumenty do historii stosunków polsko-sowieckich, Vol. III, part 1*, no. 355, p. 842. See JURKIEWICZ, pp. 123-124; KORNAT – WOŁOS, pp. 349–351.

called the Eastern Pact "Russenpakt".[61] Another example of consultations with Germany was Beck's conversation with Ambassador Moltke immediately after Laroche's departure for Paris on December 22, 1934. Beck probably informed Moltke about Warsaw's response to the French memorandum on the Eastern Pact.[62]

The policy of balance towards Germany also began to encounter difficulties. At the beginning of 1935, the leaders of the Third Reich proposed to Poland to strengthen relations and join the anti-Soviet front. Hermann Göring came to Poland in January 1935 with a very clear offer. However, Piłsudski rejected German proposals that went beyond the non-aggression pact, as well as the pressure from France and the USSR to join the Eastern Pact.[63]

After Germany's declarations in March 1935, which announced the restoration of universal military service, Poland continued to care for good relations with its western neighbor.[64] On 16 March, during a conversation with Hitler, Lipski heard that he would not accept the clause of mutual assistance in relation to Russia, because the Reich did not border it and it was unthinkable that "divisions of national-socialist troops" would bring aid to communist Russia.[65]

On April 5, 1935, Goebbels spoke with Hitler about the danger of war for the fate of Nazi Germany: "He [Hitler] does not believe in war. If it happened, it would be terrible. We have no raw materials. [We must] do everything to get out of the crisis. That is why we need to arm yourself intensively. We have no choice but to keep our nerves in check. Poland remains stable. The Eastern Pact is not an option."[66] In this situation, in connection with the submission of his own offer of a non-aggression pact in the east, Hitler declared to Lipski on April 12, 1935 that it was only about non-aggression, consultation and arbitration. Lipski assured

61 Ambassador Lipski's report, 5 December 1934, *PDD* 1934, No. 322, pp. 747–750. See KORNAT – WOŁOS, p. 326.

62 Bericht Hoffingers betreffend polnisch-französische Fühlungnahme, Warschau, 22 December 1934, Nr. 158, ÖStA, AdR, AA, Österreichische Gesandtschaft Warschau, Kt. 80, K. 415–417.

63 JĘDRZEJEWICZ – CISEK, p. 390; *Polska polityka zagraniczna w latach 1926–1939*, p. 390; GAUL, *Trzymajcie się z Zachodem*, pp. 789–791; KORNAT, pp. 161–163.

64 KORNAT, pp. 150–153.

65 Report of the ambassador in Berlin on the conversation with the German Chancellor on the introduction of universal military service in Germany, 16 March 1935, *PDD* 1935, No. 85, p. 206–207. See KORNAT, p. 147.

66 J. GOEBBELS, *Dzienniki, Vol. 1, 1923–1939*, Warszawa 2013, p. 279.

Beck in his report that the position of the German government remained completely negative towards the possibility of "concluding a pact of mutual assistance between the Reich and the Soviets".[67]

Ambassador Lipski's statement during a conversation with Minister Neurath on 3 May 1935 was symptomatic. He stated that after Beck's conversation with Eden, the English delegation no longer concealed the fact that it considered the concept of the Eastern Pact to be buried.[68] In the face of the efforts made by the Soviets, Beck once again in Geneva emphasized Poland's negative position towards the idea of the Eastern Pact. Piłsudski's opposition coincided with the refusal of Nazi Germany, which further weakened the position of Poland, still stuck in the Locarno trap.

Conclusions

The security of the Polish state occupied an important place in Józef Piłsudski's concept of raison d'état, who saw its military, political and civilizational dimensions. France and England, signatories of the Treaty of Versailles, guaranteed the western border of the Republic of Poland, and mutual ties were strengthened by belonging to Western civilization. Germany did not want to come to terms with the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles and sought to revise its eastern borders. In Rapallo, Germany reached an agreement with Soviet Russia, despite its differences in civilization, political system and ideology. In Locarno, Germany undertook to respect the inviolability of the borders with France and Belgium in the Rhine Pact, leaving the course of the border with Poland open.

The different status of Germany's western and eastern borders disturbed the balance in Central Europe. The restoration of state security became a matter of Polish raison d'état. As the alliance with France loosened, Piłsudski opted for bilateral agreements: with the USSR in 1932 and Germany in 1934, taking care to maintain an equal distance from them. The weakness of the policy of neutrality consisted in taking into account only ad hoc interests, without the bond of common values, because Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia, destroying civilizational standards, plunged into barbarism.

67 Report of the Polish ambassador in Berlin on the conversation with the Chancellor and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 13 April 1935, *PDD* 1935, No. 131, pp. 306–309; KORNAT, p. 149.

68 Report of the ambassador in Berlin on talks with the German Foreign Minister and Hermann Göring, Berlin, 5 May 1935, *PDD* 1935, No. 153, p. 349.

Poland's security in the long run was at risk because it had no reliable allies and was not a superpower. In 1934, along with Poland's isolation, the concept of the Eastern Pact was created. The Machiavellian concert of Western powers, with the participation of the USSR, according to Piłsudski the greatest enemy, was to guarantee the security of the eastern border of France.

Piłsudski's negative attitude towards the Eastern Pact was shaped by his disbelief in the sense of further rapprochement with the USSR, his reluctance to change his conciliation policy towards Germany, and his skeptical assessment of the Franco-Soviet alliance, which would diminish the role of Poland as France's ally.

The obstacles put up by Poland also resulted from the lack of consent to solutions related to the entry of the Red Army into its territory. The threat to the Polish state was obvious since Stalin's Russia was to be the guarantor of its security, which automatically put a question mark over the security of the eastern Polish border since Soviet troops had to cross it to help France. Piłsudski's caution is noteworthy in order not to completely spoil relations with allied France, which was confirmed by his statements before his death about staying with the West, mainly with France but also with England.

Piłsudski's conviction of the great threat posed by the USSR and, consequently, the exclusion of the possibility of allowing Soviet troops into Polish territory was not oversensitive or obsessed. This was evidenced not only on 1 September, when Germany attacked Poland, but also on 17 September 1939, when the Red Army, as a result of the treacherous agreement between the USSR and Hitler's Reich and in violation of the non-aggression pact, occupied the eastern territories of the Republic of Poland up to the Bug River, which never again became part of the Polish state.

Locarno and British Grand Strategy[1]

Erik Goldstein[2]

In 1925 the Locarno Pact was formally signed in London, and the 'Locarno Room' remains one of the British Foreign Office's main reception venues. As one of the chief architects of the Pact the British Foreign Secretary Austen Chamberlain was acclaimed for having changing the atmospherics of European international relations, transformed by the new 'Spirit of Locarno'. The Pact did indeed resolve a number of issues arising from the postwar settlement for the continent, though many problems remained unresolved. For Britain, however, Locarno was only one component of an evolving post-First World War Grand Strategy. British diplomacy at Locarno illustrates the challenges that confront a power balancing both global and regional roles. Placing Locarno in a wider context helps to explain key aspects of British policy and how in turn these affected efforts to create a stable international order.

[Locarno; Great Britain; Collective Security; Austen Chamberlain]

In December 1925 the Locarno treaties were formally signed with great ceremony and publicity at the Foreign Office in London. The host was a delighted Foreign Secretary, Austen Chamberlain. The rooms where the signing occurred were subsequently renamed 'the Locarno Suite' and remain the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's primary ceremonial space, an ongoing reminder of a diplomatic success. This raises the question – what was Britain hoping to achieve with the Locarno Pacts? Locarno was the last of a series of conferences and agreements, stretching from 1919

1 This article is based on a keynote lecture delivered at the conference 'Centenary of the Locarno Treaties and Collective Security Policy in Europe: Reality – Reflection – Reassessment – Re-establishment?' jointly held by Charles University, German Historical Institute Warsaw, Philipps-University Marburg, and the University of West Bohemia, Pilsen, 24 October 2024.

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to 1925, that form the settlements of the Great War.[3] During that sequence of events the British government transitioned from the Liberal led coalition of Lloyd George to a Conservative government, where foreign policy was dominated by the Foreign Secretary, Austen Chamberlain. Chamberlain was one of the driving forces in the making of the Locarno Pact, and to fully understand his, and Britain's, objectives it is important to place them in the context of an effort to shape a postwar Grand Strategy for British policy. This postwar strategy needed to conform to the realities and the needs of Britain in a much transformed international order. For Britain, the Locarno Pact was only one piece of a wider, global, map.

During the period 1905–1922 the country had been led by a Liberal party prime minister, heading either a Liberal majority or a coalition government. The first half of the peace making era was therefore shaped by Liberal values. The years 1922–1924 were a transitional period, with a brief Conservative government followed by the country's first Labour party government. That brief Conservative government continued the sequence of peace settlement treaties begun at Paris in 1919, culminating with the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 covering Turkey, the last of the peace treaties with what had been the Central Powers. The Labour government then tried to broaden out the new world order with the Geneva Protocol, but this effort was dropped after the Conservatives returned to power in late 1924.

The new prime minister, Stanley Baldwin, had little interest in foreign affairs, and therefore found the Foreign Office a convenient place to deposit the previous party leader, and potential rival, Austen Chamberlain. In doing so he allowed Chamberlain a relatively free hand in foreign policy. Chamberlain's father, Joseph Chamberlain, had been one of the leading imperialists, very focused on how to keep the far flung British Empire together. A Liberal, Joseph Chamberlain had broken with the mainstream of his party over whether Ireland should have devolved government or stay in the main 'Union'. This led his Liberal Unionist faction to partner with the Conservative party, with whom they ultimately merged in 1912.[4] Austen Chamberlain always considered himself a Liberal, just a Liberal Unionist, and in many ways his tenure provided a continuity of the Liberal policies of previous years. Part of Austen Chamberlain's complex legacy

3 E. GOLDSTEIN, *The First World Wars Peace Settlements: international relations, 1918–25*, London 2002.

4 The British Conservative party remains officially the 'Conservative and Unionist Party'.

was an inherited commitment to imperial interests. He had served as the Secretary of State for India, 1915–1917, and in that post oversaw India's engagement in the World War. Much of his life had been engaged with imperial, rather than European, concerns. He played no direct role in the peace conferences held from 1919 onwards, serving as Chancellor of the Exchequer (Finance Minister), 1919–1921. This aloofness perhaps allowed him a freedom to consider new options in external policy. His close advisers as Foreign Secretary, serving as his permanent under-secretaries, Sir Eyre Crowe and Sir William Tyrrell, had both been close to the great Liberal Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey, who held office when the Great War broke out. They provided both continuity as well as perceptive insights into the current and possible future needs of British diplomacy. Collectively they proved a formidable team.[5]

When Austen Chamberlain entered the Foreign Office there were many challenges confronting the world's one truly global power. Outside of Europe there was the problem of debt repayment to the United States, the status of the Dominions, the future governance of India, and the amorphous postwar situation in the Middle East, especially in Mesopotamia (Iraq). In Europe, France was proving difficult with its occupation of the Ruhr, which was freezing any movement towards western European stability. France after all was Britain's historic rival, and concern about France was a long running British issue. In viewing this global situation, as one of Chamberlain's advisers commented: "This country has a double status. In the first place it is an integral part of Europe, a European state just as much as is France or Germany; secondly it is the centre and nucleus of a world-wide confederation, the other members of which are the Dominions."[6]

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5 On Crowe see T. G. OTTE, Eyre Crowe and British Foreign Policy: A Cognitive Map, in T. G. OTTE – C. A. PAGEDAS, *Personalities, War, and Diplomacy: Essays in International History*, London 1997, pp. 14–37; S. CROWE – E. CORP, *Our Ablest Public Servant: Sir Eyre Crowe, 1864–1925*, Braunton 1993. On Tyrrell see E. GOLDSTEIN, Sir William George Tyrrell, in: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biograph*, Oxford 2004, Vol. 55, pp. 807–810. On the overall internal foreign policy debates see E. GOLDSTEIN, British Diplomatic Strategy and the Locarno Conference, in: M. DOCKRILL – B. J. C. McKERCHER, *Diplomacy and World Power: Studies in British Foreign Policy, 1890–1951*, Cambridge 1996, pp. 115–135.

6 J. W. Headlam-Morley memorandum for Austen Chamberlain, The National Archives, London (hereinafter TNA), Foreign Office Papers, FO 371/11064/W1252/9/98, which is reprinted in J. HEADLAM-MORLEY, *Studies in Diplomatic History*, London 1930, pp. 171–192.

With so many issues confronting the Empire, Chamberlain could not deal with them all at once and therefore had to prioritise. In weighing the various threats to the hard won postwar order he concluded that the most immediate one was the tense situation on the Continent, where the dominant feeling was 'fear', and that there would be another war unless Britain gave Europe a feeling of security.[7] Chamberlain would often return to the idea of fear as he looked at the world. Indicative that he was considering a wider world picture when considering 'fear' as a factor was his comment a few weeks into taking office, "[…] the biggest factor in the world today was fear, and this fear was not confined to Europe…", this time commenting in the context of the United States and Japan.[8] On becoming Foreign Secretary Chamberlain spotted an opportunity to address these concerns, arising from developments during 1923/24 in what became known as the Dawes Plan. In 1925 Chamberlain would be awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace together with Charles Dawes. As a former finance minister himself, Chamberlain saw how to use this as a step towards stabilization, not only in Europe but also with the ongoing problems of Britain's debts to the Unites States.

In formulating his plans Chamberlain sought the benefit of advice from historians. It was during this era that there was a Historical Adviser at the Foreign Office, Sir James Headlam-Morley, whose advice Chamberlain clearly valued.[9] On Headlam-Morley's recommendation Chamberlain had made a careful reading of a recently published biography of Castlereagh, who had overseen Britain's foreign policy in the wake of the Napoleonic wars.[10] From this he took away the lesson of the need for Britain to have a continental engagement, and that Britain needed a quiescent continent so that it could deal with its pressing global concerns. The immediate impediment to a stable and quiescent Europe was France, and its relations

7 TNA, CAB 2/4/CID 192, meeting of 16 December 1924. Committee of Imperial Defence, Cabinet Papers.

8 *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919–1939*, 1st series, Vol. 27, London, 1986 (hereinafter DBFP, followed by series number, volume number, and piece number). DBFP 1/27/251, Memorandum by Mr. Chamberlain of a conversation with M. Herriot, 16 March 1925.

9 E. GOLDSTEIN, Sir James Wycliffe Headlam-Morley, in: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford 2004, Vol. 39, pp. 224–225; E. GOLDSTEIN, "A prominent place would have to be taken by history": The Origins of a Foreign Office Historical Section', in: T. G. OTTE (ed.), *Diplomacy and Power: Studies in Modern Diplomatic Practice*, London 2012, pp. 83–102.

10 C. K. WEBSTER, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh*, London 1924.

with Germany. France's actions lay at the core of the current problem and French 'anxiety' was seen as the root cause due to this 'anxiety' over its security. It was, however, also important not to alienate France in any new policy initiative. The equivalent of what would today be called the National Security Adviser, Sir Maurice Hankey, warned that imperial communications could be seriously jeopardised by a hostile France.[11]

In determining how best to proceed Chamberlain proved a leader who sought out and listened to advice, and who valued the expertise of the Office. One of the first things he did as Foreign Secretary was to convene a symposium of officials to discuss the way forward, in early 1925. Harold Nicolson, then a career diplomat, ably summarised the conclusions.[12] These notes on the symposium provide a valuable insight into the official mind. Europe was categorized as falling into three groups: the victors, the vanquished, and Russia. Soviet Russia was part of the Locarno backdrop, and it is worth noting how Russia was (and would remain) an enduring security concern for Britain, even if lay at the other end of Europe. Russia had long been an imperial British concern, long before the Bolshevik seizure of power.[13] As the Foreign Office discussion noted: "The Russian problem, that incessant though shapeless menace […]", concluding that "Russia is not [therefore] in any sense a factor of stability: she is indeed the most menacing of all our uncertainties; and it must thus be in spite of Russia, perhaps even because of Russia, that a policy of security must be framed".[14] In this context the French focus on Germany seemed misguided. Nonetheless because of this, France was seen as "[…] the root cause of the present insecurity of Europe".[15] London understood French fears of Germany, having twice been invaded by Germany within living memory. The challenge was how to assuage those fears?

Given this situation, what were British interests? Three axioms were agreed at the symposium: 1) that 'splendid isolation' was no longer

11 Memorandum by Hankey, sent to Lampson, Prime Minister, Austen Chamberlain, Lord Curzon, Arthur Balfour, 23 Jan. 1925. DBFP 1/27/191. The copy sent to Austen Chamberlain is in FO 800/257.

12 Nicolson, Present Condition in Europe, 23 January 1925 (there is a different date in DBFP final version). FO 371/11065/W2035/9/98 [the final version is in C2201/459/18, and is reprinted in DBFP 1/27/205].

13 E. GOLDSTEIN, Britain and the First Cold War, in: M. HOPKINS et al. (eds.), *Britain and the Cold War, 1945–1964: New Perspectives*, London 2003, pp. 7–14, 193–195.

14 Nicolson, Present Condition in Europe.

15 Ibid.

feasible, but now spelt danger and vulnerability, especially now that air-power had become a factor; 2) it would be unwise to commit Britain and the Empire to responsibilities that public opinion would not be prepared to execute; and 3) to contribute to general security the first step was to establish certainty and conviction, as it was far better to give restricted promises which Europe realized would be executed, than to enter into wider commitments, the ultimate execution of which would always allow of doubt. The needs of imperial defence were defined as 1) defence of the individual Dominions, 2) defence of sea communication between the empire, and 3) defence of the British isles. Since at the moment the first two were not under threat, the priority was the defence of the United Kingdom. This necessitated that 1) no single power dominated the Channel and the North Sea ports, 2) the avoidance of hostility with the countries that controlled these ports, especially France and Belgium and 3) to prevent any third power at war with France and Belgium from threatening the ports or posing an aerial danger.

These deliberations led the symposium to the conclusion that it was a necessity for British defence to reach some understanding with France and Belgium, and for Britain to guarantee that these territories do not fall into hostile hands. If such a guarantee was established, it was thought Germany would then be unlikely to contemplate attacking, and as a consequence France would settle down, and a nucleus of certainty would settle on Europe, bringing about stability. Nothing in these plans precluded Germany eventually being included in the system. Chamberlain grasped the importance of bringing Germany back within the comity of nations, commenting that: "I was much struck with an observation made by Mr. Headlam-Morley at our conference […] that the first thought of Castlereagh after 1815 was to restore the Concert of Europe & that the more ambitious peacemakers of Versailles when they framed the Covenant, still left a gap which only a new Concert of Europe can fill. For this reason amongst others, & because their very hesitation shows that the Germans recognise the full implications of the step, I should rejoice to see Germany join the League & take her seat at the Council."[16] Chamberlain in writing to the ambassador at Washington, Sir Esmé Howard, commented: "[…] I am not without hope that the influence of Great Britain may still be made the decisive factor in restoring the comity of nations. With America withdrawn […] Great Britain is the one possible

16 Minute by A Chamberlain, 21 Feb. 1925, FO 371/11064/W1252/9/98.

influence for peace and stabilization. Without our help things will go from bad to worse."[17]

Not everyone in the Cabinet felt the same and give the importance of Cabinet agreement in the unwritten British constitutional system, this was a serious hurdle for Chamberlain's plans. But Austen Chamberlain did have some of his father's political ruthlessness. In the end, after a particularly difficult Cabinet session, he threated to resign.[18] As his luck would have it, one of his chief problem colleagues, Lord Curzon, died a week later and the Cabinet soon after gave Chamberlain what was in effect a free hand to negotiate.

Chamberlain's objective generally was stabilization, and the first step was the most pressing problem – Franco-German tension. He was not unaware, however, of wider European concerns. Central Europe was not forgotten. Chamberlain saw the importance of stability in this region. For example, as Chancellor of the Exchequer he had been deeply involved in resolving the first Austrian financial crisis and the necessity of a stable Austria for a stable region. Locarno did touch on areas beyond western Europe. The Locarno bundle of agreements included arbitration agreements relating to Germany's eastern borders, involving Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. This in turn provided a role for the new League of Nations, through Article 16, which could bring the Council, and therefore its permanent members, into play. It was a step, and a realistic one, in the context of this negotiation.

Chamberlain and Britain had to focus on Franco-German problems as a first step. A European war could escalate from Franco-German confrontation, not from a German-Czech one, or even perhaps from a German-Polish one.[19] Arbitration treaties were therefore an initial step towards diffusing tension. Britain, therefore, did not ignore Eastern Europe, but it was also aware that sorting out those regional issues would take time. Britain was not in a position to impose or dictate a solution, at best it could seek to facilitate one. Chamberlain's intention was to create what he termed 'An organ of conciliation' as a Locarno mechanism

17 Chamberlain to Howard (Washington), 18 Mar. 1925. DBFP 1/27/256.

18 AC 52/241, Chamberlain to Crowe, 14 March 1925. Austen Chamberlain Papers, University of Birmingham, and reprinted in Ch. PETRIE, *The Life and Letters of the Right Hon. Sir Austen Chamberlain*, Vol. II, London, 1940, p. 264.

19 B. J. C. McKERCHER, British Strategic Objectives, Austria, and Central-East Europe, 1918–1925, in: G. JOHNSON – A. BEST (eds.), *British Foreign and Defence Policy*, London 2025.

between the signatory powers.[20] The reality of diplomacy is that much depends on the mechanics of the machinery, and Chamberlain was proving to an adept diplomatic mechanic, clearly benefitting from his team of professional advisers.

Mechanically as to how best to proceed was an early challenge for Chamberlain. The short lived Labour government of 1924 had supported the Geneva Protocol, but the new Conservative government did not. The Protocol had been largely the initiative of Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary Ramsay MacDonald. Its purpose was to provide more insurance than the Covenant of the League did. If the Geneva Protocol was to be refuted, a constructive alternative had to be offered. This was part of the road to Locarno. As Foreign Secretary Chamberlain utilized a variety of methods, some policies were pursued through the League of Nations and some outside the League, such as Locarno. The Locarno system had some standalone aspects, with others that involved the League of Nations downstream. Locarno is often seen as an ad hoc event, but Chamberlain had hoped it would be the first of a series of 'Locarnos'. There were ideas for an 'Eastern' Locarno and a 'Mediterranean' Locarno. These collectively would stabilize the Continent, in turn allowing Britain more scope to deal with its non-European concerns.

Chamberlain had grasped one of the principles of negotiation, that it is better to move in small, achievable steps, not in grand global efforts, as per force the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 had had to do.

Complex as the western European situation was, in comparison, it was the least difficult of the many problems confronting the British empire. By breaking the western European issues further into smaller topics, it was possible to reach a positive outcome. As Tyrrell commented after the negotiations were successfully completed: "For the first time since the Armistice we have attempted to reconstruct Europe, beginning at the foundation of the building instead of generating hot air about the height of the sixth floor."[21] At the time 'The Spirit of Locarno' was widely hailed. Chamberlain was made of Knight of the Garter, Britain's highest knighthood, for his success, just as Arthur Balfour had been on his return from the Washington Conference in 1922.

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20 A. Chamberlain to Rumbold (Berlin), 8 Feb. 1929. AC 55/441. Sir Austen Chamberlain Papers.

21 Tyrrell to House, 26 Nov. 1925. Series I, Box 111a, Folder 3870. Edward Mandell House Papers (MS 466). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

So what happened after 1925 and the momentum that had been hoped for? Locarno needed implementation, which brings the focus back to institutional mechanics. This meant the mechanics of admitting Germany to the League of Nations, which also meant the winding down of the arms inspection regime mandated by the 1919 Treaty of Versailles, and incidentally diverting attention away from a report about the extensive German violations of its obligations in that regard. This all took time and attention. Then in 1926 Britain was convulsed by what has gone down in British history as 'the General Strike'. Pressing imperial concerns were soon absorbing more of London's attention. The resolution of future relations with the self-governing Dominions would not wait no longer. In 1926 came the less famous, but certainly consequential, Balfour Declaration which led to the 1931 Statute of Westminster and the effective independence of the Dominions.[22] The future governance of India was likewise occupying attention, with the 1927 Simon Commission on the future governance of India. Chamberlain, as a former Secretary of State for India was closely watching this as well.

Nevertheless, aspects of the efforts at continuing the spirit of stabilization are evident. At the 1927 Geneva Naval Conference, although Britain and the United States could not reach agreement they kept working at resolving their differences, which came to fruition at the 1929/30 London Naval Conference. The origins of that solution came on Chamberlain's watch.

It is worthwhile to recall that when Chamberlain initiated his efforts, he confronted great opposition on his domestic front. As he reminisced to his permanent under-secretary, Sir William Tyrrell, two years later: "I am much more of an 'Européen' than most of my countrymen, for I have a clearer perception than they of the inextricable way in which our interests are bound up with every possibility of the European situation. I was therefore, prepared to take the risks of the Locarno policy, and I persuaded first the Cabinet and then Parliament to accept them. I do no think that any other man on either front bench would have gone as far, and not one of them will go further."[23] In common with his father, Chamberlain took a world view of British concerns, but he added

22 See J. VALKOUN, *Great Britain, the Dominions and the Transformation of the British Empire, 1907-1931: The Road to the Statute of Westminster*, London 2021.

23 A. Chamberlain (British Delegation, Geneva) to Tyrrell, 19 Sep. 1927. AC 54/482. Sir Austen Chamberlain Papers.

a stronger European dimension. He was, after all, a self-professed heir of Castlereagh. Austen Chamberlain having become a student of Britain's traditional European role in maintaining a balance of power on the continent ordered that Castlereagh's portrait be hung in the room where the Locarno treaties were signed. To pull back the lens on the Locarno pact, Chamberlain's mental map of the world was not just a western European, or even a European-wide mental map – but a global one. As he observed in his memoirs, "We made the Treaty of Locarno a great and significant contribution to the peace of the world, but in making that contribution I have never pretended that our motives were purely altruistic and that we took no thought of ourselves."[24]

[24] A. CHAMBERLAIN, *Down the Years*, London 1935, p. 168.

Lesser-known Aspects of the Saint Germain Peace Treaty: Czechoslovak Land Reform on the Estates of Austrian Citizens in the Interwar Period[1]

Václav Horčička[2]

This study explores a lesser-known aspect of the Saint Germain Peace Treaty – the impact of Czechoslovak land reform on estates owned by Austrian citizens in the interwar period. Following the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, property rights of Austrian landowners in Czechoslovakia became a contentious issue, especially as land reform targeted large estates, many of which belonged to Austrian aristocrats. Though the Treaty of Saint Germain appeared to offer some protections, Vienna ultimately chose not to internationalize the dispute via a mixed arbitral tribunal. Legal ambiguity, Austria's political and economic dependency on Czechoslovakia, and efforts to maintain diplomatic relations all influenced this decision. Despite some diplomatic efforts and partial settlements, Austrian landowners received significantly lower compensation compared to other foreign nationals. This case highlights the limits of international legal mechanisms when weighed against broader political and economic interests in post-war Central Europe, and sheds light on Austria's cautious approach to protecting its nationals abroad.

[Czechoslovak Land Reform; Austrian Landowners; Saint Germain Peace Treaty; Mixed Arbitral Tribunal; Interwar Diplomacy]

Czechoslovak-Austrian relations in the interwar period were not without conflicts and misunderstandings. Especially the early stages in 1918 and 1919 can by no means be described as harmonious. The very way in which the two republics came into being certainly contributed to this.

1 This study was made possible thanks to the support of the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen.

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While Czechoslovakia was the result of several years of persistent and deliberate efforts by foreign and domestic resistance, Austria achieved independence, to put it simply, as if by accident; it was essentially the result of the military, economic and political crisis of the autumn of 1918. In the first years of their independent existence, the two so-called successor states of the Habsburg Monarchy were burdened in particular by the dispute over the fate of the German minority in Czechoslovakia, whose representatives expressed their will to become part of German Austria at the end of October and beginning of November 1918.[3] The uncertainty regarding the borders of both states was put to an end by the violent occupation of the border areas by Czechoslovak troops and finally by the Saint Germain Peace Treaty of 10 September 1919.[4]

Despite the normalization of economic relations between the two countries in 1921 (the so-called Treaty of Lana), other controversial issues remained that have been only marginally addressed in the literature. The consequences of the Czechoslovak land reform on the large estates owned by Austrians in Czechoslovakia was one of these issues. The Austrians were the most important ownership group alongside the Reich-German and Hungarian owners.[5] There were more than five dozen individuals and legal entities whose land holdings amounted to almost 195,000 hectares of land. The majority of these were forests, with just under seventy-nine thousand hectares of arable land.[6] The owners were mostly aristocrats (whose titles, despite the official abolition of the nobility, are listed here), but there were also persons of civic origin, church institutions or municipalities.

3 Autonomous provinces such as Deutschböhmen, Sudetenland, Böhmerwaldgau a Deutschsüdmähren were created. On the development in the border regions cf. e.g. M. F. LILL, Die Tschechoslowakei in der österreichischen Aussenpolitik der Zwischenkriegszeit (1918–1938): Politische und wirtschaftliche Beziehungen, in: *Sudetendeutsches Archiv* 2006, pp. 43–64.

4 On peace negotiations with Austria cf. O. KONRÁD, *Nevyvážené vztahy:* Československo *a Rakousko 1918–1933*, Praha 2012, pp. 110–119.

5 E.g. Reich Germans owned almost 378,000 hectares of Czechoslovak land (Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, Berlin, hereinafter as PAAA), f. Gesandtschaft Prag, karton (k.) 101, Liste der durch die Bodenreform betroffenen reichsdeutschen Grossgrundbesitzer in der Tschechoslovakei.

6 Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Wien (hereinafter as ÖStA), Archiv der Republik, f. Bundesministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten (hereinafter as AdR/Auswärtiges), f. Gesandtschafts- und Konsulatsarchive, Gesandtschaft Prag (hereinafter as Gesandtschaft Prag), k. 61, letter from Albrecht Prince Zedtwitz to the Austrian Minister in ČSR Ferdinand Marek from November 1924, Grossgrundbesitzer österreichischer Staatsangehörigkeit in der Tschechoslowakei.

The largest landowners with Austrian citizenship were the former Cisleithanian prime minister and long-time speaker of the House of Lords Alfred Prince Windischgrätz with about twenty-three thousand hectares of land in western and southern Bohemia and partly also in Slovakia (mainly Kladruby, Tachov, Štěkeň and Jablonica-Trstín in Slovakia), Karl Josef, Prince Trauttmansdorff with less than eighteen thousand hectares in south-western and north-eastern Bohemia (mainly Horšovský Týn/Bischofteinitz and Jičín-Kumburk) and Johann Josef, Count Herberstein-Proskau with more than thirteen thousand hectares in northern and southern Bohemia and southern Moravia (Libochovice, Nepomyšl, Vlachovo Březí and Dolní Kounice).

Former nobles and other landowners with Austrian nationality expected the Austrian Republic to stand up for their rights. Prague's position in applying land reform to foreigners was not set in stone. The uncertainty of the Czechoslovak authorities as to whether the reform could be defended without fail abroad is evident from their internal documents in particular. Even the Ministry of Finance, controlled by the so-called agrarians, i.e. the political current supporting the reform, questioned the calculation of compensation according to land prices in 1913–1915 in autumn 1919 and pointed out that the property levy should be calculated based on current prices.[7]

Ministers of all interested states tried to influence the amount of compensation and potentially the scope of the land reform – with varying degrees of success. Austrian Minister Ferdinand Marek also made attempts to achieve this.[8] He was, however, rather skeptical about the Austrian situation. He warned his superiors in the spring of 1922 that the victorious powers did not want to proceed together with the defeated states in Prague. But while "Reich German nationals can expect to receive the best treatment, Austrian and Hungarian nationals must

7 Archiv Ministerstva zahraničních věcí (hereinafter as AMZV), f. II. section – political, this is probably not the entire name of the fond, section ID is missing, k. 578, minutes from the 1st meeting of ministers on compensation, 4 November 1919.

8 Marek was the *chargé d'affaires* (*Geschäftsträger*) in Prague as of January 1919, and minister from 11 April 1922 until March 1938. Die Geschichte der österreichischen Botschaft in Prag und die Botschaftsgebäude, in: *Österreischische Botschaft Prag* [online], [cit. 2019–11–12.], https://www.bmeia.gv.at/oeb-prag/ueber-uns/die-botschaftsgebaeude). For more information on Ferdinand Marek, see e.g. Z. KÁRNÍK, Fenomén Marek: Nad osudy rakouského diplomata úzce spojeného s životem první republiky, in: *Acta historica et museologica Universitatis Silesianae Opaviensis*, C, No. 7, 2007, pp. 425–434.

in any case expect to be dealt with in the worst possible way during the implementation of the land reform…"[9]

Czechoslovak landowners with Austrian citizenship wanted to defend themselves against the land reform in international courts as German landowners had done. The lawsuit filed in 1924 by Reich-German citizen Albert Maria Lamoral, Prince of Thurn-Taxis, at the German-Czechoslovak Mixed Arbitral Tribunal based in Geneva was particularly significant in this respect.[10]

The Austrian owners appealed to the Austrian government in their efforts to force the establishment of a Czechoslovak-Austrian mixed arbitral tribunal, arguing in particular the provisions of the Treaty of Saint Germain. Article 267 stated that the immovable property and other assets of Austrian citizens "shall be returned to the beneficiaries, being exempt from all measures of that kind or any other measure taken on disposal, imposed administration or sequestration from 3 November 1918 until the time when this Treaty shall come into force". The sixth sub-section of section 10 (Articles 256 and 257) of the peace treaty then provided for the establishment of a mixed court of justice to settle disputes between the Allies and Associated Powers on the one hand and Austria on the other.[11] However, the question was whether it was beneficial for Austria to set up a tribunal and appeal to it in the matter of the Czechoslovak land reform.

Vienna now had to consider whether to internationalize the land reform disputes. The catalogue of complaints began to fill up as early as 1919, when the Czechoslovak state started to take action affecting the properties of Austrian citizens. Until the end of 1920, however, these concerned only individual cases. The case of the owner of the Pardubice estate, the industrialist Richard Freiherr Drasche von Wartinberg, attracted a great deal of attention in the initial phase of the reform. In December 1919, his large estate of some six and a half thousand hectares was placed under an imposed administration for alleged mismanagement.[12]

9 ÖstA, AdR/Auswärtiges, f. Gesandtschaft Prag, k. 61, No. Zl 16031, letter from Minister Ferdinand Marek to Austrian Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 4 May 1922.

10 Ibid., k. 187, complaint of Albert Maria Lamoral PrinceThurn-Taxise from 28 May 1924.

11 Treaty of St. Germain, in: *Wikisource.org* [online], [cit. 2019–11–12.], https://cs.wikisource.org/wiki/Saintgermainská_mírová_smlouva_(velká).

12 Ibid., letter from Richard Freiherr Drasche von Wartinberg to Austrian Miniter in Prague Ferdinand Marek from 29 December 1919.

The Austrian government clarified its position in a lengthy note sent to the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs in May 1921. Rather than addressing individual cases it launched a fundamental critique against the reform itself. Citing the Treaty of Saint-Germain, it claimed that "agricultural legislation has ceased to be a purely national matter" and argued that the Expropriation Act, which originally provided for the confiscation of the property belonging to "nationals of enemy states" without compensation in Article 9, was in direct contradiction to the peace treaty.[13] Referring to Drasche and other similar cases, the Viennese government demanded that the Czechoslovak authorities halt the land reform on the estates of Austrian citizens and return the expropriated property to them. Otherwise, they insisted on full compensation.[14]

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Edvard Beneš, was willing to make concessions but he did not intend to impose any significant restrictions on the reform of foreign-owned estates. In July 1921, he informed Minister Marek that Austrians would be treated similarly to British and French citizens. He suggested that Austrian citizens should seek an amicable settlement with the State Land Office.[15] The State Land Office, in turn, argued that while the Expropriation Act permitted the expropriation of property of enemy state nationals without compensation, it did so only if it did not violate the peace treaties, thereby refuting the arguments of the Austrian government.[16] Prague sent the Austrian Legation an official reply to its note to this effect.[17]

In the following months, Austrian diplomacy was limited to intervening in individual cases of land reform application.[18] In the sensitive period before Chancellor Johann Schober's trip to Czechoslovakia and

13 *Der Staatsvertrag von St. Germain samt Begleitnote vom 2. September 1919 und einem alphabetischen Nachschlageverzeichnisse*, Wien, 1919.

14 Národní archiv Praha (hereinafter as NA), f. 705 (Státní pozemkový úřad – spisy všeobecné), k. 334, No. Zl 22413, note from Austrian legation in Prague sent to the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 31 May 1921.

15 ÖStA, AdR/Auswärtiges, f. Gesandtschaft Prag, k. 61, No. Zl. 24075, letter from Ferdinand Marek to Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 5 July 1921.

16 AMZV ČR, VI. Legal section 1918–1945, k. 505, case No. 32824/21 Sec. VI, letter from State Land Office sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 31 August 1921.

17 ÖStA, AdR/Auswärtiges, f. Gesandtschaft Prag, k. 61, case No. 29124, letter from Minister Ferdinand Marek to Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 19 September 1921.

18 Ibid., case No. Zl. 21.427/Res., letter from Minister Ferdinand Marek to Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 6 September 1922.

the signing of the Treaty of Lana, it was not appropriate to aggravate mutual relations with polemic about the international legal aspects of the land reform. Austria's desire not to escalate the land reform dispute had its reasons. In the early 1920s, the government in Vienna was trying to establish good relations with Prague, which had an interest in the existence of Austria as a state and was strongly opposed to its possible annexation to Germany. In October 1922, Prague was therefore instrumental in the approval of the so-called Geneva Protocols, which provided Austria with significant foreign financial aid that prevented the state from going bankrupt.[19] Vienna's ability to intervene effectively on behalf of the Austrian landlords was inversely proportional to the degree of its dependence on Czechoslovakia and the victorious powers.

Another route through the Czechoslovak-Austrian Arbitral Tribunal did not seem promising.[20] In July 1922, this possibility was raised before Minister Marek by judicial counselor Wilhelm Löwenfeld, who associated with some of the Reich German owners and played an important role in the subsequent lawsuit filed by Prince Thurn-Taxis to the Czechoslovak-German Arbitral Tribunal. He also tried to convince Marek with the unsubstantiated claim that the Reich government considered the prospects

19 See P. BERGER – J. NOVOTNÝ – J. ŠOUŠA, Der Beitrag der Tschechoslowakischen Republik zur Sanierung der österreichischen Finanzen 1919–1938, in: A. TEICHOVÁ – H. MATIS (eds.), *Österreich und die Tschechoslowakei 1918–1938: Die wirtschaftliche Neuordnung in Zentraleuropa in der Zwischenkriegszeit*, Wien, Köln/R., Weimar, Böhlau 1996, pp. 169–210. Czechoslovakia contributed one-fifth of the 520 million gold crowns of the so-called rehabilitation loan granted to Austria to cover budget deficits that would arise from the negotiation of the protocols until 1924, and one-third of the 130 million gold crowns allowed to Austria to repay advances on loans previously granted to it by the governments of Great Britain, France, Italy, and Czechoslovakia. (Print 3939: Chamber of Deputies of the National Assembly of the Czechoslovak Republic, Report of the Budget Committee on the Government Bill (Print 3921) authorizing the Minister of Finance to take over the guarantees for the Austrian rehabilitation loans under the Geneva Protocols of 4 October 1922. In: Joint Czech-Slovak Digital Parliamentary Library [online]. National Assembly of the Czechoslovak Republic 1920–1925, Prints, 13 December 1922 [cit. 2019–11–12], http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1920ns/ps/tisky/T3939_00.htm; see also J. NOVOTNÝ – J. ŠOUŠA, K účasti československých bank na půjčkách Rakouské republice v meziválečném období, in: *Slezský sborník*, 91, 1–2, 1993, pp. 24–29.

20 Marek to Wien-Claudim, 4 April 1923, No. Zl. 3967/res., ÖStA, AdR/Auswärtiges, f. Gesandtschaft Prag, kt. 61.

of the German landowners to be good.[21] Marek was right to have considerable doubts about his conclusions. In his opinion, the cases of the Austrian owners should have been submitted to the (as yet unconstituted) mixed arbitral tribunal only if the objectivity of the president of the court was guaranteed. Even if this condition was met, however, the Minister was not sure that the mixed arbitral tribunal would rule in favor of the claimants. He warned that if this did not happen, it would reduce the hopes of all the Austrian landowners for an agreement with the Czechoslovak authorities.[22]

The meeting between a delegation of Austrian landowners and the Austrian Federal Chancellor Ignaz Seipel in May 1923 did not alter the Austrian government's position. The discussion, however, contributed substantially to clarifying mutual positions. Seipel explained the reasons why Austria was opposed to the establishment of a mixed arbitral tribunal. He even admitted that Czechoslovakia had proposed the establishment of the tribunal but Vienna had refused. There were several reasons. Austria did not want Czechoslovakia to be seen as an enemy state. In addition, Austria was convinced that since both states were part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire during the war, no measures were taken against enemy property in Czechoslovakia. The delegation was informed that, in the opinion of the Austrian Government, the land reform was also not a war measure under Article 267 of the Peace Treaty and that any potential action raised before a mixed arbitral tribunal could therefore not be expected to succeed. However, Austrian legal experts acknowledged that the landlords were entitled to full compensation for expropriation under international law. It was therefore agreed with Seipel that Vienna would wait to see if the Czechoslovak-Hungarian arbitral tribunal – as the cases of the foreign owners were related and the Hungarian case in particular was significant – would declare itself incompetent in the matter of reform. Seipel promised that he would then again consider raising the issue of land reform with international courts.[23]

The reasons for the reticence of Austrian diplomacy were both legal and political. For example, the so-called Resettlement Act (*Wiederbesiedlungsgesetz*), approved by the Austrian National Council on 31 May 1919, did

21 Marek to BMA, 13 July 1922, No. missing, ÖStA, AdR/Auswärtiges, f. Gesandtschaft Prag, kt. 61.

22 Marek to BMA, 6 June 1922, No. Zl. 21.427/Res., ÖStA, AdR/Auswärtiges, f. Gesandtschaft Prag, kt. 61.

23 ÖStA, AdR/Auswärtiges, f. Gesandtschaft Prag, k. 61, Gedächtnis-Skizze, 7 May 1923.

not go unnoticed by Prague.[24] The law allowed for the expropriation of land in order to revive peasant farms, which had ceased to exist after 1 January 1870. The scope of the measures taken was considerably smaller than in the case of the Czechoslovak land reform. In the whole of Austria, less than 14 000 hectares of land were expropriated under the law.[25] But this was much less important than other facts. In particular, it had to be taken into account that the law was also applied to estates owned by foreigners. Among the few Czechoslovak citizens impacted by the reform, Prince Jan Nepomuk Schwarzenberg was the most significantly affected, losing about 175 hectares of land to expropriation in Styria.[26] Similarly to the Czechoslovak land reform, the amount of compensation was also very problematic. It was "significantly below" the market price.[27]

In the following few years, the issue of land reform was again dealt with on an individual basis. From time to time the Austrian legation intervened in favor of a particular owner, while the Czechoslovak side made minor concessions. It was not until the second half of the 1920s that Vienna started to rethink the principles of the procedure for defending the interests of Austrian landowners in Czechoslovakia. At that time, the legal counsels of the affected owners insisted on the activation of the mixed arbitral tribunal. An example could be taken here from the lawsuits brought by the Reich-German owners. However, Felix Orsini-Rosenberg, the legal secretary of the Austrian legation in Prague, who was in charge of the land reform, was skeptical about this possibility. He said that the lawsuits did not bring any practical result until the summer of 1926. He advised his superiors not to wait for the decisions of the international courts. He was convinced that it would be more advantageous for the owners to reach an amicable settlement with the State Land Office.[28] He did not, however, indicate how they were to reach a favorable agreement

24 Gesetz vom 31. Mai 1919 über die Wiederbesiedlung gelegter Bauerngüter und Häusleranwesen (Wiederbesiedlungsgesetz), in: *ALEX: Historische Rechts- und Gesetzestexte* [online], © 2011 Österreichische Nationalbibliothek [cit. 2019–11–12], http://alex.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/alex?aid=sgb&datum=1919&page=815&size=45.

25 Stand der Wiederbesiedlung, 30 June 1927, No. missing, ÖStA, AdR, Bundesministerium für Land- und Forstwirtschaft (hereinafter as BMfLuF), Allgemein, Kt. 1913.

26 List of Foreign Owners, 24 March 1928, No. missing, ÖStA, AdR, BMfLuF, Allgemein, Kt. 1913.

27 Antrag an den Ministerialrat, no date (1925, No. z. Z. 142.970-14a/1925, *ÖStA*, AdR, BMfLuF, Allgemein, Kt. 1913.

28 Rosenberg, Pro domo, ÖStA, AdR/Auswärtiges, f. Gesandtschaft Prag, kt. 65.

without the threat of activating the mixed arbitral tribunal. If we were to view the situation purely in terms of the interests of the landlords, the activation of the mixed arbitral tribunal would have been appropriate. It will become apparent that other interests carried more weight in Vienna and that skepticism prevailed regarding the legal situation of the owners.

In the end, the Austrian government did not decide to go into open conflict with Prague over the land reform. The reasons were explained by Franz Peter, Secretary General for Foreign Affairs at the Federal Chancellor's Office[29] to minister Marek. He reiterated that the convening of a mixed arbitral tribunal under the Treaty of Saint Germain was not appropriate because "in our view, the reasoning of Article 267 of the Peace Treaty in relation to the implementation of the land reform on the estates of Austrian nationals is not ironclad". He reasoned, inter alia, that the laws on the implementation of the land reform applied to foreigners as well as to Czechoslovak citizens. Peter did not mention the application of the 1926 Arbitration Treaty, and it was thus apparently out of the question.[30]

Among the foreigners, the Austrian landlords were among those who were most damaged by the land reform. The issue was not primarily the extent of the land surrendered (its share of the original land ownership), but the financial arrangement of the expropriation. According to the records of the Czechoslovak authorities, by the end of 1929 sixteen cases had been settled by agreement (often under pressure) between the State Land Office and the Austrian landowners, representing about forty percent of the land ownership of Austrian landowners in Czechoslovakia. The average compensation for expropriated land amounted to eighteen hundred crowns per hectare, which was about half the market price at

29 Franz Peter (held the title of Knight von Thyllnreuth until 1919) was a very successful Austro-Hungarian consular officer until 1918 and was head of the 7th Department (International and State Law) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs before the dissolution of the monarchy. After the establishment of the Austrian Republic, his career continued: in 1923 he moved from the Legal Department of the Federal Foreign Office to its Political Section, and from 1926 until his retirement in 1936 he was Secretary-General for Foreign Affairs and head of the 3rd (later 4th) Section. J. ŽUPANIČ – V. HORČIČKA – H. KRÁLOVÁ, *Na rozcestí: Rakousko-uherská zahraniční služba* v *posledních letech existence monarchie*, Praha 2009, pp. 163 n.

30 ÖStA, AdR/Auswärtiges, f. Gesandtschaft Prag, k. 63, case No. Zl. 188.035-14a, Letter from Franz Peter, Secretary General of the Office of the Federal Chancellor, to Minister Ferdinand Marek from 9 December 1929.

the time.[31] The Czechoslovak landlords affected by the reform received roughly the same amount of compensation.[32]

The attempts of the Austrian landlords in Czechoslovakia to achieve the internationalization of the case, i.e. its transfer to a mixed arbitral tribunal, following the example of the Reich-German owners, were not successful in the end. The issue of land reform was, despite its undeniable importance, a minor matter. The focus of interest of the governments in Vienna and Prague was primarily the enormous economic, commercial and financial problems of Austria, which was dependent on the help of the victorious powers. Czechoslovakia played a significant role in the rehabilitation of the Austrian economy and was a key trading partner for the Austrians. Moreover, Vienna itself acknowledged that the objections raised by the Austrian landowners to the reform were not legally indisputable. Austrian diplomacy thus avoided a clash with Prague over the land reform and tried to influence its course by amicable means. However, as this study has shown, Vienna's accommodating attitude did not bring tangible benefits to the affected landowners. In particular, compared to other foreign landlords in interwar Czechoslovakia, the compensation and tax relief granted to Austrian citizens for expropriated property was lower than that granted to nationals of the other states involved.

31 However, large estate owners often claimed that market prices were even higher. AMZV ČR, VI. Legal section 1918–1945, k. 507, case No. 166445/29 – Z, Official Record from the Ministry of Finance from 21 December 1929.

32 The largest Czechoslovak landowner, Prince Jan Nepomuk Schwarzenberg, received an average of 1600 crowns per hectare. SOA Třeboň, oddělení Český Krumlov, f. Imposed administration of the Schwarzenberg property, k. 1, Bodenreform auf dem Fürst zu Schwarzenberg'schen Besitz: Verstaatlichung – Flächen und Übernahmprese, 14 December 1940.

Tschechoslowakisch-deutsche Wirtschafts- und Verkehrsbeziehungen im Schatten von Locarno[1]

Ivan Jakubec[2]

The article focuses on Czechoslovak-German economic and transport relations against the background of the Locarno Conference. The Peace Treaty of Versailles seemed to solve all problems, including those between Czechoslovakia and Germany. On the contrary, many issues remained unresolved. This article focuses on the second half of the 1920s, when some of the unresolved issues were either "definitely" resolved or remained "definitely" unresolved. One of the unresolved issues at the Paris Conference was the signing of the protocol on the establishment of the Czechoslovak lease zone in Hamburg's free port in 1929. On the other hand, it was not possible to replace the Czechoslovak-German trade treaty of 1920 with a new treaty. Negotiations on a new treaty had been underway since July 1926 but failed in the spring of 1928. The only result, however, was the conclusion of a new railway agreement in 1929. A year earlier, a "tariff and customs standstill" had also been negotiated in Munich between the northern German seaports, represented by Hamburg, and the southern European ports, represented by Trieste.

[Czechoslovakia; Germany; Economic Relations; Transport Relations; Locarno]

Die Studie konzentriert sich auf die tschechoslowakisch-deutschen Wirtschafts- und Verkehrsbeziehungen vor dem Hintergrund der Konferenz von Locarno. Der Friedensvertrag von Versailles schien alle Probleme zu lösen, auch die tschechoslowakisch-deutschen. Im Gegenteil, viele Fragen blieben auf halbem Wege stehen. Der Schwerpunkt des Beitrags bildet die zweite Hälfte der 1920er Jahre, als einige der ungelösten Fragen entweder „definitiv" gelöst wurden oder „definitiv" ungelöst blieben. Zu den noch offenen Fragen der Pariser Konferenz gehörte die Unterzeichnung des Protokolls über die Einrichtung der tschechoslowakischen Pacht-Zone im Hamburger Freihafen im Jahr 1929. Andererseits war es nicht möglich, den tschechoslowakisch-deutschen Handelsvertrag von 1920 durch einen neuen Vertrag zu ersetzen.

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Tschechoslowakisch-deutsche Wirtschafts- und Verkehrsbeziehungen waren seit 1918 nicht einfach. Wir finden Oszillation zwischen wechselseitig vorteilhaftem Pragmatismus, Aktivismus, Überlegenheit und Nicht-Transzendenz. Auf der höchsten Ebene mögen die tschechoslowakisch-deutschen Beziehungen nahtlos erscheinen, auf den unteren Ebenen sieht es jedoch anders aus. Diese Situation kann man als paradoxe Feststellung charakterisieren. Aus wirtschaftlicher Sicht wurde die Tschechoslowakei auf an einem starken und wirtschaftlich erfolgreichen Deutschland, aber aus sicherheitspolitischer Sicht an einem schwachen Nachbarn interessiert. In den 1920er Jahren finden wir in den gegenseitigen Wirtschaftsbeziehungen sowohl Versuche, den wirtschaftlichen Einfluss Österreichs und Deutschlands zu schwächen (Nostrifizierung der Unternehmen, die sein Sitz in Österreich oder in Ungarn hatten; Bodenreform, Deflationspolitik) als auch die Wirtschaftsbeziehungen aufrechtzuerhalten (Handelsvertrag von 1920, freundliche Sequestrierung gegenüber deutschem Eigentum, gegenseitige Meistbegünstigungsklausel gegenüber Deutschland).[3]

In seinem Bericht vom 2. Juni 1922 ging der deutsche Gesandte in Prag Franz Walter Koch auf die Rede von Ministerpräsident Beneš in der tschechoslowakischen zweiten Kammer – Senat – über die Beziehungen zu Deutschland ein. Er kam zu dem Schluss, dass: „Es gab und gibt gemeinsame wirtschaftliche [Kursivschrift im Original – I. J.] Interessen ganz Mitteleuropas." In der Vergangenheit gab es „gewisse wirtschaftliche und kulturelle Bande" zwischen Deutschland und böhmischen Ländern. „Es ist „die Frage der praktischen Politik" (das heißt: wir müssen es uns sehr überlegen), ob wir deutscher Kultur und deutscher Wirtschaft erneut Einfluss auf unsere Politik einräumen wollen."[4]

Die Lage der tschechoslowakischen Wirtschaft wurde von der deutschen Seite beobachtet. Einige Jahre später schrieb der Gesandte Koch am 21. Januar 1926 von Prag aus über die wirtschaftliche Lage der Tschechoslowakei im Jahre 1925: „Deutschlands Interesse liegt, wie bis-

3 Ausführlicher dazu E. KUBŮ, *Německo – zahraničně politické dilema Edvarda Beneše*, Praha 1994, S. 130–131; O. KONRÁD, Němci, Německo a Československo ve dvacátých letech. Možnosti a hranice československé politiky, in: E. HAJDIOVÁ – O. KONRÁD – J. MALÍNSKÁ (Hg.), *Edvard Beneš, Němci a Německo, Edice dokumentů, Bd. II/1*, Praha 2015, S. 15–16.

4 Beneš über die Beziehungen der Tschechoslowakei zu Deutschland, 2. Juni 1922. *Deutsche Gesandschaftsberichte aus Prag*. Ausgewählt, eingeleitet und kommentiert von M. ALEXANDER, II. Teil, München 2004, Dok. Nr. A 12, S. 624.

herige Entwicklung zeigt, […], vollständig in der Richtung der weiter fortgesetzten Loslösung der tschechoslowakischen Wirtschaft von der der übrigen Nachfolgestaaten. Und dies schon aus dem Grunde, weil dieser Vorgang geeignet erscheint, die tschechoslowakische Wirtschaft in fortschreitend engere Abhängigkeit von Deutschland zu versetzen, ganz abgesehen von den durch die sukzessive Zurückdrängung des tschechoslowakischen Einflusses auf den nahöstlichen Märkten für Deutschland sich jetzt schon ergebenden oder in der Zukunft zu gewärtigen weiteren Konkurrenzmöglichkeiten."[5]

Auch in den weiteren Jahren wurden die gegenseitigen Beziehungen positiv beurteilt. Im Namen des Gesandten Viktor von Heeren teilte von Prag aus am 23. Februar 1927 mit, dass Minister E. Beneš sich geäußert sei: „…sei das Verhältnis zwischen der Tschechoslowakei und Deutschland etwas Stabiles und sei immer korrekt und freundschaftlich gewesen und werde dies auch künftig hoffentlich bleiben."[6]

Die deutsche Diplomatie hat die Äußerungen aufmerksam verfolgt, besonders zu den Nachbarländern. Präsident Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk sollte im Frühjahr 1927 im Gespräch mit dem Minister Gustav Stresemann einführen: „Die Tschechoslowakei habe übrigens die Anregung Polens auf engere Beziehungen mit der Tschechoslowakei abgelehnt."[7] Auf der Ministerbesprechung von 30. Mai 1928 wurde konstatiert in Verbindung mit bevorstehende Ratstagung in Genf, dass „Herr Benesch habe des Weiteren von seinen Ideen wirtschaftlichen Annäherung der kleinen Staaten von Ost-Mitteleuropa untereinander gesprochen, die er sich letzten Endes in Form einer Zollgemeinschaft dieser Staaten vorstelle. Er habe dabei erklärt, daß Deutschland als einzige Großmacht schwer in diesen Rahmen passe, daß damit aber keineswegs eine Spitze gegen Deutschland gegeben sein solle".[8]

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5 Die Lage der tschechoslowakischen Wirtschaft im Jahre 1925, ebenda, Dok. Nr. 179, S. 465.

6 Beneš über das Verhältnis zu Deutschland und andere Fragender Aussenpolitik, 23. Februar 1927. *Deutsche Gesandschaftsberichte aus Prag*. Ausgewählt, eingeleitet und kommentiert von M. ALEXANDER, III. Teil, München 2009, Dok. Nr. A 4, S. 327.

7 Ministerrat beim Reichspräsidenten, 15. März 1927, 17 Uhr. *Akten der Reichskanzlei Weimarer Republik: Die Kabinette Marx III und IV*. Bearbeitet von G. ABRAMOWSKI, Bd. 1, Boppard am Rhein 1988, Dok. Nr. 201, S. 633.

8 Ministerbesprechung vom 30. Mai 1928, 16 Uhr, ebenda, Bd. 2, Boppard am Rhein 1988, Dok. Nr. 472, S. 1469.

Für die tschechoslowakische Wirtschaft war Deutschland als nächstgelegener und größter Wirtschaftsraum (für den Export tschechoslowakischer und den Import deutscher Waren), als Transitland für tschechoslowakische Exporte und Importe sowie als größter Transportpartner mit seinem Eisenbahn- und Flussnetz und seinen Seehäfen von großer Bedeutung. Der deutsche Schienengüterverkehrstarif hatte sogar einen entscheidenden Einfluss auf die Wettbewerbsfähigkeit der tschechoslowakischen Waren auf den westlichen Märkten.

Die gegenseitigen engen tschechoslowakisch-deutschen Wirtschaftsbeziehungen beweist folgende Tabelle. In den Jahren 1918–1929 hat sich Deutschland (einschließlich der Seehäfen) im Falle der Ausfuhr in der ersten Hälfte der zwanziger Jahre vergrößert bis ca. 4 Mrd. Kronen, was bedeutete 24–25 %. In der zweiten Hälfte der zwanziger Jahre hat sich tschechoslowakische Ausfuhr stabilisiert bis ca. 5–6 Mrd. Kronen, also ca. 23–28 %. Ähnliches Bild zeigt die tschechoslowakische Einfuhr aus Deutschland, aber mit steigender Tendenz von ca. 4 Mrd. bis ca. 7 Kronen, was betrug seit Mitte der zwanziger Jahre ca. 40 %.

Die tschechoslowakische Ausfuhr in Deutschland und Einfuhr aus Deutschland in den Jahren 1920–1929 in Mill. Kronen und in %

	Ausfuhr	%	Einfuhr	%
1920	3,969	18,8	3,536	27,9
1921	7,835	11,2	5,862	26,1
1922	9,978	12,1	5,604	24,0
1923	3,203	25,5	4,489	43,9
1924	4,127	24,2	6,435	40,3
1925	5,324	28,3	7,140	40,5
1926	4,762	26,7	5,635	36,9
1927	5,721	28,4	6,539	36,4
1928	5,690	26,8	7,419	38,7
1929	4,692	22,9	7,675	38,4

Quelle: Československá statistika, Reihe III, Bd. 13, 18, 27, 32, 41, 51, 58, 66, 73, Praha 1920–1930.
Daten für Deutschland einschließlich Häfen (Hamburg, Bremen) ohne Saarland.

Die internationalen Verkehrsbeziehungen bildeten und bis heute bilden die Grundlage der wirtschaftlichen, politischen und diplomatischen Außenbeziehungen. Das Niveau der Verkehrsbeziehungen zwischen Staaten wirkt sich auf das Niveau ihrer Wirtschaftsbeziehungen aus und umgekehrt.

Die Verkehrsfrage in den tschechoslowakisch-deutschen Beziehungen stellt einen sehr breiten Themenkomplex dar, der eine ganze Reihe von Beziehungen in Bezug auf Tarife, Technik, Betrieb, Finanzen, Recht, Eigentum usw. umfasst. Obwohl die tschechoslowakische Außenpolitik hauptsächlich auf Frankreich ausgerichtet war, orientierte sich die tschechoslowakische Wirtschafts-, Handels- und Verkehrspolitik an Deutschland. Diese ambivalente Ausrichtung beeinflusste die tschechoslowakisch-deutschen Wirtschafts- und Verkehrsbeziehungen in der Zwischenkriegszeit erheblich.

Der Verkehr war für die Tschechoslowakei als Binnenstaat von entscheidender Bedeutung, sowohl wirtschaftlich als auch politisch. Da die Produktionskapazitäten die Verwertungsmöglichkeiten auf dem innerstaatlichen Markt überstiegen, war die tschechoslowakische Industrie gezwungen, sich auf ausländische, auch außereuropäische Märkte zu orientieren. Dies stellte hohe Anforderungen an die Transport- und Zollverbindungen.

Die geografische Lage des Staates schuf die Voraussetzungen dafür, dass die Tschechoslowakei zu einem Transitgebiet für den internationalen Handel wurde, was jedoch nur teilweise gelang. Obwohl die Tschechoslowakei mit den Schlussfolgerungen der Pariser Friedenskonferenz in Bezug auf die Verkehrs- und Zollpolitik fast vollständig zufrieden war, blieben einige Fragen unvollendet oder offen.

Im Beitrag wurden drei Beispiele aus dem Verkehrs-, Tarif- und Handelsbereich gewählt. Dazu noch eine Bemerkung. Die tschechoslowakische Verkehrsinfrastruktur, Tarif- und Handelspolitik war so wichtig oder interessant, dass bei der deutschen Gesandtschaft in Prag war ein deutscher Eisenbahnsachverständige, später Beauftragter der Deutsche Reichsbahn-Gesellschaft (weiter als DRG) für die Tschechoslowakei tätig.[9]

[9] Dazu I. JAKUBEC, Německé Verkehrsberichte jako dokumenty k československo-německým hospodářským vztahům?, in: P. DUFEK (Hg.), *Obchodování v srdci Evropy. O dějinách a pramenech československo-německých hospodářských vztahů (1918–1992)*, Praha 2019, S. 98–107.

a) Abkommen von München Hamburg – Triest von 1928

Für den tschechoslowakischen Außenhandel waren Hamburg, Bremen (Baumwollimporte) und Stettin (Importe von schwedischem Eisenerz nach Nordmähren und ins angrenzende Tschechisch-Schlesien) sowie Triest von besonderer Bedeutung. Der Weg über Hamburg wies gegenüber dem Weg über Triest eine Reihe von Vorteilen auf, insbesondere die kürzere und technisch einfachere Transportverbindung, die durch die Möglichkeit der Nutzung der Eisenbahn oder der Elbmündung verbessert wurde, sowie die bessere technische, verkehrstechnische und logistische Ausstattung Hamburgs selbst. Dennoch behielt Triest bis Mitte der 1920er Jahre eine gewisse Bedeutung und diente als Korrektiv beim Aufbau der tschechoslowakischen Seetarife. Gleichzeitig gab es in der ersten Hälfte der 1920er Jahre ein gewisses Beharrungsvermögen bei der Weiterführung von Transportwegen aus der Monarchie. Die Route über Triest galt in Fachkreisen als „hochwertige Exportroute" oder „Exportweg von hohem Kaliber", unabhängig von den hydrologischen Bedingungen für die Ausfuhr von Zucker, Baumwoll- und Wollfäden, Flechtwaren, Glaswaren und bei der Einfuhr von Rohbaumwolle und Wolle.[10] Die tarifliche Begünstigung den Hafen Triest wurde von der Deutschen Reichsbahn mit dem Abschluss eines neuen Tarifs zwischen der Tschechoslowakei und den norddeutschen Häfen gekontert.[11]

Die Rivalität zwischen Hamburg und Triest, deren Kern in dem Bestreben lag, ein möglichst großes Transportgebiet aus der Tschechoslowakei in die Interessensphäre des einen oder anderen Hafens zu bekommen und damit die Tarifpolitik des anderen Konzerns zu beeinflussen, gipfelte 1925 in einem erbitterten Konkurrenzkampf zwischen diesen Hafengruppen. Die Deutsche Reichsbahn schlug eine Lösung vor, die auf gleichen Entfernungen von Hamburg und Triest (dem geographischen Zentrum) und auf berechneten Fässern (Preis/Entfernungsverhältnis, Einheitspreis) sowohl nach Norden als auch nach Süden beruhte. Dies hätte den völligen Ausschluss von Triest aus dem Überseeverkehr mit der Tschechoslowakei bedeutet, was aus Sicht des Handels, der Industrie und der Tschechoslowakischen Staatsbahnen (weiter als ČSD) nicht akzeptabel war und auch von den adriatischen Verwaltungen abgelehnt wurde.[12]

10 J. FUXA, Československo v dopravě s námořními přístavy, in: *Doprava a hospodářství*, 1, 1937, S. 11.

11 L. POHL, *Mezinárodní železniční tarify v době poválečné. Přednáška doc. Ladislava Pohla, centr. inspektora v čsl. minist. železnic ve Spolku tariférů v Praze dne 12. prosince 1924*, Praha 1925, S. 12.

12 *Deset let Československé republiky*, Bd. 2, Praha 1928, S. 445.

Die Friedensverträge beendeten den Tarif- und Verkehrskampf zwischen Hamburg und Triest nicht. Dieser Kampf veränderte sich vor dem Weltkrieg von Kampf zwischen den norddeutschen Seehäfen bzw. deutschen Bahnen und dem österreichischen Hafen Triest nach 1918 auf den Kampf von italienisch-österreichisch-tschechoslowakischen Verkehrsinteressen mit den Interessen der norddeutsche, insbesondere Hamburgs. Im Jahr 1926 wurde der Seehafen-Zweckverband errichtet. Die Interessenabgrenzungslinie verlief horizontal durch die Tschechoslowakei in Richtung Karlsbad/Karlovy Vary – Pilsen/Plzeň – Budweis/České Budějovice.[13] Scharfer Konkurrenzkampf zwischen Hamburg und Triest erreichte seinen Höhenpunkt im Jahre 1925, als die tschechoslowakischen, österreichischen und italienischen Eisenbahnen auf ihrem Strecken die von der Deutschen Reichsbahn ermäßigten Tarifsätze übernahmen und überdies noch eine Frachtermäßigung von 5 % gewährten.[14]

Am 7.–9. Juni 1928 fand eine Konferenz in München statt, auf der ein „Friedensvertrag" zwischen den interessierten Seiten geschlossen wurde. Die imaginäre Demarkationslinie teilte die Tschechoslowakei horizontalweise in Richtung Haid b. Tachau/Bor u Tachova – Pilsen – Pardubitz/Pardubice – Čadca.[15] In den dreißiger Jahren kam es zu weiteren Verhandlungen mit anderen Seehäfen (Gdingen, Konstanze) und zu den Abgrenzungslinien. Nach München 1928 sind an der Demarkationslinie die Tarife für Hamburg und Triest gleich. Hamburg setzt die Tarife in der Nordgruppe, Triest in der Südgruppe.

b) Eisenbahnvertrag von 1929

Der tschechoslowakisch-deutsche Handelsvertrag, der am 29. Juni 1920 in Prag unterzeichnet wurde, markierte eine entscheidende Etappe in den gegenseitigen Beziehungen in wirtschaftlicher, verkehrstechnischer

[13] L. STUBER, *Die Seehafentarifpolitik der deutschen Eisenbahnen. Allgemeine Grundlagen, historischen Entwicklung. Analyse der gegenwärtigen Situation und künftige Gestaltungsprobleme im Gemeinsamen Markt*, Düsseldorf 1969, S. 61–67.

[14] I. JAKUBEC, *Eisenbahn und Elbeschiffahrt in Mitteleuropa 1918–1938. Die Neuordnung der verkehrspolitischen Beziehungen zwischen der Tschechoslowakei, dem Deutschen Reich und Österreich in der Zwischenkriegszeit*, Stuttgart 2001, S. 111.

[15] Konference Mnichov 1928, Umschlag 6, Nr. 105449/IV-28 und Umschlag 2. Archiv Ministerstva zahraničních věcí České republiky (weiter als AMZV), IV. Sektion, Kart. 156; H. WEBER, *Der Tarifkampf Hamburg – Triest. Seine historische Entwicklung und jetzige Form*, Diss. Heidelberg, Beerfelden 1930, S. 211–214.

und zollrechtlicher Hinsicht.[16] Seit Juli 1926 verliefen langen und schwierigen Verhandlungen zwischen der Tschechoslowakei und Deutschland um einen neuen Handelsvertrag. Sie endeten erfolglos.[17] Die deutsche Wochenzeitschrift „Wirtschafsdienst" meldete jedoch im November 1927, dass „die Verhandlungen mit der Tschechoslowakei kurz vor dem letzten Stadium stehen".[18] Und fünf Monate später räumte sie realistisch ein, dass die Verhandlungen nicht an den Forderungen der Tschechoslowakei, auch nicht an ihrer Schuh- und Lederexportindustrie, gescheitert seien, sondern „hauptsächlich an der Möglichkeit, deutsche Zugeständnisse auch nur in geringem Umfang auf dem Gebiet der landwirtschaftlichen Erzeugnisse zu erhalten".[19] Dies entspricht die Aufzeichnung des Vortragenden Legationsrats Windel am 7. Juni 1929. Das Problem war der Zolltarif im Textilgebiet, Porzellan, Glas, aber vor allem verschlechterte Industrielage in Deutschland und tschechoslowakische landwirtschaftliche Wünsche.[20] Der Handelsvertrag blieb in Kraft mit jährlichen Änderungen bestehen.

Der Kern des Pudels bildete die Frage sog. (Eisenbahn)Markprioritäten. Gemäß Artikel 203 des Saint-Germain-Vertrags und Artikel 186 des Trianon-Vertrags musste die Tschechoslowakische Republik einen Teil der Schulden der Monarchie übernehmen. Die Markprioritäten stellten einen Teil der Schulden dar, die unter anderem bei den Eisenbahnen gesichert waren: bei der Böhmischen Nordbahn, der Böhmischen Westbahn, der Nordwestbahn, der Staatseisenbahngesellschaft, der Elisabethbahn, dem Staatseisenbahndarlehen von 1913 und der Aussig-Teplitzer-Bahn. Der Gesamtbetrag belief sich ca. auf 190 Mill. Mk.[21] Die Tschechoslowakei eilte mit der Valorisierung nicht. Am 17. Februar 1927, zum Abschluss der

16 Nařízení vlády republiky Československé ze dne 9. září 1921, Nr. 350/21, in: *Sbírka zákonů a nařízení státu československého 1921*, Praha 1921, S. 1373–11409; Wirtschaftsabkommen zwischen der Deutschen Regierung und der Tschechoslovakischen [!] Regierung, *Reichsgesetzblatt 1920*, Berlin 1920, Nr. 242, S. 2240–2278.

17 Aufzeichnung des Staatssekretärs des Auswärtigen Amts von Schubert, Berlin, 23. Mai 1928. in: *Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik 1918–1945* (weiter als *ADAP*), Serie B, Bd. IX, Göttingen 1976, Dok. Nr. 30, S. 65–71.

18 Deutschland Handelslage, in: *Wirtschaftsdienst*, 45, 11. November 1927, S. 1739.

19 Tschechoslowakei, in: *Wirtschaftsdienst*, 14, 6. April 1928, S. 559.

20 Aufzeichnung des Vortragenden Legationsrats Windel, Berlin 7. Juni 1929, *ADAP*, Serie B: 1925–1933, Bd. XII, Göttingen 1978, Dok. Nr. 15, S. 36–37.

21 E. KUBŮ, Majetkoprávní problematika v československo-německých vztazích meziválečného období, in: J. ŠTEMBERK – M. MANOVÁ u.a., *Historie a cestovní ruch. Perspektivní a podnětné spojení*, Praha 2008, S. 99.

vorbereitenden Verhandlungen für einen neuen Handelsvertrag, erklärte der Vorsitzende der deutschen Delegation, dass die Verhandlungen verschoben werden könnten, wenn die Kredite aus der Monarchie Zeit nicht diskutiert würden. Der deutsche Wirtschaftsminister Julius Curtius erklärte am 6. März 1928 im Reichstag, dass: „Ich kann mir nicht vorstellen, dass es möglich ist, wie bisher, in den Verhandlungen [um Handelsabkommen] mit Tschechoslowakei fortzufahren, wenn es nicht gelingt, in irgendeiner Weise eine Änderung der Situation vorzunehmen."[22] Der Bericht aus der tschechoslowakischen Botschaft in Berlin aber eingeführt hat, dass der Hauptgrund der Einfuhr tschechoslowakischer Landwirtschaftlichen Produkten sei.

Dann gab es die Möglichkeit, den gegenseitigen Warenverkehr durch neues Eisenbahnabkommen sichern. In den Verhandlungen ging es um die sog. beschränkte Parität von Gleichbehandlung der Ware des anderen Staates auf derselbe Strecke und Richtung und um die sog. Anfuhr Klausel, also Tarif-Maßnahmen gegen den Wettbewerb des Kraftfahrzeugens. In der Kohlenfrage ging es de facto um die Verlängerung des Art. 365 des Versailler Vertrages. Die Tschechoslowakei erleichterte den Export deutscher Kohle in die Tschechoslowakei, nach Österreich, Ungarn, Rumänien, Italien, in die Schweiz und an die Donauumschlagsplätze. Das tschechoslowakisch-deutsche Eisenbahnabkommen vom 1929 wurde als Erfolg beurteilt. Das tschechoslowakische Eisenbahnministerium konstatierte, dass „außer der Kohlenfrage gelangen es uns das zu erreichen, wofür sich die tschechoslowakische Delegation während der Verhandlungen um den Handelsvertrag im Jahre 1927 bemühte. Es ist bedauerlich, dass es nicht möglich war, die deutschen Eisenbahnen zu verpflichten, die bestehenden Transittarife auf dem Festland beizubehalten, die sie zwar noch nicht abgeschafft haben, die sie aber nach und nach abschaffen und uns damit die Ausfuhr nach Holland, Belgien und Frankreich und die Einfuhr aus diesen Ländern erschweren".[23]

Im Zusammenhang mit dem Eisenbahnabkommen verpflichtete sich die Deutsche Reichsbahn, ihren Sonderkohlentarif Nr. 6 auf tschechoslowakische Kohle ab der Grenze zu gewähren und damit de facto die Bestimmungen des Artikels 365 des Versailler Vertrages zu erweitern.

22 Ebenda, S. 94.

23 Zpráva ministerstva železnic o tzv. tarifní paritě železniční mezi ČSD a DRG vom 15.11.1929, Národní archiv Praha (weiter als NA), bestand Ministerstvo průmyslu, obchodu a živností (weiter als MPOŽ), Kart. 1792, Nr. 80721/29 priora 59963/29.

Im Gegenzug zu dieser Vereinbarung gewährte die ČSD-Tarifvorteile für deutsche Kohle, die für die Tschechoslowakei, Österreich, Ungarn, Rumänien, Italien, die Schweiz und die Donau-Umschlagplätze bestimmt war.[24] Außer dem Transit von und nach dem Balkan war Deutschland auch an der Einfuhr von oberschlesischer Kohle in die Tschechoslowakei und im Transit interessiert.

Am 30. Januar 1929 teilte Kamil Krofta, damals Leiter des Präsidiums des tschechoslowakischen Ministeriums für auswärtige Angelegenheiten, dem deutschen Gesandter Koch mit: „In Anbetracht der Tatsache, dass viel schwierigere und wichtigere Fragen, die beide Staaten betreffen, bereits glücklich und gütlich gelöst worden sind (die tschechoslowakischen Zonen in Hamburg, die Auslegung des Art. 16 der Elbe-Schifffahrt-Akte) oder mit Erfolg und in der Hoffnung auf eine vollständige Einigung verhandelt werden (die reichsdeutschen Eisenbahnen auf tschechoslowakischem Gebiet, Luftfragen usw.), kann das Auswärtige Amt nicht glauben, dass die wenig wichtige Frage der sogenannten Markprioritäten ein Grund gegen die Wiederaufnahme der Verhandlungen über einen Handelsvertrag sein könnte."[25]

Mitte Februar 1929 verzichtete Deutschland in einer mündlichen Erklärung Kochs de facto auf das Junktim mit Handelsvertrag und Markprioritäten. Allerdings wollte Deutschland unter Berufung auf das Locarno-Schiedsabkommen das Problem der Markprioritäten der Staatseisenbahn-Gesellschaft (StEG) im April 1933 dem Ständigen Internationalen Gerichtshof in Den Haag vorlegen. Der Austritt Deutschlands aus dem Völkerbund machte dies unmöglich.[26]

In Politischem Bericht von 17. März 1930 teilte Koch mit, dass Beneš: „Wenn man von dem Fehlen eines Handelsvertrages absehe, woran die Umstände schuld seien, die keinem der beiden Staaten zur Last gelegt werden könnten, so seien fast alle größeren Fragen zwischen der Tschechoslowakei und dem Reich zur Zufriedenheit geordnet."[27]

Sogar von der späteren Sicht (vom Jahre 1949) das tschechoslowakische Verkehrsministerium mitteilte, „allerdings wurde der Inhalt dieses Übereinkommens seitens der deutschen Bahn stets eingeschränkt und nur im Rahmen der direkten internationalen Tarife anerkannt. Trotzdem

24 Ebenda.
25 Jednání s Německem, AMZV, VI. Sektion, Kart. 255, Umschlag 18, Nr.15056/29.
26 KUBŮ, *Majetkoprávní problematika*, S. 97.
27 Beneš über sein Verhältnis zum Deutschen Reich. *Gesandschaftsberichte aus Prag*, III. Teil, Dok. Nr. A 29, S. 390.

wirkten seine Bestimmungen bis zum Zweiten Weltkrieg überwiegend zugunsten der tschechoslowakischen Wirtschaft".[28]

c) Freihafenzone Hamburg (tschechoslowakisches Pachtgelände für die Binnenschifffahrt im Hamburger Hafen) und Stettin

Anlässlich des Besuchs des tschechoslowakischen Vertreters von Außenministerium Kamil Krofta (späterer Außenminister) am 27. Januar 1927 in Berlin äußerte sich der Staatssekretär des Auswärtigen Amts von Schubert, daß er auf den Abschluss des Vertrages den größten Wert lege, „und zwar in erster Linie deshalb, weil auf diese Weise unsere Beziehungen abermals auf eine festere Basis gestellt werden würden. Zweitens, aber auch deshalb, wie ich ihm bereits gesagt hätte, weil auf diese Weise ein Präzedenzfall geschaffen würde, der auch Polen gegenüber verwertet könne".[29] In der Information für das Nationalversammlung für Herrn Dr. Beneš vom Jahre 1930 wurde konstatiert, dass die Dreiköpfige Kommission gemäß des Artikel 363 des Versailler Vertrages erteilte, am 2. November 1929 „Entscheidung über die Zuteilung der Räumlichkeiten im Hamburger Hafen und Stettiner Hafen" bekannt. Errichtet wurde nur die Binnenschifffahrtzone. Bestandteil der Entscheidung war der „Pachtvertrag zwischen der Tschechoslowakischen Republik und der Frei- und Hansestadt Hamburg über der Pacht im Hamburger Hafen laut den Artikeln Nr. 363 und 364 Versailler Friedensvertrages". Die Dokumente wurden von der tschechoslowakischen Regierung am 11. April 1930 bewilligt.[30]

In Anbetracht der Ergebnisse der Umfrage unter den Wirtschaftskreisen über die Notwendigkeit von See-Zonen und der Gründung einer tschechoslowakischen Seegesellschaft und der hohen Millioneninvestitionen beschloss die Regierung, „vorläufig von der Errichtung einer tschechoslowakischen Zone in Stettin und einer See-Zone in Hamburg abzusehen, aber die Möglichkeit ihrer künftigen Errichtung innerhalb eines Zeitraums von 99 Jahren zu sichern; ihre Forderungen in der Frage der rechtlichen Regelung auf das praktisch notwendige Maß zu beschränken, aber

28 Přehled dopravních styků se zahraničím v r. 1937 a v době poválečné, 29.11.1949. NA, bestand Ministerstvo dopravy, Kart. 293, Nr. 15016/49, S. 5.

29 Aufzeichnung des Staaatssekretär des Auswärtigen Amts von Schubert, Berlin, 27. Januar 1927, *ADAP*, Serie B, Bd. IV, Göttingen 1970, Dok. Nr. 72 und Anmerkungen dazu, S. 165.

30 Rozhodnutí tříčlenné komise podle čl. 6334 mír. sml. Versailleské, Informace Národního shromáždění pro p. ministra Dra Beneše. AMZV, IV. Sektion, Nr. 133, Umschlag 2, sine.

zu verlangen, dass den Bedürfnissen der Elbschifffahrt in größtmöglichem Umfang Rechnung getragen wird." Teil C des Protokolls I erweiterte die Möglichkeit der unkontrollierten Durchfahrt in die Tschechoslowakei aus dem Pachtgelände und dem Freihafen durch die tschechoslowakischen Behörden. Die Ergebnisse der langjährigen Verhandlungen entsprechen in praktischer und wirtschaftlicher Hinsicht „vollkommen den Bedürfnissen der tschechoslowakischen Elbschifffahrt. Die erzielten Vorteile werden in höchstem Maße der tschechoslowakischen Elbschifffahrtsgesellschaft zugutekommen, an der der Staat kapitalmäßig beteiligt ist und die dadurch eine dauerhafte und vorteilhafte Basis für ihre Tätigkeit im Hamburger Hafen erhält, zum Nutzen einer schnelleren und billigeren Aus- und Einfuhr tschechoslowakischer Waren über das für uns wichtigste Zentrum des Überseehandels und -transports".[31]

Die deutschen Interessen, insbesondere die von Hamburg, wurden bei den Verhandlungen ebenfalls berücksichtigt. Das tschechoslowakische Außenministerium erklärte im Wesentlichen: „Wie jeder andere Hafen ist auch Hamburg sehr daran interessiert, seine Anlagen zu erhalten, wenn nötig zu erweitern und die tschechoslowakische Wirtschaft, die einen so großen Anteil an seinem Gesamtbetrieb hat, so weit wie möglich an sich zu binden. […] Als Gegenleistung für unsere grundsätzlichen Zugeständnisse in der Frage der rechtlichen Regelung hat sich Deutschland entschlossen, uns in praktischer und wirtschaftlicher Hinsicht voll entgegenzukommen. Das direkte Einvernehmen ist auch der Grundgedanke aller Vereinbarungen für die Zukunft. So ist diese heikle Frage zur Zufriedenheit beider Parteien gütlich geregelt worden, was sicherlich zur Festigung der richtigen Beziehungen der Tschechoslowakischen Republik zu Deutschland beitragen wird."[32]

Über das Pachtgelände gingen 1931 ca. 20 % (212.645 t), 1932 ca. 21 % (129.173 t) der über Hamburg auf der Elbe exportierten tschechoslowakischen Waren. Umgekehrt handelte es sich 1931 um ca. 11,3 % (104.199 t), 1932 ca. 17 % (93.995 t). Für weitere Jahre mit Ausnahme ein paar Monate im Jahre 1933 sind keine anderen Angaben zur Verfügung. Die meisten von Warenvolumen gingen aber über andere Häfen im Freihafen Hamburg.[33]

31 Ebenda.
32 Ebenda.
33 JAKUBEC, *Eisenbahn*, S. 126–127.

Gelöst wurden auch die Fragen der Repartition (Verteilung) des Binnenschifffahrtparks auf der Elbe, Donau und Oder. Es ist es gelungen durch das Protokoll vom 4. November 1928 zwischen der Tschechoslowakei und Deutschland neue Änderung der Zoll- und Statistiksteuerung im Falle des direkten Durchfuhrs auf der Elbe laut des Art. 16 und ff der Elbe-Schifffahrt-Akte beschließen, Die Veränderung wurde durch Beschluss des Ministerrates am 2. Februar 1929 genehmigen und notiert von Internationalen Elbe-Kommission (Commission International de l'Elbe, weiter als CIE) auf dem 17. Tagung der Elbekommission im Februar 1929 mit Gültigkeit von 1. September 1929.[34]

Umgekehrt offengeblieben sind: Vertrag über die grenzüberschreitenden Eisenbahnen der Tschechoslowakei und Deutschland. Er wurde unterzeichnet im Jahre, ratifiziert erst im Jahre 1937. Ca. 100 Km der Bahnen auf dem tschechoslowakischen Gebiet befand sich im Bereich und Besitz der Deutschen Bahnen (Strecke Reichenberg – Zittau, Bahnen in der Umgebung von Eger/Cheb). Umgekehrt war die Strecke Asch/Aš (Böhmen) – Adorf (Sachsen) unterstellt tschechoslowakischer Hoheit. Abkommen über den Grenzverkehrsdienst der Deutschen Reichbahn bzw. Der Tschechoslowakischen Staatsbahnen von 1931 wurden in Deutschland von 1933 in Deutschland und in der Tschechoslowakei 1935 ratifiziert, in Kraft trat nach dem Austausch der Ratifikationsurkunden Ende Februar 1937.

Schluss

Die Post-Locarno-Verhandlungen wurden fast freundlich, aber nicht unproblematisch und unsentimental geführt. Auf der einen Seite steht die klare Bemühung, die eigenen wirtschaftlichen Interessen zu verteidigen, auf der anderen Seite die Bereitschaft, die Sachargumente der anderen Seite zu akzeptieren, allerdings nicht uneingeschränkt. Die zweite Hälfte der 1920er Jahre ist auch eine Zeit der wirtschaftlichen Ruhe, ein Boom, und Deutschland nimmt Kredite auf, um die Reparationen zurückzuzahlen.

Die wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen (Verkehr, Zölle) waren nicht problemlos, aber inhaltlich korrekt und pragmatisch. Deutschland brauchte nämlich den Transit nach Balkan und zurück und auch einige tschechoslowakische Rohstoffe und Produkte; die Tschechoslowakei brauchte den

[34] 8. Vyhláška ministerstva obchodu v dohodě se zúčastněnými ministerstvy ze dne 7. září 1929, in: *Plavební ročenka 1930*, [Praha] 1930, S. 143–144.

Transit durch Deutschland zu den deutschen Seehäfen und umgekehrt und Deutschland musste das Hinterland der deutschen Seehäfen, insbesondere Hamburg, sichern und für die Tschechoslowakei waren einige deutsche Produkte wichtig.

Was ist nicht gelungen, war die Markprioritätenproblematik zu beschließen, und neuen Handelsvertrag abzuschließen. Trotzdem galt der alte Handelsvertag bis zu der Errichtung des Protektorats. Weiter waren die Bemühungen um den Umtausch der Gelände in Hamburg nicht erfolgreich. Umgekehrt die Nicht-Errichtung des Aufbaus der Seehafenzone in Hamburg und der Binnenschifffahr- und Seehafenzonen in Stettin wurden mit den hohen Kosten verbunden und bestehenden Lagerhäuser in Hamburg und Stettin waren ausreichend. In Stettin mietete die tschechoslowakische Oder-Schiffahrtgesellschaft durch Ostreederei GmbH. Gebiet bei Parnitzbrücke (Halbinsel Ewa) als Betriebseinrichtungen; Umschlag realisierte sich im Reiherwerderhafenu.[35]

Auf der Elbe gab es auch in der zwanziger Jahre Exzesse, z. B. die durch unterschiedliche Auslegungen der Bestimmungen der Elbe-Schifffahrt-Akte oder die Anwendung von Vorschriften verursacht werden. So beschwerte sich in der Mitte der zwanziger Jahre der Deutsche Verkehrsbund, Mitgliedschaft Binnenschiffer und Wasserpersonal der Elbe-, Oder u. Märkischen Wasserstraßen Dresden über die mangelnden Sprachkenntnisse der Steuermänner auf tschechoslowakischen Schiffen und deren unbefugte Prüfung bzw. Feststellung von Schifffahrtspatenten.[36]

35 L. VAVROUCH, Československá přístavní pásma v cizině, in: *Plavební cesty Dunaj-Odra-Dunaj*, 8, 1947, S. 5; *Slovník veřejného práva československého*, Bd. III, Brno 1934, S. 698–707.

36 NA, bestand Československý plavební úřad, Kart. 45, Nr. 1670/26, 1884/26 und 2720/26.

The Treaties of Locarno: Final Building Block of Germany's Re-Internationalisation

Tilman Lüdke[1]

The defeat in World War I had a de-nationalising effect on Germany: it was stripped of its colonial possessions and was forbidden to become active in territories Germany had been quite intensively involved in before the war. There was a rupture in relations with the Ottoman Empire and its successor territories; under British pressure, Iran blacklisted a large number of German individuals from entering the country. Germans were prohibited from visiting the Middle East under British and French mandate rule altogether. However, attempts to re-enter the international scene dated almost to the beginning of the Weimar Republic, and certainly pre-dated the rapprochement with the western powers. While the activities of "Easterners", exemplified by the Rapallo Treaty with the Soviet Union, are comparably well studied, the relations with Middle Eastern countries in the years leading up to the Locarno Treaty still remain underexplored. These include the abolition of the Iranian "Black List" in 1922, and the re-establishment of diplomatic relations with the Turkish Republic in 1924. The signature of the Locarno treaties and Germany's subsequent entry into the League of Nations in the autumn of 1926 re-opened the way of German diplomatic, commercial and cultural activities in the Middle East. The fact that German policy towards the Soviet Union and to the "East" was hardly affected by the signature of the Locarno Treaties allows the argument that these Treaties – frequently hailed as a predecessor to the treaties establishing the European Communities in the 1950s and 1960s – did not mark a German turn "to the West." They rather provided Germany with added security and a framework the Nazi Regime could build on in its commercial and diplomatic expansion to South-Eastern Europe and the Middle East in the years after 1933.

[Germany (Weimar Republic); Foreign Relations; Turkey; Iran; Soviet Union]

Introduction

The overwhelming majority of literature dealing with "Weimar Germany" focuses on internal affairs within the republic, and particularly on the weakness of the otherwise laudable "first democracy on German soil".[2]

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2 See f.i. E. KOLB, *Die Weimarer Republik*, Munich 2002.

Traditionally, most scholars focus on internal reasons for the eventual failure of the democratic-republican system; foreign policy aspects, in comparison, receive less attention.[3] In geographical terms, authors covering Weimar Germany's foreign policy – understandably – concentrate on relations with Germany's European neighbours, particularly the victorious powers of the First World War.[4]

Relations with these powers improved gradually: the conditions of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 came as a moral and financial shock. The reparations demanded by defeated Germany were regarded as unbearable. The reparation issue did not only have external, but also internal consequences: some historians argue that they contributed to the mega-inflation of the German mark until November 1923. Furthermore, French insistence on reparation payments led to the occupation of the industrially important Ruhr area in the same year.

Indirectly this unsustainable situation triggered developments improving the relations of Germany with its neighbours. The Dawes-Plan of 1924 agreed upon as result of a conference in London imposed new and more manageable conditions for reparation payments; it also re-involved the United States in European politics as a guarantor power.[5] Although the Dawes Plan failed as an ultimate solution, it had to be considered as an important building block for the eventual signature of the Locarno Treaties in 1925, and Germany's membership in the League of Nations in the following year. This act marked the re-integration of Germany into the ranks of "civilised European states" and led to far-spread normalisation of foreign relations in Western Europe.

This article wishes to draw attention away from the traditionally overly Eurocentric view of German foreign relations. It argues that the signature of the Locarno Treaties and consequent German entry into the League of Nations marked the preliminary end, not the beginning of Germany's re-introduction into the international system. It argues that its relations

3 See K.-D. ERDMANN – H. SCHULZE (eds.), *Weimar: Selbstpreisgabe einer Demokratie: Eine Bilanz heute*, Düsseldorf 1980.

4 See G. NIEDHART, *Die Außenpolitik der Weimarer Republik*, Berlin 1999; C. BAUMGART, *Stresemann und England*, Cologne 1996; M. BERG, *Gustav Stresemann und die Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika: Weltwirtschaftliche Verflechtung und Revisionspolitik 1907–1929*, Baden-Baden 1999; W. ELZ, Die Weimarer Republik und ihre Außenpolitik: Ein Forschungs- und Literaturbericht, in: *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 119, 1999, pp. 307–375.

5 About the Dawes Plan, see H. HOLBORN, *Deutsche Geschichte in der Neuzeit, Vol. III: Das Zeitalter des Imperialismus (1871–1945)*, München 1971, pp. 406–407; H. A. WINKLER, *Geschichte des Westens: Die Zeit der Weltkriege 1914–1945*, München 2011, pp. 319–321.

with countries outside Europe (case studies will be Turkey, Iran and the Soviet Union) were largely maintained and even reinforced in the years between 1918 and 1925/26. The proof of this lies in the rapid expansion of German activity and influence in the Middle East and the Soviet Union thereafter (i.e. in the late 1920s and 1930s); these developments would have been impossible without an intensive previous preparatory history of diplomatic and economic relations.

There is considerable debate over the question if one might speak of a typical "Weimar" foreign policy: there are influential voices advocating that this foreign policy was oriented "backwards", in other words, to re-create a pre-1914 situation as much as possible; others argue in favour of a "forward" policy, regarding Weimar period moves towards a "United States of Europe" as a prequel to the foreign policy eventually followed by the Federal Republic after 1949.[6] As early as 1961 Werner Conze put forward the argument that after 1918 Germany had to realise that its position was that of a secondary power in a world that was predestined to be dominated by one superpower (USA), with the Soviet Union alone having the potential to rise to the same status.[7] With the benefit of hindsight, Conze's view proved accurate. Yet there remains the question if this position of Germany in Europe was the result of a sober evaluation of facts and consequently pro-active policies, or if German decision-makers were forced to learn the hard way. The answer seems to lie in the middle: there was "Good Germany", patiently working for a revision of the Versailles Treaty and reconciliation with the former enemies, and "Bad Germany", represented by revisionist forces that wished to embark on a "war of revenge" and therefore operated networks of clandestine German re-armament in violation of the Versailles Treaty. The former was mainly to be found in the German civilian political leadership, the latter more in right-wing groups in the *Reichswehr* and administrative personnel in some Weimar institutions, namely the Foreign Office.[8]

6 Examples may be found in W. BUSCHAK, Ein Paneuropa der Arbeit im Dreiländereck zwischen Belgien, Deutschland und den Niederlanden zu Anfang der 1930er Jahre, in: clio-online, February 5, 2025, pp. 1–12, www.europa.clio-online.de [visited 2025–03–15]; S. A. ROTRAMEL, *International Health, European Reconciliation and German Foreign Policy after the First World War 1919–1927*, PhD. Thesis Georgetown University, Washington 2010.

7 W. CONZE, Weichenstellungen der deutschen Außenpolitik nach 1918, in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 9, 2, 1961, pp. 166–177.

8 "Good Germany" was not only represented by Gustav Stresemann; Foreign Minister Walter Rathenau (1922) also played an important role; see Ch. SCHEIDEMANN,

Good Germany, Bad Germany

The analysis and evaluation of German history of the 20th century is characterised by a struggle between two major narratives, which in the context of this article will be named "Good Germany" and "Bad Germany." The distinction between the two terms lies in the methods which German politicians and military men advocated to overcome the restrictions imposed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles. This referred particularly to the issue of reparations, and to that of "military equality." Two dominant approaches can be observed from the early 1920s onward: on the one hand, the gradual, "political" approach, consisting of negotiations, legal wrangling, diplomatic persistence and tenacity. Its representatives subscribed to the idea that economic strength, not military force, was the best way for Germany to re-establish influence in the world.[9] This approach proved successful: The signature of the Locarno Treaties late in 1925 and Germany's entry into the League of Nations in late 1926 were only stations to the factual end of reparations and military restrictions six years later. Kraus's observation that "Hitler reaped what Weimar had sown" thus proved correct.[10] By 1933, Germany did not pay reparations anymore and was fast on the way to become an impressive military power again. Furthermore, Germany by the early 1930s already had what might be called an economic empire encompassing south-eastern Europe as well as Turkey and Iran.[11] "Good Germany" – represented by politicians interested in reconciliation and cooperation in Europe – carried the day before "Bad Germany" took over for good.

Wegbereiter der Entspannungspolitik? Rathenau, die Reparationsfrage und die deutsche Außenpolitik, in: *Jahrbuch zur Liberalismus-Forschung*, 35, 2023, pp. 55–74. "Bad Germany" followed a long tradition of militarist-aggressive trends. See D. BALD – W. SCHREIBER, Deutsches Militär und Deutsche Außenpolitik 1914–2014, in: *DSS Arbeitspapiere*, Vol. 111, 2014.

9 See W. MICHALKA, Nation, Europa und Weltpolitik: Der Erste Weltkrieg und Rathenaus Friedens- und Kriegsziele, in: *Jahrbuch zur Liberalismus-Forschung*, 35, 2023, pp. 33–54. See also R. GRAF, Idealismus, Voluntarismus und Utopie: Walther Rathenau in der Geschichte des Zukunftsdenkens, in: *Jahrbuch zur Liberalismus-Forschung*, 35, 2023, pp. 145–162. Graf also offers an interesting approach to tackle the psychological aspects of historical processes in times of tension: R. GRAF, *Vorhersagen und Kontrollieren: Verhaltenswissen und Verhaltenspolitik in der Zeitgeschichte*, Göttingen 2024.

10 H.-Ch. KRAUS, *Versailles und die Folgen: Außenpolitik zwischen Revisionismus und Verständigung 1919–1933*, Berlin 2013, p. 143.

11 S. G. GROSS, *Export Empire: German Soft Power in Southeastern Europe 1890–1945*, Cambridge 2015.

Good Germany

The "Good Germany" narrative focuses on all those socio-political and economic factors that contributed to the integration of Germany within "Europe" (meaning not only a geographical, but also a socio-political and perhaps even psychological construct). The praise heaped on the Weimar Republic as the "First German Democracy" by the modern German "Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (Federal Centre for Political Education)" is a case in point.[12] Democratic elements were already identifiable in Imperial Germany, represented by the existence of an elected parliament (Reichstag) with the important power to control the budget. Yet proper governmental accountability was only firmly established in the post-1918 republic. This blends neatly into what might be called "German Democracy Studies". Most of these studies, however, are not only praising Weimar democracy, but also study its weaknesses. The Weimar Republic often is called a "democracy without democrats", meaning that the democratic centre (predominantly exemplified by the Social Democratic Party and the (Catholic) Centrum Party) was opposed by extremists both from the left (the powerful Communist Party of Germany (KPD)) and the right (various parties ranging from bourgeois centre-right to extreme right). Weimar democracy successfully weathered the strains of the early post-World War I period (extending from the armistice in November 1918 to the signature of the Versailles Treaty in 1919, the conflict over reparations, particularly with France leading to occupation of the Ruhr area in 1923 and, last but by no means least, the mega-inflation of summer/autumn of the same year). Yet it proved eventually incapable of maintaining democracy under the pressure of the Great Depression. In January 1933 Adolf Hitler became imperial chancellor and in March initiated a dictatorship lasting more than 12 years.[13]

Bad Germany

"Bad Germany" is the term chosen for the revisionist forces in politics and particularly the armed forces (*Reichswehr)*. Fuming at the "injustice" and "humiliation" of the Treaty of Versailles these individuals were keen on re-taking lost territories by force. To do so, Germany would have to re-gain military strength, and this could not possibly happen under the

12 E. PIPER, *Die Weimarer Republik*, Bonn 2021.

13 See f.e. K. D. ERDMANN – H. SCHULZE (eds.), *Weimar: Selbstpreisgabe einer Demokratie: Eine Bilanz heute*, Düsseldorf 1980.

watchful eyes of allied inspectors. Re-armament, particularly in the fields of aviation, armour and chemical warfare could only be pursued abroad. Numerous military men – exemplified by the famous Hans von Seeckt – did not think highly of such an approach. In their opinion the USA and Britain were too disinterested, and the French too vindictive and fearful to tackle the Versailles restrictions in a way benefiting Germany decisively. Hitler's rise was thus not only explicable through the World Economic Crisis. A considerable grouping of influential groups in German society (disgruntled military men, anti-Communist businessmen, backwards-looking petty bourgeois and finally a body of intellectual opinion ranging from the far left to the far right) opposed the democratic regime. Rather than integrating Weimar Germany into a democratic Western Europe, they rather advocated an authoritarian regime. This regime was to be erected by armed forces prepared by collaboration with the Soviet Union. They thus represented the "Easterners" in opposition to the democratic "Westerners."

There are three very important narratives resulting from these developments. The one was of limited duration: a defeated German Reich was forced to form alliances with "pariahs", as it was excluded from the western European (and US) circle of "civilized nations" in the years following the end of World War I. These pariahs were the Soviet Union and the Turkish Republic. On the other hand, these years saw the birth of a very important aspect of German foreign policy in the Middle East: rather than relying on diplomatic and even military power, German foreign policy was economically dominated. Defeated in war, and thus during the Weimar Republic and the early years of the Federal Republic a "military and political dwarf", Germany's powerful economy made this country a highly esteemed partner for development in the region. Here Turkey and Iran are at the forefront. Thirdly, there was the aspect of clandestine re-militarisation pursued by right-wing revisionist groups within the German military: while the Soviet Union was the preferred partner (and has also been studied in greatest detail), similar endeavours saw activities in Holland and Turkey, particularly in the naval field. The success of these undertakings, and the support for it in Germany had less to do with practical than with psychological and symbolical factors.

Security and Economics

This article does not undertake to challenge the priority of "European" developments in a narrower definition, in other words with the Western

powers. The "Spirit of Locarno" transformed Germany's position in a way that the competing "spirit of Rapallo" never did. German chancellor Hans Luther in his angry reply to the right-wing opposition to the treaties described this to perfection: "In Locarno we have achieved one hundred per cent of what we desired. Never has a (German) delegation scored such a success! We were a people of helots, and today we are once again a state of world importance. If the German National Party is to destroy this achievement, the storm of outrage will blow it away; and I for my part will join the people in its struggle against the German National Party!"[14]

With the benefit of hindsight Luther's view was entirely correct. Yet the German National Party had a certain point: the signature of the Locarno treaties meant acceptance of the real limits to German power. Germany left its pariah position but did by no means achieve unlimited freedom of action, and certainly not military parity. It accommodated itself to solve Germany's problems through negotiations, not by force – and thus chose the pragmatic over the heroic course of action.

This had far-reaching repercussions: an increase of Germany's influence in the world could only come from "soft power", particularly German economic strength. But in the industrialized world German goods would have to compete with those of other industrial powers, which were justifiably interested to promote and, if necessary, protect their own industries. Thus, non-industrialized countries outside Europe proper became important as markets: here Germany's military and political weakness would be beneficial rather than problematic, as the non-European partners were more likely to trust a power that was unable to pursue aggressive colonial policies.

Interestingly both "good Germany" and "bad Germany" came to accept this idea, as is evidenced by the following case studies: "Good Germany" is to be identified in German contribution to the national development of formerly semi-colonized Turkey and Iran. "Bad Germany" played a considerable part in the collaboration with the Soviet Union: Although Germany's signature of the Locarno treaties was received by Moscow as a disconcerting if not outright hostile act, the Rapallo Treaty was soon after augmented by the Treaty of Berlin (1926). German foreign minister Gustav Stresemann underlined that this treaty was intended

14 G. A. CRAIG, *Deutsche Geschichte 1866–1945: Vom Norddeutschen Bund bis zum Ende des Dritten Reiches*, München 1980, p. 454.

to reassure the Soviet Union that the good relations created through the Rapallo Treaty would by no means be negatively influenced by the Locarno Treaties.[15]

"Soft Power": The German Foreign Policy U-Boat

The metaphor of the U-Boat may at first glance seem baffling but is actually quite apt to describe German policies not only during the Weimar period, but also before and particularly after it. Initially nothing suggested that the U-Boat would play an important role during both world wars; however, Germany, possessor of a sizeable overwater navy in World War I (and a considerably smaller one in World War II) had to make do with alternative weaponry: it thus developed U-Boats to credible weapons of war, with which it achieved at times impressive successes. It did so after the realisation that the Royal Navy outproduced it in the last years before and during World War I (the defeat in the so-called "Naval Race"). The submarine played a far more important role in the war than had been envisaged by all involved parties yet failed to turn the tide decisively in German favour (an experience repeated during World War II). Applied to economic strength as a foreign policy "weapon", the same applies: economic strength allows a country to attain considerable influence over industrially less developed others (through purchasing their raw materials, supplying them with manufactured goods, undercutting politically undesirable competitors), but such influence must needs be limited. It is of comparably little value in a world system where raw/ hard power matters more than anything else, as was the case before 1914. However, in the post-WWI "system" direct and formal control of imperial territories rapidly became hors de-la-mode. Regardless if US president Wilson failed to produce a "Wilsonian Peace", new ideas of international or rather global relations had come into being and achieved prominence: while often to the chagrin of the "old" imperial powers (particularly Britain and France), colonised peoples had become far more able to articulate their interests than before and, more importantly, to find a sympathetic ear for them.[16] Britain and France were a case in point: Both the British and the French empires grew in the years after 1918, particularly in the Middle East; but these acquisitions were not

15 HOLBORN, p. 415.

16 D. FROMKIN, *A Peace to End all Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East 1914–1922*, London 1989.

colonies, but "mandates": the mandatory powers took on the obligation to "prepare" local populations for independence. By and large they failed to do so, but the very idea marked an important departure from pre-1914 conditions. Imperial relations were more and more regulated by treaties than by hard-power relations: Britain was forced to recognise the formal independence of Egypt in 1922 (in 1936 further formalised through a treaty); an Anglo-Iraqi treaty in 1930 allowed the formal independence of Iraq (which became the first independent Arab country to join the League of Nations in 1932). A negotiated treaty between France and Syria/ Lebanon failed to be ratified by the French parliament in 1936).[17]

German Relations with Countries outside Europe: Turkey, Iran and the Soviet Union

The bulk of literature on Weimar German foreign relations focuses on those with the European, and particularly the victorious, states of Europe, and also with the USA.[18] To offset this Euro-centric orientation, this article is focusing on Germany's foreign relations with Turkey (which, in the shape of the Ottoman Empire, had been an ally during World War I), Iran and the Soviet Union in the early to mid-1920s. These examples are chosen for their differences as well as their similarities. There was a long tradition of friendly relations between Germany and the Ottoman Empire, most notably represented by the alliance during the First World War.[19] After 1918 the Ottoman government had succumbed to pressure of the victorious powers: if the Versailles Treaty was considered harsh, the Sèvres Treaty might be called devastating. However, a nationalist opposition refused to accept the Treaty and initiated a military campaign against it. Having secured military victory in 1922 (which saw France and Italy pull out of the coalition of enemies, and Greece defeated on the battlefield), the nationalists secured diplomatic recognition in 1923.

17 See M. A. FITZSIMONS, *Empire by Treaty: Britain and the Middle East in the Twentieth Century*, London 1965.

18 One recent publication that tries to redress this problem is Ch. CORNELISSEN – D. VAN LAAK, (eds.), *Weimar und die Welt: Globale Verflechtungen der ersten deutschen Republik*, Göttingen 2020.

19 U. TRUMPENER, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 1914–1918*, Princeton 1968; J. L. WALLACH, *Anatomie einer Militärhilfe: Die preußisch-deutschen Militärmissionen in der Türkei 1835–1919*, Düsseldorf 1976; H.-W. NEULEN, *Feldgrau in Jerusalem: Das Levantekorps des kaiserlichen Deutschland*, Munich 1991.

However, the new Turkish Republic was at first somewhat a pariah state, and Germany – this time in the capacity of a strong industrial power – could be of great assistance. The military weakness of the German partner also meant that it was not endangering the independence of Turkey, to which the new government under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was fiercely committed.

The second example – Iran – was typical for those territories that had never been directly colonised but reduced to semi-dependency by the Great Powers. Iran was in the unenviable position to be located between Russia / the Soviet Union to the north and British India to the south. Although Iran did indeed profit from the rivalry between the two large neighbours (as an offshoot of the so-called "Great Game"), its termination in 1907 reduced the country to little more than a semi-colony, and also turned it – despite self-declared neutrality – into a diplomatic and in certain areas military battlefield during World War I. The Iranian central state at the time was too weak, and its military forces too disorganised to offer effective resistance. In similarity to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk Reza Khan, a military officer, initiated a centralisation campaign that saw him become minister of war, prime minister and, eventually, in 1925 crowned as Shah of the new Pahlavi dynasty. Here also Germany became a preferred partner during the 1920s and 1930s to counter the continued pressure of Britain and the Soviet Union.

Despite having overthrown the Tsarist regime in 1917 the Soviet Union, founded after the conclusion of the Civil War in 1922, continued to be an imperial power – yet motivated rather by ideological than by power political motives. Its global mission to spread communism was partly stopped with the emergence of Joseph Stalin as a strongman, but there were deep apprehensions of the spread of socialist ideas into the later so-called "Third World". Eventually neither the Turkish nationalists nor Reza Khan showed much readiness to lean towards the example of the "red" neighbour. Germany, despite being a partner of these two emerging Middle Eastern powers, however, established good, if not cordial relations with the Soviet regime.

Case Studies 1 and 2: Turkey and Iran

The Ottoman Empire and Khajar Iran had deteriorated to the status of semi-colonies during the 19th century. In the Ottoman Empire, a toxic mix of separatist nationalism in the Balkans and colonial encroachment by the European powers weakened governmental control. A long series

of reforms proved unsuccessful to re-gain strength.[20] Both Ottoman and Iranian independence were only maintained due to the rivalry of the Great Powers: Britain and France were interested in shoring up the Ottomans as a buffer state against Russian expansionism; the same applied to Iran, which together with Afghanistan was likewise seen as a buffer between British India and a potential Russian aggressor (the so-called "Great Game" immortalized among others by the famous author Rudyard Kipling). Yet the buffer zone – which had given Afghanistan and, with limitations, Iran at least a guarantee of formal independence – became unnecessary after the Anglo-Russian agreement of 1907: agreeing that Germany was a common enemy, the Triple Entente (began with the Anglo-French Entente Cordiale of 1904) was now a given fact. "Asia" seemed to be set on the path of being divided into British and Russian spheres of influence. It was the unforeseen consequences of World War I that shattered this intention.[21]

Both Turkey and Iran underwent fundamental regime transformations in organizational and ideological terms: the Ottoman Empire (*de-facto* terminated after 1918, *de-iure* only after the foundation of the Turkish Republic in October 1923) and the Tsarist Empire (after the Russian Revolution of October / November 1917 and the ensuing civil war only re-constituted as the Soviet Union in 1922) saw the emergence of republican regimes of either etatist-authoritarian or socialist character, which replaced former monarchies.[22] In Iran the transformation was of a different character: while the monarchy survived the war, the pre-World War I "non-state", as masterfully described by Abrahamian and de Bellaigue, was replaced with a centralizing and modernizing authoritarian monarchy under the Pahlavi-Dynasty.[23] The other great difference was of course that the Russian Revolution affected one of the former "Great

20 B. LEWIS, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, Oxford 2002, pp. 74–209. See also M. Ş. HANIOĞLU, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, Princeton 2008; R. E. WARD / D. A. RUSTOV, *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey*, Princeton 1964; E. J. ZÜRCHER, *Turkey: A Modern History*, London 1993; C. LAMOUCHE, *Histoire de la Turquie depuis les origines jusqu'a nos jours*, Paris 1953, pp. 264–362.

21 See P. MISHRA, *From the Ruins of Empire: The Revolt against the West and the Re-Making of Asia*, London 2012, particularly pp. 184–215, 242–298.

22 See M. A. REYNOLDS, *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires 1908–1918*, Cambridge 2011.

23 See Ch. De BELLAIGUE, *Patriot of Persia: Patriot of Persia: Muhammad Mossadegh and a Tragic Anglo-American Coup*, London 2013.

Powers", while both Turkey and Iran had long histories of suffering under colonial encroachment. Both Turkey and Iran provided examples of national state-building in the years following World War I. Within almost exactly five years – counting from the signature of the Mudros Armistice on October 30, 1918, to the proclamation of the Turkish Republic on October 29, 1923 – the Turkish nationalists overcame all attempts at colonization. At the same time, Iran also began to overcome its instability, internal divisions and semi-colonial status: while dominated by Britain after the Soviet pull-out in the after-war years, nationalistic politicians like Tabatabai (at first only assisted by the military officer Reza Khan) gradually managed to emancipate the country. Reza Khan soon afterwards embarked on a meteoric rise that saw him Minister of Defence (1921), Prime Minister and eventually first Pahlavi Shah of Iran.

The post-WWI period marked the apex of nationalism on the continent; in the Middle East, the idea of the national state was introduced during this time. Multi-ethnic empires broke up and made way for "national states", which in many cases were as multi-ethnic as the empires they replaced, yet either did not have, or did not wish to make use of, the centuries-honed imperial toolbox for the reasonably peaceful rule and administration of such populations. It goes without saying that this situation led to almost countless clashes and conflicts, adding credibility to the argument that the war did by no means end on November 11, 1918: the guns might have fallen silent on the Western front, only to fire again further to the east. There the "Wilsonian Paradoxon" was at its most visible: giving the right to people for "self-determination" only allowed a more peaceful and satisfied world where these "rights" did not clash with the rights of other peoples. Imperial sub-groups, often with a considerable degree of autonomy before, now became national "minorities".[24] Outside Europe, Wilson's enthusiasm for "self-determination" was decidedly muted. The post-war "order" (or rather disorder) did not lead to de-colonization, but for re-colonization for many peoples. The British and French empires reached their largest extent ever: they grabbed the lion's share of the former German colonies and secured new ones in the Middle East. In that context, Arthur Ponsonby published a pamphlet in 1928, which must be considered a masterpiece of honesty: "Falsehood

24 J. BURBANK – F. COOPER, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton 2010. See also U. von HIRSCHHAUSEN – J. LEONHARD, *Empires: Eine globale Geschichte 1780–1920*, München 2023.

in Wartime" focuses on the "War for Freedom and Democracy", which however seemed restricted to "white people."[25]

At first glance it might have seemed that the war and its long-term consequences, including the establishment of the League of Nations, had done little to shake the existing imperial order across the globe. "Old" Empires might have fallen, but the "Younger" ones seemed to be going strong and unimpeded. But this apparent imperial stability was undermined by two factors which ultimately led to the emergence of a new world order where "political" empire was increasingly challenged by "economic" empire (which might be read as "hard" power increasingly replaced by "soft" power). These factors were the economic weakness of imperial metropoles impoverished by the war, particularly London and Paris on the one hand, and increased anti-colonial agitation and organization in the colonized and semi-colonized territories on the other. The harsh economic consequences of the war unveiled that empire in many cases was a burden, not an asset.[26] That also meant that a power unburdened by imperial obligations (and also – forcefully – by military ones) stood a good chance to gain considerable influence in the de-colonized areas. Both the Weimar Republic and later the Federal Republic were to use this "economic tool" with considerable success.

What finally exposed the hollowness of "imperial stability" was the inability of the imperial powers to impose settlements to their advantage in those areas seemingly "liberated" from the tutelage of "Old" Empires such as the Ottoman one. It took until 1920 for the victorious powers to agree on a Peace Treaty with the Ottoman Empire (Treaty of Sèvres). It envisaged the parceling out of the Ottoman territories of 1914 among a multitude of interested parties: some were directly allotted to the victors (France and Italy in Anatolia), some were eventually to become "mandates" (to be "guided" and "prepared" for independence by the mandatory powers Britain and France); some were to become independent (an Armenian and a Kurdish State in Eastern Anatolia). Further to the east, following the Russian/ Bolshevik retreat from Iran after the unsuccessful attempt to set up an independent socialist republic in Gilan (1919–1920),

25 A. PONSONBY, *Falsehood in War-Time: Containing an Assortment of Lies Circulated Throughout the Nations During the Great War*, London 1928.

26 See A. T. WILSON, *Mesopotamia 1917–1920: A Clash of Loyalties: A Personal and Historical Record*, Oxford 1931; P. SLUGLETT, *Britain in Iraq: Contriving King and Country 1914–1932*, London 1976; R. S. SIMON – E. H. TEJIRIAN, *The Creation of Iraq, 1914–1921*, New York 2004.

Britain imposed a treaty on the weak country giving it full access to and control over natural resources.[27] None of these undertakings came to fruition: nationalist movements both in Turkey and Iran eventually led to the establishment of independent, internationally recognized states. Germany was able to profit from the need of these states for economic development; relations were prepared in the period before the signature of the Locarno Treaties and came to full fruition afterwards. In other words, German attempts at informal influence (to avoid the term "empire") were crowned with success. That blends in neatly with Charles Bloch's view that Germany was unchangeably "imperialist" between 1871 and 1945: while the first phase (1888–1918) was marked by the acquisition of colonies, the second phase was characterized by "modern" (read economic) forms of influence. While later German imperialism during the Third Reich showed no respect for "small countries" at all, a pragmatic cooperation with anti-colonial nationalisms could benefit Germany greatly. As early as December 12, 1925, a German official in the Foreign Office noted that Germany could make use of the differences between the Great Powers and support the medium-sized and small states against their hegemonic tendencies – in other words, become the leader of those in danger of dispossession.[28]

Turkey

Both countries had profited from a strong leader figure, but it was Turkey that was especially prominent in German imagination, a fact no doubt due to the numerous individuals having had first-hand experience of conditions in the Ottoman Empire during the war years. Germany was thus one of the first European countries to invert an intellectual and emotional colonial relationship: particularly for the German right, the Turkish nationalist struggle and the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Pasha seemed to be an example to be emulated.[29] In fact the economic, political and military conditions laid down in the Treaty of Versailles were harsh for Germany; but what smarted most in the defeated power's psyche was the treaty article that gave Germany "sole responsibility" for the

27 S. RAVASANI, *Sowjetrepublik Gilan: Die sozialistische Bewegung im Iran seit Ende des 19. Jhrt. bis 1922*, Berlin 1973.

28 Ch. BLOCH, *Das Dritte Reich und die Welt: Die deutsche Außenpolitik 1933–1945*, Paderborn 1993, p. 11.

29 See B. LEWIS, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, Oxford 2002, pp. 239–293; E. J. ZÜRCHER, *Turkey: A Modern History*, London 2017, pp. 133–166.

outbreak of war (and its butchery). Germans did not only feel punished but humiliated and excluded from civilized humanity. In that aspect they were like Turkey. The Turkish nationalists, led by Mustafa Kemal Pasha, had rejected the harsh Sèvres Treaty and eventually managed to establish an independent, internationally recognized Muslim state. Yet in doing so they had gravely offended western feelings. Turkey bore - and to a certain extent continues to bear – the opprobrium of the Armenian genocide of the years 1915 to 1917.[30] Turkey's governments never officially disavowed all policies of their Young Turk predecessors, and never accepted the Armenian atrocities as genocide – which continues to influence Turkish-European relations to the present day.[31] The impression of Turkey in general and Atatürk in particular in post WWI Germany has been amply demonstrated.[32] A surprisingly large number of high-ranking Weimar politicians and military men had served in the Middle East during World War I. They had thus witnessed at first glance the realities of an empire about to fall apart, and the measures taken by a dictatorial government against it: the Armenian genocide was interpreted by many of these men as a necessary act to defend "national" unity. At least one of them – Max Erwin von Scheubner-Richter, destined to become a "martyr" during Hitler's abortive 1923 Putsch – was deeply impressed: after Versailles he began to equal the Germans publicly to the Armenians, who were betrayed and persecuted by all and sundry without a friend in the world.[33]

Although the Mudros Armistice had forced the Ottoman Empire to sever all relations with the Central Powers, the signature of the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 abolished its conditions completely. As early as 1924 Germany and the Turkish Republic re-established diplomatic relations: Rudolf Nadolny became the first German ambassador (until 1933). By 1925 German instructors were working in Turkey to train the

30 See H. BOZARSLAN – V. DUCLERT – R. KEVORKIAN, *Comprendre le génocide des Arméniens: De 1915 à nos jours*, Paris 2015.

31 M. TUSAN, *Smyrna's Ashes: Humanitarianism, Genocide, and the Birth of the Middle East*, Berkeley 2012; See also H. BOZARSLAN – V. DUCLERT – R. KEVORKIAN, *Comprendre le génocide des Arméniens: De 1915 à nos jours*, Paris 2015.

32 S. IHRIG, *Atatürk in the Nazi Imagination*, Cambridge 2014; see also S. IHRIG, *Justifying Genocide: Germany and the Armenians from Bismarck to Hitler*, Cambridge 2016.

33 See M. JOSEPH, Max Erwin von Scheubner-Richter: The Personal Link from Genocide to Hitler, in: H.-L. KIESER – E. PLOZZA (eds.), *Der Völkermord an den Armeniern, die Türkei und Europa / The Armenian Genocide, Turkey and Europe*, Zurich 2006, pp. 147–165; See also B. VALENTINITSCH, *Max-Erwin von Scheubner-Richter (1884–1923): Zeuge des Genozids an den Armeniern und früher, enger Mitarbeiter Hitlers*, MA Thesis, Graz 2012.

armed forces. A more picquant and less-known aspect of this military cooperation was the training of German submarine crews by Turkish naval personnel.[34] Eventually Turkey formed part of Germany's emerging economic empire in south-eastern Europe, which was to see full fruition after the late 1920s.[35]

Iran

In western languages Iran only became "Iran" once Reza Shah Pahlavi had ordered the country's official name to be changed from the older and generally used "Persia". In the context of this article, Iran shall be used even when referring to periods and events before 1935. Hardly anything has rankled so much with the adherents of Edward Said's "orientalism" thesis than the assumption that "East" and "Islam" were inseparably connected with "oriental despotism".[36] Among these Islamic despotic regimes was often that of "Persia", which might be explained by references to antique authors (thus Herodotus contrasted Greek "freedom" with Persian "despotism").[37] Both de Bellaigue, who described the youth years of the famous later Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh and Abrahamian however threw light on the inherent contradictions between the self-portraits of Iranian rulers of the Khajar-dynasty (with the travel report of Nasir al-Din Schah not only a literary, but also humoristic highlight[38]) with the grim reality, which forced Persian monarchs to rely on the (often materially interested) cooperation of tribes, which held real military power in the country.[39] As a result, the supposedly "despotic" Khajar monarchs in particular and the Iranian state in general were characterised by notorious weakness until after 1918. Although the Iranian government had declared neutrality in autumn 1914 neither Britain nor Russia nor the Ottoman Empire had respected this declara-

34 H.-W. NEULEN, *Feldgrau in Jerusalem: Das Levantekorps des kaiserlichen Deutschland*, München 1991, p. 266. See also BND-Archive, Sig. 1287, 1957.

35 See M. D. PERT, *German Soft Power in Turkey and the Balkans in the Interwar Era, 1918–1939*, MA Thesis, Istanbul 1920.

36 E. SAID, *Orientalism*, New York 1978.

37 See K. A. WITTFOGEL, *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power*, New Haven 1957.

38 See H. LEICHT (ed.), *Nasir al-Din Shah: Ein Harem in Bismarcks Reich: Das ergötzliche Reisetagebuch des Nasreddin Schah, 1873*, Stuttgart 1969.

39 Ch. de BELLAIGUE, *Patriot of Persia: Muhammad Mossadegh and a Tragic Anglo-American Coup*, New York 2012; E. ABRAHAMIAN, Oriental Despotism: The Case of Qajar Iran, in: *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 5, 1974, pp. 3–31.

tion, turning parts of Iran into a battlefield. After the First World War the Bolsheviks announced the withdrawal of all their forces and declared to respect Iranian independence fully. Britain used this auspicious position to impose a humiliating treaty on the Iranian government giving it wide privileges in the country; and this opened the way for Germany anew, this time not as an ally of a potentially hostile power, but as a supporter of Iranian national aspirations.

In difference to Turkey no formal document disrupted diplomatic relations between Iran and Germany; however, due to British pressure, Iran created a blacklist after the end of the war. It contained 74 names of individuals banned from entering the country for the duration of ten years on grounds of having "violated the neutrality of Iran during the war years."[40] One of the main objectives of German diplomatic representatives in Iran was to see this list abolished, which was eventually successful.[41]

The years after World War I saw almost revolutionary change in Iran: Iranian nationalism became influential.[42] Nationalist politicians became eager to fend off colonial tutelage, backed up by the military figure of Reza Khan, an officer in the Iranian Cossack units. The latter prevailed over the civilian politicians: becoming at first minister of war, he then served as prime minister to the last of the Khajar Shahs. Although Reza Khan – a great admirer of Atatürk – desired to establish a republic, he was eventually convinced that a renewed monarchy would be the only possible course to take: in 1925 Reza Khan was crowned Reza Shah and established the last Iranian (Pahlavi) dynasty, only terminated by the Islamic Revolution of 1979.[43]

The Germans could provide everything that Iranian modernisation needed, but had the practical advantage of being militarily and politically

40 Bundesarchiv / Militärarchiv Freiburg, Coll. MSg 2/2152: "Einreiseverbot nach Persien (according to Mitteilungen des Bundes der Asienkämpfer, Year 1, Vol. 1, December 1, 1919) für die Dauer von 10 Jahren. Am 1. September 2021 wurden davon 35 Namen gestrichen. Der Grund für das Einreiseverbot besteht in „Vergehen gegen die Neutralität Persiens während des Krieges ("Ban of Entry into Persia for 74 individuals for 10 years. On September 1, 1921, 35 names were struck out. The ban is based on the accusation of violation of Persian neutrality during the war)."

41 W. von BLÜCHER, *Zeitenwende in Iran: Im Brennpunkt der Weltpolitik: Persien*, Biberach an der Riss 1949.

42 See R. W. COTTAM, *Nationalism in Iran*, Pittsburgh 1964.

43 See H. AMIRSADEGHI (ed.), *Twentieth-Century Iran*, London 1977; for Iran's relations with Britain and Russia see G. LENCZOWSKI, *Russia and the West in Iran, 1918–1948: A Study in Big-Power Rivalry*, Ithaca 1949.

weak and, an additional advantage, far away. Inversely Germany understood that given the strength of British power it had to stick scrupulously to the rules: Germany showed itself as a "loitered economic power having completely forgone its former power political goals. After it had managed to allay British mistrust, German economic and professional involvement in Iran experienced an unprecedented rise from the second half of the 1920s onwards.[44] In fact contemporary observers were somewhat stupefied: In Iran Germany seemed to experience a meteoric rise towards the end of the 1920s, as far as foreign advisors were concerned. In February 1928 Sir Robert Clive, British Ambassador to Iran, reported not without concern to Foreign Secretary Austen Chamberlain the impressive list of functions for German nationals:

- Financial Advisor to the Persian Government
- Chairman of the National Bank
- Financial Inspector (under the command of the Financial Advisor)
- Supervisor of the National Arsenal
- Advisor for Forestry Issues
- Supervisor for Iron Mining
- Concession for the German aviation firm Junkers in the fields of general aerial, postal and passenger flight services
- Appointment of German professor Ernst von Herzfeld as official archaeologist
- Director of the School of Applied Sciences in Tehran.[45]

Case Study 3: The Soviet Union and "Bad Germany"

While Turkish-German and Iranian-German relations from the early 1920s onwards focused on economic cooperation – with the exception of training of German U-Boat crews in Turkey – relations with the Soviet Union right from the beginning were dominated by the military.[46] At first glance, Weimar Germany and the Soviet Union were strange bedfellows: "Weimar" democracy had come into being with the defeat of the extreme

44 M. KÜNZEL, *Die Deutschen und der Iran: Geschichte und Gegenwart einer verhängnisvollen Freundschaft*, München 2009, p. 70.

45 Ibid., p. 41.

46 The training of German U-Boat crews in Turkey during the inter-war period has not been studied and is therefore almost impossible to corroborate. The author came across this information during his research in the archives of the West German foreign intelligence service (*Bundesnachrichtendienst*/ BND). See BND-Archive, File 001297, 1957, 28.

left (Communists and Independent Social Democrats) late in 1918; Social Democrats and particularly the more centrist and conservative parties considered the Soviet Union an "empire of evil." Yet ideological aspects were not the only ones influencing the relations between the two countries. Partly for historical, yet mainly for strategic reasons economic relations were initiated even before the establishment of the Soviet Union in 1922: the Soviet diplomat Viktor Kopp was already negotiating trade agreements with Weimar Germany as early as 1921.[47] A year later, relations were formalised: in a rather impromptu manner the "opposite" to the Locarno Treaties was signed: The Treaty of Rapallo.

It preceded the Locarno Treaties by a good three years. It established friendly and formal relations between the Soviet Union and Germany; it was also the starting point for an, at times, intensive military cooperation which allowed Germany to build and test arms it was not allowed to do so by the Versailles Treaty in the USSR. Moscow, on the other hand, profited from German know-how and deliveries of sophisticated industrial goods.[48] The Rapallo-Treaty has been subject of a veritable "war of historians" in German historical scholarship. Advocates of "good Germany" paradoxically subsumed it into Germany's "march to the west"; those emphasizing "bad Germany" saw it as the predecessor to the Soviet German non-aggression pact of 1939 (including its "secret protocol" decreeing the occupation and division of Poland). While the former camp has not entirely lost its influence, the latter view eventually came to dominate the scholarly debate.[49] The "Rapallo" phase of Soviet German relations lasted until 1932. The argument that it came to an end with Hitler's ascension to power has been proved wrong; ideological hostility notwithstanding there was a fairly uninterrupted cooperation between the two countries between 1918 and 1941. It was not terminated in 1933, but with Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union of June 22, 1941.[50]

47 V. L. ČERNOPEROV, Viktor Kopp und die Anfänge der sowjetisch-deutschen Beziehungen 1919 bis 1921, in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 60, 4, 2012, pp. 529–554.

48 See M. LUTZ, *Siemens im Sowjetgeschäft: Eine Institutionengeschichte der deutsch-sowjetischen Beziehungen 1917–1933*, Stuttgart 2009.

49 N. JOERES, Forschungsbericht Rapallo: Zeitgeschichte einer Kontroverse, in: *Francia: Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte*, 34, 3, 2007, pp. 103–126; P. ALTER, Rapallo: Gleichgewichtspolitik und Revisionismus, in: *Neue Politische Literatur*, 19, 1974, pp. 509–517.

50 G. HILGER – Ä. G. MEYER, *The Incompatible Allies: A Memoir History of German-Soviet Relations 1918–1941*, New York 1953. G. HILGER, *Wir und der Kreml: Deutsch-sowjetische Beziehungen 1918–1941: Erinnerungen eines deutschen Diplomaten*, Frankfurt 1956;

By that time another aspect of German Soviet cooperation had been observable: both countries were interested in a military build-up. While the German interest in regaining military strength was at first mainly motivated by the desire to resist western (mostly French) meddling in German affairs, the Soviet regime needed military strength in its interior (Soviet power in Central Asia was only established for good in 1934). But in one foreign policy aspect both countries had common interests: in their hostility to Poland.

Re-constituted Poland after 1918 occupied territory which both Berlin and Moscow considered their own. While after the signature of the Locarno Treaties there had been debate if an "Eastern Locarno" were possible – in other words, that Weimar Germany was to accept the boundaries established after 1918 – even Gustav Stresemann, changed from the annexationist Saulus of World War I to the accommodationist Paulus of the Weimar Republic considered this impossible. The existence of the Polish state did not only mean that many German nationals now lived in a state which treated them as a minority but also had turned East Prussia into a semi-exclave of the Reich. Soviet attempts to terminate Polish independence in the war of 1918 – 1920 had resulted in an ignominious Soviet defeat, leading to considerable chagrin. For Germany, Poland's membership in the French-created and -supported *cordon sanitaire* was an additional cause for enmity.

The Soviet-German military partnership thus was able to unite two powers beyond ideological borders. For both the training and testing grounds at Lipetsk (for aircraft) and Kama (for tanks) proved invaluable. This did not only refer to modern equipment, but also to the training of personnel which later could train others; a German pilot managing to land his badly damaged aircraft rather than bailing out was in fact scolded by his superiors: "Aircraft were more easily replaced than pilots." In fact, Ian Ona Johnson has argued that Germany, rather than weakened by the consequences of the Versailles treaty managed to re-arm quicker and more effectively than its west European competitors: in 1939 the German armed forces enjoyed a considerable advantage over their enemies.[51]

G. L. WEINBERG, *Germany and the Soviet Union 1939–1941*, Leiden 1954; E. H. CARR, *German-Soviet Relations between the two World Wars 1919–1939*, Baltimore 1951; E. H. CARR, *Berlin-Moskau: Deutschland und Rußland zwischen den beiden Weltkriegen*, Stuttgart 1954.

51 I. O. JOHNSON, *Faustian Bargain: The Soviet-German Partnership and the Origins of the Second World War*, Oxford 2021. The crash-landing incident is described on p. 151.

Hardly anything could be more indicative of the importance both the Soviet Union and Weimar Germany put in their collaborative relationship than its continuation after the signature of the Locarno Treaties. In order to ally Soviet fears that signing the treaties had made Germany join a hostile western capitalist camp (which even stood accused to prepare military action against the USSR) foreign minister Stresemann reconfirmed the Rapallo Treaty by the Treaty of Berlin in 1926.[52]

Epilogue

When the Locarno-Treaties were signed, Germany already had a well-developed network of international relations in areas outside the core of Europe. Rather than beginning to play an international role again after the signature, the country was able to build upon careful preparation-work, and economic relations with the extra-European world were coming to full fruition afterwards. Although interrupted by the increasingly aggressive policies followed by the Nazi Regime, and particularly the Second World War, the Weimar Republic already showed signs of defining a long-term German role: a peaceful economic giant in the centre of Europe almost untouched by „Colonial Guilt."[53] Yet only the Federal Republic of Germany was able to make full use of this precedent in the years after the Second World War.[54]

52 HOLBORN, p. 414.

53 Thus, both Turkey (February 1945) and Iran (September 1943) eventually declared war on Germany, without a shot being fired in anger. See KÜNZEL, p. 70.

54 See S.-O. BERGGÖTZ, *Nahostpolitik in der Ära Adenauer: Möglichkeiten und Grenzen, 1949–1963, Düsseldorf 1998*; see also T. LÜDKE, Die Aktivitäten von Organisation Gehlen und BND im Nahen Osten, 1946–1968, in: W. KRIEGER et al. (eds.), *Die Auslandsaufklärung des BND: Operationen, Analysen, Netzwerke*, Berlin 2021, pp. 396–502.

The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and the Locarno Pact[1]

Srđan Mićić[2]

This paper will address the issue of the Pact of Locarno on the Foreign Policy of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Yugoslav state was challenging two important issues on internal and international level during 1925. In internal policy, the main issue at the time was finding the way for resolving disputes between Serbian and Croatian political actors. In the foreign policy, the main issue was the ways and the manners in which Yugoslav state should deal with the new arrangement between the Great Powers, and their possible repercussions on the Balkans and the Central Europe. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs Momčilo Ninčić and Vojislav Marinković were trying to incorporate their ideas and concepts in the contemporary international tendencies.

[Yugoslavia; Balkans; Greece; Bulgaria; Romania; Little Entente; Locarno; Arbitrage; Customs Union]

During 1925 the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SCS) was facing with two significant processes, one was in the international affairs, and the other was in the internal affairs. The first half of the year was embedded by the negotiations between the strongest Serbian political representatives – the Peoples Radical Party (PRP) – led by the Prime Minister Nikola Pašić, and the strongest Croatian political representatives – the Croatian Republican Peasantry Party (CRPP) – lead by Stjepan Radić. The latter accepted the Constitution and the Monarch and consequently changed name into the Croatian Peasantry Party (CPP). Their first coalition

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government was formed in mid-1925.[3] The international relations during the same year were demarcated by the process of Great Powers' reacceptance of Germany in their ranks and the Weimar Republic's consent to the established international order in the Western Europe. These processes left the Eastern Europe without real guaranties from probable menaces.[4]

The Foreign Policy of the Kingdom of SCS / Yugoslavia could be devised into three concepts: Adriatic, Balkan and Central European. The first was mainly defence from the Italian threat. Regarding the other two, the Balkans was much more important than the Central Europe.[5] In the former region, Belgrade pursued to preserve dominant position and to prevent prevailing influence of Great Powers.[6] During 1920's, Belgrade was mainly focused on suppressing Rome's influence in Tirana, Sofia and Athens. Regarding the relations with the Great Powers for the period until the Remilitarisation of the Rhineland in 1936, it could be defined as the balance between France – as the trusted friend – and Italy – as the constant menace.[7]

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3 Radić started the internationalisation of the so-called Croat question during the Genoa Conference of 1922, and it culminated during his political exile in 1923 and 1924. He was seeking support from the Great Powers, the former enemies Austria and Hungary, and the USSR. In late 1924, the Government reacted with repressive measures against the CRPP, same as those introduces against the Communists in late 1920. During 1925 the PRP and the CRPP reached agreement on respecting the Constitutional order and forming the coalition Government. Their Cabinets lasted from July 1925 until April 1927. For further reading: B. GLIGORIJEVIĆ, *Parlament i političke stranke u Jugoslaviji (1919–1929)*, Beograd 1979; Ђ. Ђ. СТАНКОВИЋ, *Никола Пашић и Хрвати (1918–1923)*, Београд 1995; Б. ГЛИГОРИЈЕВИЋ, *Краљ Александар Карађорђевић, књига II, Српско-хрватски спор, друго издање*, Београд 2010.

4 S. MARKS, *The Illusion of Peace: International Relations in Europe, 1918–1933*, Basingstoke 2003, pp. 69–82; *Locarno Revisited: European Diplomacy, 1920–1929*, G. JOHNSON (ed.), London, New York 2004, pp. 8–36, 55–108; Z. STEINER, *The Lights that failed: European International History 1919–1933*, Oxford 2005, pp. 24–33.

5 V. VINAVER, *Jugoslavija i Mađarska 1918–1933*, Beograd 1972, pp. 9, 10; A. SUPPAN, *Jugoslawien und Österreich 1918–1938: Bilaterale Außenpolitik im europäischen Umfeld*, Wien, München 1996, pp. 222, 225; Á. HORNYÁK, *Hungarian-Yugoslav relations 1918–1927*, New York 2013, p. viii; S. MIĆIĆ, Foreign Policy of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia 1918–1941, in: J. ĐURIŠIĆ – D. TEODOSIĆ, *Serbian People and the Yugoslav State – Foreign Policy 1918–1990*, Belgrade 2021, pp. 33, 34.

6 S. MIĆIĆ, Shifting in the Yugoslav Foreign Policy from Regional Alliance to Neutrality, in: S. MIĆIĆ – J. ČAVOŠKI (eds.), *On the Fault Lines of European and World Politics: Yugoslavia between alliances and Neutrality/Non-Alignment*, Belgrade 2022, p. 54.

7 For further reading: V. VINAVER, Engleska i italijansko 'zaokruživanje Jugoslavije'

During the Italy-Yugoslavia negotiations in 1923, Benito Mussolini was offering bilateral agreement, and trilateral which would include France. The second proposal was only an asset to surmount Paris' opposition to the Foreign Minister Momčilo Ninčić's policy of friendship with Rome.[8] The latter had support of the King Aleksandar Karađorđević. Finally, Mussolini together with Ninčić and King Aleksandar reached the formula for bilateral agreement for the harmonization of the Italian and Yugoslav foreign policies in the Balkans and the Danubian Region. The so-called Rome Pact was signed in January 1924.[9] These cordial policies were significantly challenged during 1925 and 1926 and definitely terminated in 1927.[10] The Yugoslav position was that Rome Pact was primarily settling issues in the Balkans, but military alliance with Italy would be acceptable only in the tripartite form, with France.[11]

1926–1928, in: D. JANKOVIĆ (ed.), *Istorija XX veka, zbornik radova, Tom VIII*, Beograd 1966, pp. 93–186; D. ŽIVOJINOVIĆ, *Amerika, Italija i postanak Jugoslavije 1917–1919*, Beograd 1970; B. KRIZMAN, Italija u politici kralja Aleksandra i kneza Pavla (1918–1941), in: *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, I, 1975, pp. 33–96; E. MILAK, Kraljevina Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca i Rimski sporazum (1922–1924), in: Ž. AVRAMOVSKI (ed.), *Istorija XX veka, zbornik radova XIV–XV*, Beograd, 1982, pp. 131–172; V. VINAVER, *Jugoslavija i Francuska između dva svetska rata (Da li je Jugoslavija bila francuski "satelit")*, Beograd 1985; E. MILAK, *Jugoslavija i Italija 1931–1937*, Beograd 1987; J. PASZKIEWICZ, *Jugoławia w polityce Włoch w latach 1914–1941*, Poznań 2004; M. BUCARELLI, *Mussolini e la Jugoslavia 1922–1939*, Bari 2006; S. SRETENOVIĆ, *Francuska i Kraljevina Srva, Hrvata i Slovenaca 1918–1929*, Beograd 2008; Б. ГЛИГОРИЈЕВИЋ, *Краљ Александар Карађорђевић, књига III, У европској политици, друго издање*, Београд 2010; M. RISTOVIĆ, *Mussolini ante portas: Italijanski fašizam i jugoslovensko susedstvo (1919–1925)*, Beograd 2021; Ž. AVRAMOVSKI, *Jugoslavija i Italija 1918–1941, zbornik radova*, Beograd, 2024.

8 V. PAVLOVIĆ, Le conflit franco-italien dans les Balkans 1915–1935: Le rôle de la Yougoslavie, in: *Balcanica*, XXXVI, 2005, p. 187.

9 MILAK, Kraljevina Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca i Rimski sporazum (1922–1924), pp. 143–146, 153–164; VINAVER, Jugoslavija i Francuska između dva svetska rata, pp. 60, 61, 63, 64; ГЛИГОРИЈЕВИЋ, *Краљ Александар Карађорђевић, III*, pp. 35–39.

10 The cordial policy passed the first test when Ahmed Zogu regained power in Albania, in December 1924. Belgrade and Rome started competition for influence over Tirana, Sofia and Athens, and for gaining trust of Budapest, during 1925 and 1926. It ended with defeat of the Kingdom of SCS, in 1926 and 1927. For further reading: VINAVER, Engleska i italijansko 'zaokruživanje Jugoslavije' 1926–1928; VINAVER, *Jugoslavija i Madarska 1918–1933*; BUCARELLI, *Mussolini e la Jugoslavia 1922-1939*; S. MIŠIĆ, *Albanija: prijatelj i protivnik. Jugoslovenska politika prema Albaniji 1924–1927*, Beograd 2009; HORNYÁK, *Hungarian-Yugoslav relations 1918–1927*.

11 Archive of Yugoslavia (further: AY), Records of the Legation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in France – Paris, Vichy (388), box 10, folder 25, f. 441, 442.

Regarding the Danube region, Yugoslavia's Foreign Policy was relying on the Little Entente, the tripartite alliance with Czechoslovakia and Romania. Its main tasks were to prevent revision of the Peace Treaties, and the restoration of the Habsburg dynasty in the Central Europe.[12] During 1920s, Belgrade had stronger political, military and economy relations with Prague than with Bucharest.[13] Ninčić was passing the leading role of the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Edvard Beneš in the ranks of the alliance. This policy was revised only after Vojislav Marinković took over for the second time the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), in April 1927.[14] He started proactive Yugoslavia's Foreign Policy in the Central European Affairs.[15]

Although the Little Entente was the basis of the Danubian Policy of the Kingdom of SCS, it did not mean there were no impediments between allies. In late 1924 and first half of 1925 relations between the Kingdom of SCS and Czechoslovakia were gloomy due to the Prague's attitude towards internal disputes between Serbs and Croats on the issues of the state's organisation. After the downfall of the Ljubomir Davidović's coalition Cabinet – which main goal was agreement with the Croatian Republican Peasantry Party (CRPP) led by Stjepan Radić – and return to power of the Peoples Radical Party led by Nikola Pašić,[16] Beneš asked for

12 For further reading: E. CAMPUS, *Mica Înțelegere*, Bucureşti 1968; M. VANKU, *Mala antanta 1920–1938*, Titovo Užice 1969; E. CAMPUS, *The Little Entente and the Balkan Alliance*, Bucureşti 1978; M. ÁDÁM, *Richtung selbstvernichtung: Die Kleine Entente 1920–1938*, Budapest, Wien 1988; M. ÁDÁM, *The Little Entente and Europe (1920–1929)*, Budapest 1993; Z. SLÁDEK, *Malá dohoda 1919–1938: Její hospodářské, politické a vojenské komponenty*, Praha 2000.

13 G. POPI, *Jugoslovensko-rumunski odnosi 1918–1941*, Novi Sad 1984; P. HRADEČNÝ, *Politické vztahy Československa a Jugoslávie v letech 1925-1928 v zahraničním i vnitřním kontextu*, Praha 1988; E. BOIA, *Romania's Diplomatic Relations with Yugoslavia in the Interwar Period, 1919–1941*, Boulder, New York 1993; A. Đ. MARINKOVIĆ, *Ženidba kralja Aleksandra Karađorđevića*, Beograd 2004; J. ŠEBA, *Paměti legionáře a diplomata*, Praha, 2016; A. MITROVIĆ, *Razgraničenje Jugoslavije sa Mađarskom i Rumunijom 1919–1920*, Novi Sad, Beograd 2019; B. CATANA, *România, Serbia şi diferendul privind împărțirea Banatului (1914–1920)*, Târgovişte 2021.

14 Marinković's first tenure as the Foreign Minister lasted from July until November 1924, and the second tenure from April 1927 until July 1932. His tenure as the PM lasted from 4 April until 6 July 1932 (R. LJUŠIĆ – L. DIMIĆ i drugi (eds.), *Vlade Srbije 1805–2005*, Beograd 2005, pp. 303, 319, 321, 324, 327, 329, 331, 332–334.

15 MIĆIĆ, Foreign Policy of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia 1918–1941, p. 47.

16 Davidović's coalition government lasted from late July until early November 1924. It was formed by the Yugoslav Democratic Party – the second strongest Serbian party

postponement of the next Ministerial conference of the Little Entente. He was seconded by the Romanian Foreign Minister Ion G. Duca. Later, Ninčić asked for the postponement. He was willing to meet with Duca on the bilateral issues. Belgrade and Prague started press campaigns for mutual recriminations. In late March – when became clear that Pašić and Radić would negotiate on resolving internal problems – the situation started to improve.[17] After the agreement was reached and the Serbo-Croatian government was formed, the Yugoslav-Czechoslovak relations improved rapidly in mid-1925.[18] Nevertheless, Radić was still able to make confusion in bilateral relations with immoderate statements – for which he was known – particularly when he was praising the Czechs excessively over the Serbs.[19]

The formation of the Pašić-Radić government had opposite effect on relations between Belgrade and Bucharest. Their bilateral relations were already challenged by several factors during 1924.[20] Radić was known for a non-friendly attitude towards Romania. He was only gradually recognising the Little Entente as positive factor in the international relations.[21] The Romanians were displeased with the Serbo-Croatian coalition

– the Slovene People's Party and the Yugoslav Muslim Organisation, the strongest Slovenian and Muslim parties. The final goal was to strengthen the coalition with the CRPP and thus obtain the widest support among the South Slavs in the Kingdom of SCS. Davidović was dismissed due to the opposition of the king Aleksandar and Pašić, the leader of the strongest Serbian party. B. GLIGORIJEVIĆ, *Demokratska stranka i politički odnosi u Kraljevini Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca*, Beograd 1970, pp. 386–401, 409–440; Б. ГЛИГОРИЈЕВИЋ, *Историја Демократске странке 1919–1928*, Београд 2010, pp. 227–250).

17 Beneš and Duca were cordial to postpone the conference until March or April, but in the end it was held in January 1925. R. BŘACH, *Československo a Evropa v polovině dvacátých let*, Praha, Litomyšl 1996, pp. 193–197.

18 J. DEJMEK, *Edvard Beneš. Politická biografie českého demokrata, Část první, Revolucionář a diplomat (1884–1935)*, Praha 2006, p. 395.

19 ŠEBA, p. 235.

20 Main problems were Bucharest's dissatisfaction with Yugoslav-Italian agreement, Belgrade's refusal to sign tripartite defensive alliance with France and Romania, Belgrade's and Prague's refusal to support Romania in negotiations with the USSR regarding Bessarabia, different positions regarding Romanian minority in the Kingdom of SCS, and border incidents. VINAVER, *Jugoslavija i Mađarska 1918–1933*, pp. 262, 263, 266–269; POPI, pp. 55–61, 242, 296, 297; BOIA, pp. 109–122; Z. JANJETOVIĆ, *Deca careva, pastorčad kraljeva. Nacionalne manjine u Jugoslaviji 1918–1941*, Beograd 2005, pp. 236, 237, 242–244, 250, 254, 371, 372.

21 POPI, p. 66.

government, in which Radić played significant role. During the exile,[22] he was searching for a help from Moscow in an attempt to internationalise the so-called Croatian question in summer 1924.[23] Therefore, his ministerial position in 1925 could only steer up suspicion in Bucharest regarding future relations between the Kingdom of SCS and the USSR, and revive previous doubts that Belgrade and Prague were searching for ways to transform the Little Entente into the pan-Slavic alliance.[24] Before and during the League of Nations' (LoN) Council and Assembly sessions in September 1925, Radić changed hitherto views first towards the Little Entente, and consequently towards Romania.[25] He was very cautions to avoid misleading statement for the foreign press,[26] and he was following

22 Radić left for Budapest in July 1923, longest stayed was in Vienna, also visited London, and kept contacts with Italian and Hungarian representatives. He was denied re-entrance to Austria, before Ninčić's official visit. Ž. AVRAMOVSKI, *Britanci o Kraljevini Jugoslaviji. Godišnji izveštaji Britanskog poslanstva u Beogradu 1921–1938, knjiga prva (1921–1930)*, Beograd, Zagreb 1986, pp. 178, 188; Ž. AVRAMOVSKI, *Nemci o Kraljevini Jugoslaviji. Izveštaji nemačkih diplomatskih predstavnika 1920–1941, Tom I, 1920–1929*, Beograd 2020, doc. No. 56, p. 186, doc. No. 57, p. 187, doc. No. 59, p. 189; VINAVER, *Jugoslavija i Madarska 1918–1933*, pp. 243, 244; B. KRIZMAN, Jugoslavija i Austrija 1918–1938, in: *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, IX, 1, 1977, pp. 15-19; SUPPAN, pp. 369, 370, 376.

23 Radić was in the USSR from early June until early August, on the invitation of the Peasant International and the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs Georgy Chicherin. The Soviets wanted to exploit the CRPP for their plans for proletarian-peasantry revolutions in the Balkans. Radić was pursuing Moscow's support in political struggle against the government in Belgrade. In the end, he enrolled the CRPP into the Peasant International and returned to Zagreb one week after Davidović formed the Government. For further reading: M. KOLAR-DIMITRIJEVIĆ, Prepiska između Stjepana Radića i Seljačke internacionale u Moskvi 1924. Prilog građi za povijest Hrvatske republikanske seljačke stranke, in: *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, IV, 1, 1972, pp. 148–164; M. KOLAR-DIMITRIJEVIĆ, Put Stjepana Radića u Moskvu i pristup Hrvatske republikanske seljačke stranke u Seljačku internacionalnu, in: *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, IV, 3, 1972, pp. 7–29.

24 P. S. WANDYCZ, *France and her Eastern Allies 1919–1925: French-Czechoslovak-Polish Relations from the Paris Peace Conference to Locarno*, Minneapolis 1962, p. 318; W. STĘPNIAK, *Dyplomacja polska na Bałkanach (1918–1926)*, Warszawa 1998, pp. 237–239.

25 Влад.[ислав] Рибникар, Говор г. Радића, in: *Политика* од 17. септембра 1925, p. 2; З., Г. Радић о нашем раду у Женеви, in: *Политика* од 23. септембра 1925, p. 2; POPI, p. 66.

26 С.[танислав] Винавер, Данас ће се састати г. г. Пашић и Радић, in: *Време* од 8. септембра 1925, p. 1.

Ninčić's line in the diplomatic activities.[27] This proved to be rectifying for the bilateral relations between the Kingdom of SCS and Romania.

The second impediment during 1925 was Czechoslovak view that Ninčić was neglecting the Little Entente and was focusing on forging of the Balkan Entente, between the Kingdom of SCS, Romania and Greece.[28] The Czechoslovak Plenipotentiary Minister in Belgrade Jan Šeba claimed that project was promoted in the Kingdom of SCS by the Romanian Queen Maria – the mother-in-law of the King Aleksandar – but it was ill-perceived by Serbian statesmen and public, because they discarded the idea of women's involvement in politics.[29] Nevertheless, he informed Prague that Ninčić was avoiding meeting with Beneš in March and April 1925, due to preparations for the Balkan Entente.[30] Although the Polish diplomats also contemplated same idea,[31] Šeba's report proved to be misleading. Due to the problems in the Yugoslav-Greek relations, Ninčić's viewpoint was that settlement of bilateral issues[32] was the precondition

27 Конференција министара Мале антанте, in: *Време* од 9. септембра 1925, p. 3; Нинчић и Радић код Пашића, in: *Правда* од 9. септембра 1925, p. 1; Влад.[ислав] Рибникар, Друштво народа, in: *Политика* од 11. септембра 1925, p. 3; Влад.[ислав] Рибникар, Говор г. Радића, in: *Политика* од 17. септембра 1925, p. 2.

28 BŘACH, p. 197.

29 The French Plenipotentiary Minister Joseph-Fernand Grenard confirmed information the Romanian Queen Maria was responsible for this action. According to Šeba, she was pursuing to supress Czechoslovakia's influence in the ranks of the Little Entente, because she was opposing to any form of republicanism. Her daughter, the Yugoslav Queen Maria (Mărioara) was not involved in politics and did not support this initiative. ŠEBA, pp. 222, 233.

30 BŘACH, p. 197.

31 In January 1925, the Plenipotentiary Ministers in Belgrade and Bucharest Zdzisław Okęcki and Józef Wielowieyski presented to the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to support the Yugoslav-Romanian-Greek alliance in order to diminish Prague's influence in the ranks of the Little Entente, and in the Central Europe. A. ESSEN, *Polska a Mała Ententa 1920–1934*, Warszava Kraków 1992, pp. 154, 155.

32 The main issues in bilateral relations at the time were the renewal of alliance, the exploitation of the Ghevgheli–Thessaloniki railway, the establishment, exploitation of the Yugoslavia's FTZ in the Thessaloniki Port, the expropriation of the Serbian Hilandar monastery's land, and the status of the South Slav minority in the Aegean Macedonia. I. D. MICHAÏLIDIS, Traditional Friends and Occasional Claimants: Serbian Claims in Macedonia between the Wars, in: *Balkan Studies*, 36, 1, 1995, pp. 104–108; D. BAKIĆ, The Port of Salonica in Yugoslav Foreign Policy 1919–1941, in: *Balcanica*, XLIII, 2014, pp. 198–200; J. PASZKIEWICZ, *Grecja a Bezpieczeństwo międzynarodowe na Bałkanach 1923–1936*, Poznań 2012, p. 149; А. М. ПЕЋИНАР, *Краљевина Срба, Хрвата и Словенаца и Грчка (1919–1924). Од српско-грчких ка југословенско-грчким односима*, Београд 2021, pp. 211–221.

for forging any alliance in the Balkans.[33] His main argument was that after experience with Greek interpretation of the allied obligations in 1915, no one in Belgrade could trust new Athens' guarantees.[34] The series of bilateral problems were only justifying this distrust.[35] After the initial surprise, the Quai d'Orsay supported the Kingdom of SCS.[36] In multilateral relations, Ninčić reintroduced the idea of Greek and Polish membership in the Little Entente, in February and March 1925.[37] Nevertheless, it was the Greek Foreign Minister Konstantinos Rentis who called for the Balkan Security Pact based on the arbitration – between Greece, the Kingdom of SCS and Romania – in June 1925. The project was not officially presented to the respective governments, and Belgrade simply ignored it.[38] The Yugoslav charge d'affaires in Athens Vladimir Vukmirović immediately responded to Rentis that his initiative would not be warmly welcomed by the MFA.[39] The Yugoslav press contested proposed formulas, and manners in which it was announced.[40] Ninčić preserved his stand that improvement of the bilateral relations was the precondition for revival of defensive alliance.[41] Even the Bulgarian charge d'affaires in Athens Ivan Danchev noticed that Greek proposal was directly affecting the Yugoslav vital interests, and was unacceptable because it projected arbitration only in the issues of secondary

33 BŘACH, p. 198.

34 MIĆIĆ, Shifting in the Yugoslav Foreign Policy from Regional Alliance to Neutrality, p. 71.

35 AY, Records of the Legation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in England – London (341), box 24, folder 58. The Foreign Minister Momčilo Ninčić to the Plenipotentiary Minister in Athens Panta Gavrilović, Conf. No. 9665 from 15 November 1924.

36 According to the director of the Directory for political and economy affaires Jules Laroche, the Quai d'Orsay appreciated the importance of the Thessaloniki port for traffic between the Kingdom of SCS and France, based on experience from the Great War. They were aware of the fact that future role of the port would depend if Belgrade and Rome would be on the same side or on the opposite sides in some future war. AY, r. 388, b. 10, f. 24, f. 77.

37 ESSEN, p. 160.

38 Ž. AVRAMOVSKI, Pitanje Balkanskog garantnog pakta i jugoslovensko-bugarski odnosi 1925. godine u svetlu britanske politike na Balkanu, in: *Vojnoistorijski glasnik*, XXXV, 2, 1984, pp. 92, 93, 96, 99.

39 Central State Archive, Sofia, (further: CSA) Records of the Legation of Bulgaria in Athens (322 k), Inventory no. 1, archival unit No. 396, f. 28, 29.

40 AY, Records of the Legation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in Romania – Bucharest (395), box 15, folder 150, f. 175–177.

41 Ibid., r. 388, b. 10, f. 24, f. 82.

importance.[42] According to the Plenipotentiary Minister in Paris Miroslav Spalajković, all Greek officials and politicians – except for the former Foreign Minister Georgios Rusos[43] – were seeking alliance with Bulgaria against the alleged imperialism of the Kingdom of SCS.[44] The Yugoslav Plenipotentiary Minister in Bucharest Boško Čolak-Antić was not able to grasp full implication of the proposal onto the Romanian official circles, due to Duca's illness and lack of frankness of the diplomatic clerks. At first, he could inform only that public asked for the renewal of the Balkan alliance from 1912, to prevent gathering of the Balkan states around Italy and the Kingdom of SCS.[45] It took him one week for the detail survey of situations. Čolak-Antić assessed that Romanians were afraid of the alleged Yugoslav hegemony over the Balkans, and therefore supporting any proposition which would diminished Belgrade's positions in the region. They supported Rentis' proposition with same motivation.[46] The Plenipotentiary Minister in Rome Vojislav Antonijević informed Ninčić that the new State Under-Secretary Dino Grandi was seeking to exploit situation between Belgrade and Athens, and to prevent their bilateral agreement without Italian interference.[47] According to the charge d'affaires in London Đorđe Todorović, in late 1924 the British officials had

42 According to Danchev the Greek government was proposing to submit to the Court of Arbitration only questions of the expropriation of the Serbian Hilandar monastery's land and the citizenship of 300 to 400 Muslim families in Greece. He informed the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign and Religious Affairs that bilateral negotiations conducted in Belgrade were sobering for the Greek diplomats to finally comprehend that the Kingdom of SCS was not pursuing the FTZ in Thessaloniki only for commercial purposes, but also for political interests. The question was raised in Athens if the renewal of alliance was possible and advisable. CSA, r. 322 k, inv. No. 1, a. u. no. 396, f. 7–14.

43 In late May 1924, Rusos was not an opponent to the idea of the Balkans confederation, but he emphasized that the greatest impediment for the implementation of this idea was Bulgaria's territorial claims towards Greece. AY, r. 388, b. 10, f. 24, f. 35–38. In mid-June 1924, he informed the Plenipotentiary Minister in Athens Jovan T. Marković about the basis of his Foreign Policy. Rusos was seeking alignment with the Kingdom of SCS in order to protect international order established by peace treaties. Ibid, f. 35–38, 44–46.

44 Spalajković received this information from the Bulgarian political emigrant Konstatin Todorov, who was closely cooperating with Yugoslav state institutions. AY, r. 388, b. 9, f. 23, f. 677.

45 AY, r. 395, b. 13, f. 124, f. 59–61.

46 Ibid., f. 62–64, 74–77.

47 Archive of the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts, Belgrade (further: ASASA), Personal papers of Milan Antić (14.387), items no. 9051 and 9094.

some comments on the Yugoslav policy regarding the imperialistic front.[48] In mid-1925, the Plenipotentiary Minister in London Đorđe Đurić reported that the Foreign Office (FO) supported Belgrade's views on bilateral issues and had some remarks on the manners in which they were presented to Athens.[49] The French Plenipotentiary Ministers in Belgrade and Athens Joseph-Fernand Grenard and Count Charles de Chambrun were instructed by the Quai d'Orsay to examine in details differences in Yugoslav and Greek stand on bilateral relations,[50] because the French government wanted it resolved before sessions of the LoN's Council and Assembly. Grenard seconded Belgrade's views.[51] Ninčić discussed these issues with Aristide Briand and Austin Chamberlain – on the margins of the Sixth LoN's Assembly – and obtained their support.[52] He could reject Rentis' proposal without any risk from accusation with disturbing the peace in the region.[53] The Yugoslav and Greek Foreign Ministers reached an agreement to settle bilateral issues first,[54] and to discuss other projects

48 The Athens' main argument against Belgrade was that the Kingdom of SCS had imperialistic tendencies towards the Greek part of Macedonia and Thessaloniki. The British officials were criticizing Yugoslav government for keeping the largest Army in the Balkans and using the French loan for the armament instead for some productive activities. AY, r. 341, b. 1, f. 1. Todorović to Ninčić, Str. Conf. No. 1097 from 9 December 1924.

49 Ibid., r. 341, b. 1, f. 2. Đurić to Ninčić, Conf. No. 247 from 15 August 1925.

50 ASASA, r. 14.387, item No. 9078; CSA, r. 322 k, inv. No. 1, a. u. no. 527, f. 123, 124.

51 AY, r. 388, b. 10, f. 24, f. 84, 85.

52 Г. др. Нинчић код г. Бријана, in: *Правда* од 10. септембра 1925, p. 1; В.[ладислав] Р.[ибникар], телеграм из Женеве од 9. септембра, in: *Политика* од 10. септембра 1925, p. 4; Станислав Винавер, Пораз г. Рентиса, in: *Време* од 10. септембра 1925, p. 3; С.[танислав] Винавер, Новинари код г. др. Нинчића, in: *Време* од 11. септембра 1925, p. 1; В.[ладислав] М.[артинац], Г. Нинчић и г. Рендис, in: *Политика* од 11. септембра 1925, p. 1.

53 Савет Друштва народа, in: *Политика* од 5. септембра 1925, p. 3; Влад.[ислав] Рибникар, Г. Нинчић и Рендисов пакт, in: *Политика* од 8. септембра 1925, p. 4; Влад.[ислав] Рибникар, Заједничко иступање Мале Антанте, in: *Политика* од 9. септембра 1925, p. 3.

54 Нови преговори са Грчком, in: *Правда* од 9. септембра 1925, p. 1; Станислав Винавер, Пораз г. Рентиса, in: *Време* од 10. септембра 1925, p. 3; В.[ладислав] М.[артинац], Г. Нинчић и г. Рендис, in: *Политика* од 11. септембра 1925, p. 1; М.[илоје] С.[окић], Пред новим преговорима са Грчком, in: *Правда* од 12. септембра 1925, p. 1; С.[танислав] Винавер, Састанак г. др. Нинчића и г. Рентиса, in: *Време* од 12. септембра 1925, p. 1; С.[танислав] Винавер, Изјаве г. Рентиса дописнику „Времена", in: *Време* од 13. септембра 1925, p. 1; Исправка г. Рентиса, in: *Време* од 13. септембра 1925, p. 1; Влад.[ислав] Рибникар, После састанка Нинчић-Рендис, in: *Политика* од 13. септембра 1925, p. 3.

later. Ninčić and Duca discussed Rentis' proposal.[55] Yet, statement of the Romanian Foreign Minister on the Pact of Non-Aggression with all neighbours was another reason for the suspicion of the Yugoslav press.[56] After the Sixth LoN's Assembly, Ninčić asked the Quai d'Orsay for support in the Yugoslav-Greek negotiations on economy problems.[57] Đurić was still convinced that Belgrade could count on the support of the FO.[58]

Beside the misunderstandings and suspicions in the ranks of the Little Entente and between the Balkan nations, development of ideas and plans of the Great Powers was also an important factor. During the discussions about two concepts of preservation of the peace based on universal and regional level – from 1922 until 1924[59] – the Little Entente had interest to support both cases. The first concept intended to guard the European peace, and the second concept was protecting the member-states' national security and the alliance's *raison d'être*. In that regard, the Little Entente was pleased with agreement between Edouard Herriot and Ramsay MacDonald – during the Fifth LoN's Assembly in 1924 – on the Protocol for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes, the so-called Protocol of Geneva.[60] Three state-members particularly supported French

55 Влад.[ислав] Рибникар, Друштво Народа, in: *Политика* од 10. септембра 1925, p. 4; М.[илоје] С.[окић], Изјаве г. Дуке, in: *Правда* од 13. септембра 1925, p. 1; Влад.[ислав] Рибникар, Г. Дука о пакту и о излазу на Солун, in: *Политика* од 13. септембра 1925, p. 4.

56 The misunderstanding was based on falsely interpretation that Duca was seconding Rendis' proposal. Both Yugoslav and Romanian Foreign Ministers were forced to smooth things over by issuing statements to the other country's press (Влад.[ислав] Рибникар, Румунија тражи пакт са свима суседним државама, in: *Политика* од 17. септембра 1925, p. 2; Изјаве Дуке и Нинчића, in: *Правда* од 19. септембра 1925, p. 2; Г. Нинчићев деманти, in: *Правда* од 19. септембра 1925, p. 1; Одјек предлога г. Дуке о пакту неагресије, in: *Политика* од 25. септембра 1925, p. 3; Влад.[ислав] Рибникар, Румунија тражи пакт са свима суседним државама, in: *Политика* од 17. септембра 1925, p. 2; Г. др. Нинчић о говору г. Дуке, in: *Време* од 25. септембра 1925, p. 3; Изјаве Нинчића о Дуки, in: *Правда* од 25. септембра 1925, p. 1; POPI, pp. 67, 68.

57 AY, r. 388, b. 10, f. 24, f. 89.

58 Ibid., r. 341, b. 12, f. 25. Đurić to Ninčić, Conf. No. 363 from 24 December 1925.

59 C. SVOLOPOULOS, La sécurité régionale et la Société des Nations, in: *The League of Nations in retrospect: proceedings of the symposium*, Berlin, New York 1983, pp. 268, 269; P. J. YEARWOOD, *Guarantee of Peace: The League of Nations in British Policy 1914–1925*, Oxford 2009, pp. 215–250.

60 F. P. WALTERS, *A History of the League of Nations*, London 1952, pp. 264, 268–270; M. VAÏSSE, La Société des Nations et la désarmement, in: *The League of Nations in retrospect: proceedings of the symposium*, Berlin, New York, 1983, p. 247; YEARWOOD, pp. 283–323.

triple formula Arbitration, Security, Disarmament; and argument on a "gap in the Covenant" which would allow new wars in which the LoN's members could not intervene.[61] The Czechoslovak Plenipotentiary Minister in London Vojtěch Mastný informed Todorović that the FO would reject the French formula for the security in Europe and would discard security of eastern and southern German borders from their agenda. He recommended to interlocutor to follow his example and to suggest Ninčić to work with Beneš on mutual approach between Czechoslovakia, the Kingdom of SCS, Poland and Greece in the issue of the security and peace in Europe.[62] Todorović could inform the MFA that Britain would reject the Protocol of Geneva, in mid-February.[63] Nevertheless, the Little Entente was still disappointed when Austin Chamberlain rejected it during the LoN's Council session in March 1925, which paved the way for negotiating the Pact of Locarno.[64] Before the Little Entente's Ministerial Conference in May 1925, differentiation in views between three Foreign Ministers was conspicuous.[65] During the Conference Ninčić, Beneš and Duca had cordial views on the on-going negotiations between the Great Powers and their future agreement. They were displeased with menace to the international order established at the Peace Conference, yet they believed in honest intentions of Paris. The main concern was that the Great Power's actions would lead to division between states with and without international guarantees of their borders. Ninčić, Beneš and Duca came to conclusion that the Little Entente should work on strengthening the territorial *status quo* in Europe.[66] At the Ministerial Conference held in Geneva in September 1925, three Foreign Ministers discussed idea of the so-called Eastern Security Treaty for the Central European states.[67]

During the Sixth LoN's Assembly, Pašić and Ninčić issued instruction for the newly appointed Plenipotentiary Minister Đorđe Đurić to emphasize in conversations with British officials Yugoslav support to the cordial policy of the FO and the Quai d'Orsay regarding security in the Western Europe. The PM and the Foreign Minister wanted to send clear-cut message that the Yugoslav Foreign Policy was based on preserving the

61 WALTERS, pp. 271–275.
62 AY, r. 341, b. 1, f. 1. Todorović to Ninčić, Conf. No. 38 from 28 January 1925.
63 Ibid. Todorović to the MFA, Conf. No. 55 from 13 February 1925.
64 WALTERS, pp. 284, 285; VAÏSSE, p. 248; YEARWOOD, pp. 327–344.
65 BŘACH, p. 200.
66 CAMPUS, p. 71.
67 SLÁDEK, p. 69.

friendship with both Great Powers, on the pacific settlement of disputes, and on guarding the international order based on peace treaties.[68] Ninčić – who was not invited to attend the Locarno Conference – immediately took the initiative to arrange a meeting with Beneš. He wanted to discuss all the implications of the Pact of Locarno for the Central Europe and the Balkans. They had met on 22 October 1925 on Bled,[69] and the main topics were mutual interests of the Little Entente towards the LoN and Austria, and some bilateral issues.[70] Ninčić's instinct was not wrong. Chamberlain discussed with Beneš, on 19 October 1925, the possibility of implementation of the Locarno model for the Central Europe. The FO assessment was that Beneš was a better interlocutor than Ninčić for reaching the agreement between the Little Entente and Hungary.[71] Chamberlain's idea was the reconciliation of the former enemies and appeasement of Italian claims in the Danubian region, but without any obligations for Britain.[72] Beneš accepted the idea, and the role of initiator within the ranks of the Little Entente. He had cordial view with Ninčić on necessity for the so-called Central European Locarno, and they received Duca's consent on 23 October.[73] They assigned leading role to London and Paris in this matter, since they were convinced that Rome would reject any initiative of the Little Entente.[74] Ninčić presented this idea to the British Plenipotentiary Minister Howard Kennard,[75] yet Chamberlain refused it.[76]

68 AY, r. 341, b. 1, f. 2. Đurić to Ninčić, Str. Conf. No. 320 from 12 November 1925.

69 MIĆIĆ, Shifting in the Yugoslav Foreign Policy from Regional Alliance to Neutrality, p. 68.

70 Among bilateral issues, the most important was the President Tomáš Masaryk's elusion to officially visit the Kingdom of SCS and Romania. ŠEBA, p. 235.

71 VINAVER, Jugoslavija i Francuska između dva rata, p. 89; D. BAKIĆ, 'Must Will Peace': British Brokering of 'Central European' and 'Balkan Locarno', 1925–9", in: *Journal of Contemporary History*, 48, 1, 2012, pp. 27, 28, 30.

72 CAMPUS, p. 75; P. FINNEY, Raising Frankenstein: Great Britain, 'Balkanism' and the Search for a Balkan Locarno in the 1920s, in: *European History Quarterly*, 33, 3, 2003, pp. 321, 322; DEJMEK, pp. 408–410; BAKIĆ, 'Must Will Peace', pp. 26–29.

73 MIĆIĆ, Shifting in the Yugoslav Foreign Policy from Regional Alliance to Neutrality, pp. 68, 69.

74 AVRAMOVSKI, Pitanje Balkanskog garantnog pakta, p. 101; BAKIĆ, 'Must Will Peace', p. 28.

75 Ninčić's main argument before Kennard was that Budapest would impose difficult conditions, if initiative would come from the Little Entente. AVRAMOVSKI, Pitanje Balkanskog garantnog pakta, p. 101.

76 MIĆIĆ, Shifting in the Yugoslav Foreign Policy from Regional Alliance to Neutrality, p. 69.

The head of the Central Department Miles Lampson clarified to Đurić that the FO was supporting initiatives for the Central Europe and Balkan Locarno pacts, but their stand was that any involvement of non-regional actors would thwart those plans.[77] Beneš suggested to Ninčić to return to the original plan for the Little Entente to take the initiative and secure reorganisation of the regional security under their conditions.[78] Čolak-Antić did not trust Duca's sincerity in this issue. The former assessed that the latter accepted proposed idea only after Chicherin's visits to Warsaw and Berlin – in September and December 1925 – which made a grave impression on the Romanian Government and on the opposition, as they felt abandoned by Poland in their bilateral anti-Soviet front. According to Čolak-Antić, these events urged Duca to ask Ninčić and Beneš for prompt meeting to discuss plans for the Central European Locarno.[79]

The Pact of Locarno made several impacts on the Yugoslavia's Foreign Policy. Ninčić was under strong impression of the surmounting the enmities between the French and the Germans, and the readiness of the British and the Italians to guarantee security in the West Europe. One of his closest associates in the MFA, Milan Antić, concluded that his superior was "misled by the pactomania".[80] Ninčić was more confident in the implementation of the Locarno model in the Central Europe than in the Balkans.[81] The three Foreign Ministers of the Little Entente were discussing separately terms of potential utilisation of the Locarno model, since autumn 1925. Beneš was interested in rapprochement with Austria and took lenient stand towards Hungary,[82] Duca was inclined towards closer cooperation with Poland,[83] and Ninčić preserved his hitherto focus

77 AY, r. 341, b. 1, f. 2. Đurić to Ninčić, Str. Conf. No. 320 from 12 November 1925.

78 MIĆIĆ, Shifting in the Yugoslav Foreign Policy from Regional Alliance to Neutrality, p. 69.

79 AY, r. 395, b. 13, f. 124, f. 93–95.

80 MIĆIĆ, Shifting in the Yugoslav Foreign Policy from Regional Alliance to Neutrality, p. 69.

81 BAKIĆ, 'Must Will Peace', p. 28.

82 Masaryk and Beneš took a lenient stand towards Hungary, to gain Chamberlain's support against Mussolini's plan to forge his Locarno system in the Danubian region through closer cooperation with Vienna and Budapest. P. S. WANDYCZ, *The Twilight of French Eastern Alliance 1926–1936: French-Czechoslovak-Polish Relations from Locarno to Remilitarization of Rhineland*, New Jersey 1988, p. 31; SLÁDEK, pp. 74, 75; DEJMEK, pp. 412, 414; D. BAKIĆ, *Britain and Interwar Danubian Europe: Foreign Policy and Security Challenges, 1919–1936*, London 2017, pp. 82, 83.

83 CAMPUS, p. 74.

on the Balkan states. Mussolini informed London and Paris on intention to form the Balkan Locarno as the beginning of a larger plan. He assessed the Pact of Locarno as the weakness of the French system of the collective security, because the Eastern, Central and Southeastern Europe were left unprotected. His main goal was to exploit favourable circumstances to form the Italian bloc in the Danubian region and in the Balkans. In order to present his ambitions as compatible with the British and French foreign policies, Mussolini officially introduced this plan as the *Locarno danubiano-balcanica*, in February 1926.[84]

Ninčić concurred with Prague that the Italian initiatives for the regional treaties represented Rome tendency to dominate in the Balkans, to disintegrate the Little Entente and to isolate France.[85] He deemed necessarily to work simultaneously on the revival of the Yugoslav-Italian friendship and on securing the peace in the Balkans.[86] He was ready to participate in Mussolini's plans only under condition if the Quai d'Orsay participated as well. Ninčić prepared two proposals for new design of the Yugoslav-Italian relations. Both had the same goal, to oppose Mussolini's initiative in the Balkans and the Danubian region. The first proposal was a bilateral treaty for re-arrangement of the Central European security structure. The second proposal was broadening the Rome Pact of 1924 to the tripartite treaty with France. Both plans had anti-German basis. Ninčić discussed them with Italian and French statesmen and diplomats in Rome, Paris and in Geneva, during February and March 1926.[87] He presupposed that Mussolini would be only inclined towards plan to incorporate the Kingdom of SCS in the Italian bloc which would be

84 KRIZMAN, Italija u politici kralja Aleksandra i kneza Pavla (1918–1941), p. 39; ÁDÁM, Richtung selbstvernichtung, pp. 72, 73; M. L. NAPOLITANO, *Mussolini e la Conferenza di Locarno (1925): Il problema della sicurezza nella politica estera italiana*, Urbino 1996, pp. 230, 231; H. J. BURGWYN, *Italian Foreign Policy in Interwar Period, 1918–1940*, Westport, London 1997, pp. 36–40; BUCARELLI, pp. 42, 43; L. MONZALI, *Il sogno dell'egemonia: l'Italia, la questione jugoslava e l'Europa centrale (1918–1941)*, Firenze 2010, pp. 40, 41.

85 VINAVER, *Jugoslavija i Mađarska 1918–1933*, pp. 301, 302; М. БЈЕЛАЈАЦ, *Дипломатија и војска. Србија и Југославија 1901–1999*, Београд 2010, pp. 131–133.

86 VINAVER, Engleska i italijansko 'zaokruživanje Jugoslavije' 1926–1928, p. 77.

87 Č. POPOV, *Od Versaja do Danciga*, Beograd 1976, pp. 359, 360; VINAVER, *Jugoslavija i Francuska između dva svetska rata*, pp. 90–92; ÁDÁM, *The Little Entente and Europe (1920–1929)*, pp. 298–300; MIĆIĆ, Shifting in the Yugoslav Foreign Policy from Regional Alliance to Neutrality, p. 72.

directed against France and Czechoslovakia.[88] Ninčić's proposal for the tripartite treaty with Paris was based on Mussolini's initiative from 1923, so he could expect it would be acceptable for Rome. His plan to forge the anti-German bloc with Italy was an alteration in his hitherto politics. Until 1926, he was following Czechoslovakia and Italy in policies towards the Weimar Republic. Early that year, Ninčić was prepared to "step out" together with Mussolini. He was convinced that Beneš would follow their lead.[89]

Pašić did not approve Ninčić's idea. He was against alignment with Italy – and possibly France – on the anti-German basis. Since mid-1921, the PM was searching for ways to prepare ground in the Yugoslav public for some future political agreement with the Weimar Republic.[90] He thought that "the Germans are nation of the future in Europe".[91] After Ninčić's visit to Rome in late February 1926, Pašić advised prudence and carefulness in negotiating new agreements. The PM was reserved towards Mussolini's proposal for tripartite security agreement between Italy, the Kingdom of SCS and Austria against the Anschluß. Pašić assessed that Berlin's claims towards south would be directed against Rome, and not against Belgrade. His intention was to exploit favourable pro-Serbian sympathies of Germans – and their rehabilitated status of the Great Power in the ranks of the LoN – in the future development of the European affairs. Pašić believed that Berlin and Moscow would forge an alliance, which would place Italy in the powerless position. Therefore, he was suggesting to the Foreign Minister it would not be advisable to take any excessive obligations towards Rome, and against Vienna and Berlin.[92] The postponement of the German admission in the LoN in March 1926, urged Pašić to instruct Ninčić to avoid any bilateral agreement with France. His intention was to evade any anti-German obligation without further proof

88 Ninčić assumed that Mussolini was planning to forge bloc with the Kingdom of SCS, Bulgaria and Hungary, and had information that Duca refused similar Italian offer. He apprehended it as a plan to subdue Belgrade to Rome. ASASA, r. r. 14.387, item No. 8929.

89 Ibid.

90 Д. ДЕНДА, *Шлем и шајкача. Војни фактор и југословенско-немачки односи (1918–1941)*, Нови Сад 2019, pp. 86, 87.

91 Z. JANJETOVIĆ – S. MIĆIĆ, Österreich in den Augen der jugoslawischen Diplomatie 1918–1938, in: K. AJLEC – B. BAKOVEC – B. REPE (eds.), *Nečakov zbornik. Procesi, teme in dogodki iz 19. in 20. stoletja*, Ljubljana 2018, p. 487.

92 ASASA, r. r. 14.387, item No. 8929.

for sustainability of the Locarno policy in Europe.[93] The Foreign Minister received similar advice from London. Todorović informed Ninčić the FO was against any regional alliances and deemed Anschluß as inevitable. The British suggestion was to avoind creating enemies upfront.[94]

The King Aleksandar supported Ninčić's efforts to reach an agreement with Italy.[95] Despite his endeavours to find formula acceptable both for Paris and Rome, the latter rejected the tripartite pact. Mussolini thus proved that his proposal from 1923 was manoeuvre to suppress French opposition to the Rome Pact. Another impediment for the Yugoslav Foreign Minister was the FO refusal to support the Yugoslav-French treaty which would isolate Italy. In the end, Ninčić had stopped halfway. He was not certain whether to continue with the policy of friendship with Rome or to ask for French aid to defend the Kingdom of SCS from the Italian "friendship". Finally, the inconsistency of Mussolini's policy forced Ninčić to orientate towards Paris.[96] He estimated that the Italian true aim was to suppress the French influence, dissolve the Little Entente, and to isolate the Kingdom of SCS to impose the will of Rome. The preparatory work on signing of the Yugoslav-French treaty was interpreted in the Yugoslav public as a revival of war alliance. Based on similar assessment, Mussolini decided to radicalise his policy towards the Kingdom of SCS.[97]

Another impact of the Locarno Pact on the Yugoslavia's Foreign Policy, was Ninčić's modification of the strategy for the Balkans. The basis remained the same, i.e. the preservation of dominant position in the region through friendly relations and probable cooperation with Albania, Greece, or Bulgaria. The priority in negotiations was given to one side, so to the preserve manoeuvre to shift bilateral negotiations to some other direction in the case of deadlock. The novelty was emphasizing economic

93 Ibid., r. r. 14.387, items no. 8929 and 8942.

94 AY, r. 341, b. 6, f. 13. Todorović to Ninčić, Conf. No. 136 from 10 March 1926.

95 MIĆIĆ, Shifting in the Yugoslav Foreign Policy from Regional Alliance to Neutrality, p. 72.

96 VINAVER, Engleska i italijansko 'zaokruživanje Jugoslavije' 1926–1928, pp. 79–81; B. KRIZMAN, *Vanjska politika jugoslavenske države 1918–1941. Diplomatsko-historijski pregled*, Zagreb 1975, p. 46; VINAVER, *Jugoslavija i Francuska između dva svetska rata*, pp. 92–96; W. A. SHORROCK, France, Italy and the Eastern Mediterranean in the 1920s, in: *The International History Review*, 8, 1, 1986, pp. 79, 80; ÁDÁM, *The Little Entente and Europe (1920–1929)*, pp. 300–302; SRETENOVIĆ, pp. 318–324; MIĆIĆ, Shifting in the Yugoslav Foreign Policy from Regional Alliance to Neutrality, pp. 72, 73.

97 MIĆIĆ, Shifting in the Yugoslav Foreign Policy from Regional Alliance to Neutrality, p. 73.

issues rather than political ones. The tactics remained the same.[98] This allowed Ninčić to represent endeavours in pacifistic manners – that he was pursuing prosperity of all Balkan nations – and to evade any new accusation on the alleged Yugoslav imperialism. The aim was to devise formula for rejecting the Great Powers' initiatives for implementation of the Locarno model in the region.

Ninčić kept viewpoint that improvement of bilateral relations with Greece and Bulgaria was the precondition for any multilateral agreement among the Balkan nations.[99] Pašić seconded this stand.[100] Ninčić was neither accepting the FO suggestions for the Balkan Locarno[101] nor the Quai d'Orsay idea of the *équilibre balkanique* through bilateral agreements.[102] No more than he was eager to consent Mussolini's project. After the Greek Foreign Minister Alexandros Hatzikyriakos tried to involve Chamberlain in negotiating the Balkan Security and Arbitration Agreement – based on the Pact of Locarno and under LoN's supervision[103] – the Plenipotentiary Minister in Bern (and Pašić's nephew) Milutin Jovanović advised the MFA to react promptly. His main argument was that the LoN's Council was impotent towards European Powers and demonstrated strength only towards other nations. Therefore, he suggested to the MFA to obviate Geneva interference, and continue with the foreign policy based on preserving the international order established by peace treaties and on bilateral agreements with neighbouring states.[104] Pašić and Ninčić consented his views. Belgrade accepted the idea of the Guarantee Pact for the Balkan in principal but emphasised the importance of improving bilateral relations with Greece and Bulgaria as the necessary precondition. Furthermore, the blame was shifted to the neighbours' courtyard by pointing out instability of regimes in Athens and Sofia.[105] After meeting with Lampson,

98 S. MIĆIĆ, Yugoslav Diplomacy and the ideas of the Balkan unity, 1925–1930, in: *Balcanica Posnaniensia*, XXIX, 2022, p. 217.

99 AVRAMOVSKI, Pitanje Balkanskog garantnog pakta, p. 101.

100 MIĆIĆ, Shifting in the Yugoslav Foreign Policy from Regional Alliance to Neutrality, p. 75.

101 AVRAMOVSKI, Pitanje Balkanskog garantnog pakta, pp. 101–110; BAKIĆ, 'Must Will Peace', pp. 46–48.

102 S. SRETENOVIĆ, Le poids grandissant de l'Italie dans les relations entre la France et le Royaume des Serbes, Croates et Slovènes 1924–1927, in: *Istorija 20. veka*, 2, 2007, p. 25.

103 AVRAMOVSKI, Pitanje Balkanskog garantnog pakta, pp. 101, 102.

104 AY, r. 395, b. 14, f. 136, f. 169.

105 AVRAMOVSKI, Pitanje Balkanskog garantnog pakta, p. 108.

Đurić concluded that Greek attempt to involve the FO in the issue of the Balkan Locarno was unsuccessful.[106] In late December, he concluded that the British were accepting the fact that Belgrade was pursuing only economic interests in negotiations with Athens. He assumed that the FO would not blame the Kingdom of SCS but neighbouring countries in the case of failure of the Balkan- and Central European Locarno.[107] The bilateral negotiations between Belgrade and Athens – initiated during the meeting between Ninčić and Rentis in Geneva – were terminated in early November 1925 due to different views on the Balkan Guarantee Pact.[108] After the improvement of the Greek-Turkish relations in autumn 1925, the MFA rejected Athens' proposition for a conference in Istanbul between the Foreign Ministers of the Balkan states for exchange of opinions on the regional guarantee pact.[109] The Greek officials were aware that the Kingdom of SCS had final word on Hatzikyriakos' initiatives, and they were anxious of possible bilateral Yugoslav-Bulgarian agreement which could further aggravate their position.[110] This was evident particularly after the Incident at Petrich, in October 1925. Athens unsuccessfully tried to strengthen its positions by creating confusion between the Kingdom of SCS and Romania.[111] The second attempt was rapprochement with Albania, Turkey, and possibly Bulgaria in an attempt to weaken the Kingdom of SCS' position in the region, and coerce Belgrade to accept Greek terms.[112] The MFA concluded that Athens was not sincere in bilateral negotiations.[113]

In late 1925 and early 1926, Ninčić was devising plan for the Balkan Customs Union as countermeasure against Great Powers' initiatives for

106 AY, r. 341, b. 1, f. 2. Đurić to Ninčić, Str. Conf. No. 320 from 12 November 1925.

107 Ibid., r. 341, b. 12, f. 25. Đurić to Ninčić, Conf. No. 363 from 24 December 1925.

108 ASASA, r. 14.387, item No. 9028.

109 C. IORDAN-SIMA, La Turquie kémaliste et l'idée du Pacte balkanique dans les années 1925–1926, in: *Révue des Études Sud-Est Européennes*, XIX, No. 2, 1981, p. 314.

110 The Plenipotentiary Minister in Athens Panta Gavrilović had to refute rumours. ASASA, r. 14.387, item No. 9039.

111 The Greek diplomats informed indirectly Duca that Gavrilović – in the name of Belgrade – accepted the Guarantee Pact for the Balkans, after Romania had supported the Yugoslav stand in this issue. Detailed exchange of information between Belgrade and Bucharest clarified it as Athens' intrigue. AY, r. 395, b. 1, f. 3, f. 126–128.

112 CSA, r. 322 k, inv. No. 1, a. u. No. 527, f. 40–45.

113 AY, r. 341, b. 24, f. 58. The circular of the head of Information section of the MFA Vukašin Životić to all Legations and to the General Staff, Greece No. 6 from 16 February 1926.

implementation of Locarno pact model in the region. He was considering only Bulgaria, Greece and Albania as future members. The idea was centred on the formula "The Balkans for the Balkan Nations" – which was basis for the Serbian Foreign Policy since 1912 and re-introduced as the Yugoslav Foreign Policy at the Peace Conference in Paris in 1919. From Belgrade point of view, it was the solely sustainable foundation for the Balkan Locarno.[114] The MFA and the Ministry of Trade and Industry started their consultation regarding Albania first, in October 1925. The final drafts for the Trade Agreement and the Customs Union were finished on in January 1926. In the end, two Ministries agreed to proceed with the Trade agreement.[115] The Minister of Education Stjepan Radić – who was known for his pro-Bulgarian sentiments – publicly announced the customs union between the Kingdom of SCS and Bulgaria, in early October 1925.[116] Ninčić assigned important role to Sofia in his project. He instructed the head of the III Department of the General Political Directorate of the MFA[117] Aleksandar Cincar-Marković to study the question of the Yugoslav-Bulgarian Customs Union and the Balkan Customs Union, in December 1925. Cincar-Marković concluded that the Yugoslav leadership in economic gathering of regional states would be the only real basis for the Balkan Locarno. He assessed the Customs Union with Bulgaria and the Trade Agreement with Albania as the prelude for tripartite customs union, which would be the first step towards the Balkan Customs Union.[118] The Plenipotentiary Minister in Sofia Milan Rakić officially introduced the idea to the Bulgarian Government, in January 1926.[119] Ninčić and Cincar-Marković had another concern. They had to be cautious from internal rumbles, in the case that Croats decide

114 MIĆIĆ, Yugoslav Diplomacy and the ideas of the Balkan unity, 1925–1930, pp. 219, 220; С. МИЋИЋ – И. РИСТИЋ, Александар Цинцар-Марковић о југословенско-бугарском царинском савезу и балканској царинској унији, децембра 1925 – јануара 1926, in: *Архив: Часопис Архива Југославије*, XXIII, 1–2, 2022, pp. 153–157.

115 С. МИШИЋ, *Албанија: пријатељ и противник. Југословенска политика према Албанији 1924–1927*, Београд 2009, pp. 107–110.

116 МИЋИЋ – РИСТИЋ, p. 144.

117 The III Department was responsible for the political issues concerning the Balkan states, i.e. Albania, Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey. С. МИЋИЋ, *Од бирократије до дипломатије. Историја југословенске дипломатске службе 1918–1939*, Београд 2018, p. 98.

118 MIĆIĆ, Yugoslav Diplomacy and the ideas of the Balkan unity, 1925–1930, pp. 219–221; МИЋИЋ – РИСТИЋ, pp. 146–149, 154–157.

119 VINAVER, *Jugoslavija i Francuska izmedu dva svetska rata*, p. 97.

to use rapprochement with Bulgaria for the Croatian Bulgarian political collaboration against Serbs.[120] Apart from the internal issue, there were two significant points on the international tier. The first was exclusion of Romania from the project. The second was the question of Turkey. On the margins of the VI LoN's Assembly, Ninčić and the Turkish Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüştü Bey agreed to officially end hostilities from the Great War,[121] and to establish diplomatic and friendly relations. This process lasted from August 1925 until July 1926.[122] Therefore, Cincar-Marković was not entirely certain if Turkey could become member of the Balkan Customs Union.[123] Sava Kukić – the former Director of the Customs Administration and a member of a number of Yugoslav delegations for concluding trade agreements[124] – studied the issue of the customs union on request of the Foreign Minister, in March 1926. He supported views of Ninčić and Cincar-Marković, because he considered the close economy cooperation as the precondition for any form of multilateral political agreement among Balkan Nations.[125]

The Yugoslav strict neutrality during the Incident of Petrich in October 1925 left favourable impression on official and political circles in Bulgaria.[126] According to Rakić, the Aleksandar Tsankov's Cabinet accepted advise of the Ministry of Military General Ivan Volkov to wait

120 МИЋИЋ – РИСТИЋ, pp. 163–167.

121 The Kingdom of SCS refused to sign the Peace Treaty of Lausanne from 1923. D. TODOROVIĆ, *Jugoslavija i balkanske države 1918–1923*, Beograd 1979, p. 229.

122 The candidate (and later) the first Plenipotentiary Minister to the Kingdom of SCS Yusuf Hikmet Bayur Bey arrived in Belgrade in August 1925. The Delegate of the Kingdom of SCS in Istanbul Trajan Živković and Rüştü Bey were discussing all issues in bilateral relations during October. The Treaty of Peace and Friendship was signed on 28 October 1925, and ratified on 1 February 1926. Rüştü Bey officially visited Belgrade in late December 1925. The first Yugoslav Plenipotentiary Minister Tihomir Popović was appointed on 8 June, and he took the post on 1 July 1926. Д. ТОДОРОВИЋ, Питање успостављања дипломатских односа између Краљевине Срба, Хрвата и Словенаца и Републике Турске (1923–1925), in: *Balcanica*, IV, 1973, pp. 285–287; МИЋИЋ, Од бирократије до дипломатије, pp. 174, 175).

123 MIĆIĆ, Yugoslav Diplomacy and the ideas of the Balkan unity, 1925–1930, p. 220; МИЋИЋ – РИСТИЋ, p. 155.

124 Т. ПИВНИЧКИ ДРИНИЋ, Сава Кукић, in: Ч. ПОПОВ (ed.), *Српски биографски речник, Том 5, Кб–Мао*, Нови Сад 2011, pp. 429, 430.

125 AY, r. 388, b. 12, f. 34, f. 384.

126 И. РИСТИЋ, *Балкански Каин и Авељ. Бугарска у југословенској политици (1919–1929)*, Београд 2023, p. 293.

for the Yugoslav response first, and then to react on the Greek threat. Only after they had received reports from the Plenipotentiary Minister in Belgrade Konstantin Vakarelski on Ninčić's benevolent stand, the Bulgarian government could make its move against Greece.[127] The King Boris III personally expressed his gratitude to Rakić. He stated that Belgrade's benevolent stance was crucial for successful action before the LoN, because it allowed Sofia to calmly consider situation and determine action. The King Boris went so far to state that "no Bulgarian would ever forget this favour".[128] This improvement of political relations paved the way for Ninčić's plan for the Customs Union. After the project was presented to the Bulgarian government in January 1926, he was able to conduct with more aplomb the negotiations on the tripartite treaty with France and Italy during February and March. The failed consultations with Rome turned Belgrade towards Sofia. After the general director of the Bulgarian Railways Vladimir Karakashev asked for settlement of all transportation issues in mid-February 1926,[129] the Yugoslav authorities wanted to utilise it to facilitate the project of the Customs Union. The Interministerial conference decided to open negotiations with the Bulgarian Government, in late March. Transportation issues were resolved at the bilateral conference in Sofia, in mid-April 1926.[130] Ninčić's new offer to the Andrey Lyapchev Cabinet was the Pact of Arbitration, later same month.[131] Although the principle of arbitration was promoted in Europe through the Pact of Locarno, it was not a novelty in the Yugoslav Foreign Policy. During the V Assembly of the LoN in September 1924, the Foreign Minister Marinković deemed it as possible solution for the bilateral issues between the Kingdom of SCS and Italy over Albania.[132] After the

127 AY, the Records of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (334), box 8, folder 28, folios 233, 234.

128 Ibid., f. 226.

129 Ibid., f. 272, 273.

130 Hitherto, the mutual trade and transportation was based on temporary conventions from 1920 and 1925. During the Conference in Sofia, 15–18 April, two sides signed conventions on railways, tariffs and mutual train stations. It allowed unhindered traffic and transportation of goods. И. Т. РИСТИЋ, *Бугарска у политици Краљевине Срба, Хрвата и Словенаца (1919–1929)*, докторска дисертација, Филозофски факултет Универзитета у Београду 2017, pp. 478–482.

131 И. РИСТИЋ, Између старих и нових изазова – Бугарска у политици Краљевине СХС 1926. године, in: *Токови историје*, 2, 2013, pp. 81, 82.

132 The detailed account on the Yugoslav-Italian contest over Albania, in: МИШИЋ, Албанија: пријатељ и противник.

downfall of Davidović's Cabinet in early November 1924, Marinković passed on this idea to Ninčić. After short consideration, he embraced it later same month. The first offer for bilateral arbitration over Albania was sent to Rome in early 1925, but it was rejected. The second time it was presented as a draft during Ninčić's visit to Rome in February 1926.[133] The offered Pact of Arbitration to the Lyapchev's Cabinet in late April 1926, was coinciding with tendencies in the European affairs at the time. Until mid-1926, the Bulgarian Government rejected this proposition,[134] and Ninčić changed his approach. Relying on his Balkan concept of the foreign policy, he turned towards bilateral negotiations with Athens, and devised new idea of gathering of regional states.

Since November 1925, Ninčić and Čolak-Antić were careful not to provoke any suspicion in Bucharest, with political and economy rapprochement with Bulgaria.[135] The Foreign Minister was prudent to convince Duca there were no discussions on the military alliance between Belgrade and Sofia.[136] Čolak-Antić was particularly cautious in communication with Romanian officials during internal political crises caused by the question of the Crown Prince Carol's succession to the throne, in January 1926.[137] Yet, Radić's inappropriate public speeches created distressing impact on the Romanian official circles. He was announcing unification of two South Slavic states, and retaking of the South Dobruja, the disputed area between Romania and Bulgaria. It seems that Duca was not totally honest in this question. He waited for a month to react, and to ask for the official explanation from the Yugoslav Government.[138] After the General Alexandru Averescu formed his third government in mid-May 1926, new Foreign Minister Ion Mitilineu was curious regarding on-going negotiations between Belgrade and Sofia on the Pact of Arbitration.[139] Ninčić denied the negotiations, and clarified that he was assessing the situation about this issue and concluded that Lyapchev's Cabinet was

133 ASASA, r. 14.387, item No. 8929.

134 РИСТИЋ, Између старих и нових изазова, pp. 82–84.

135 AY, r. 395, b. 1, f. 2, f. 74.

136 Ibid., r. 395, b. 13, f. 132, f. 665.

137 S. MIĆIĆ, Boško Čolak-Antić and Yugoslav-Romanian Relations, in: A. DJURIĆ MILOVANOVIĆ – J. KOLUNDŽIJA – M. MĂRAN et al. (eds.), *New Cultural and Political Perspectives on Serbian-Romanian Relations*, Lausane 2023, pp. 92, 93.

138 AY, r. 395, b. 1, f. 3, f. 129, 130.

139 Ibid., f. 190.

not accepting proposed principles for the agreement.[140] Two Foreign Ministers discussed the issues of Belgrade's and Bucharest's relations with Sofia and Athens during the Ministerial Conference of the Little Entente, 17 and 18 June 1926. Ninčić accepted Mitilineu's offer to utilise the Romanian Plenipotentiary Minister in Athens Constantin Langa-Raşcanu as interlocutor for re-opening of the Yugoslav-Greek conversations.[141]

The MFA considered the Officers League led by the General Theodoros Pangalos as the main culprit for the breakdown of bilateral negotiation between Belgrade and Athens, in autumn 1925. In mid-November, Pangalos was assessed as honestly benevolent. His insistence on the Balkan Guarantee Pact and chauvinist stand towards the Kingdom of SCS were deemed as the manoeuvre for purposes of the internal policy. It was assumed that the rapprochement between Belgrade and Sofia would force Athens to seek support from Rome.[142] Therefore, Ninčić answered to the offer of the Pangalos' Cabinet to survey conditions of negotiations' renewal, but he was avoiding continuation of official negotiations.[143] In late December 1925, the Yugoslav side rejected Greek proposal to ask for the Great Powers' guarantees for the agreement on bilateral issues.[144] After the General Pangalos assumed dictatorial powers on 3 January 1926, the Plenipotentiary Minister in Athens Panta Gavrilović informed Antić on the changed situation. According to his report, the Greeks became particularly oversensitive towards the Kingdom of SCS, and Italy was seeking to exploit this turn of events.[145] In mid-February the diplomatic service and the MFA started to question Greek sincerity and closely surveyed their intentions to seek support from other countries.[146] Since the Free-trading Zone (FTZ) in the Thessaloniki port and the situation with the South Slavic minority in the Aegean Macedonia were crucial issues in the bilateral relations, Pangalos' sent clear-cut message. During the visit to Thessaloniki, on 21 February, he stated to the Yugoslav General Consul Đorđe Nastasijević sincere friendship towards

140 Ibid., f. 191.
141 ASASA, r. 14.387, item No. 9791; CSA, r. 322 k, inv. No. 1, a. u. No. 527, f. 120, 121.
142 Ibid., r. 14.387, item No. 9028.
143 Ibid., item No. 9029.
144 Ibid., item No. 9018.
145 Ibid., item No. 9015.
146 AY, r. 341, b. 24, f. 58. The circular of the head of the Information section of the MFA Vukašin Životić to all Legations and to the General Staff, Greece No. 6 from 16 February 1926.

Serbs – as the supporter of Eleftherios Venizelos' pro-Serbian policy in the Great War – and therefore his intention to established friendly bilateral relations. He emphasised his previous support for the FTZ as the chief of staff of the General Headquarters, and his willingness to continue work in the same direction. Regarding the South Slavs minority, his intention was to protect them from malpractices of local clerks and officials, and to personally supervise conduct of competent authorities.[147] The MFA assessed these statements as important, and in a week circulated it to all Yugoslav Legations.[148] The General Georgios Kondylis' failed attempt to overthrow the Government in February 1926, altered the situation. Pangalos announced to the Greek public his determination to protect the Aegean Macedonia and Thessaloniki against any external threat.[149] Athens believed that Belgrade and Tirana would support – directly or indirectly – the General Nikolaos Plastiras to organise new *coup d'état*,[150] as he came to the Kingdom of SCS after Kondylis' failure.[151] Ninčić made some progress during discussions with new Foreign Minister Loukas Kanakaris-Roufos in Geneva, in March 1926.[152] The Yugoslav Foreign Minister was procrastinating further talks, because he was waiting for the results of the rapprochement with Bulgaria.[153] The situation did not

147 ASASA, r. 14.387, item No. 9774.

148 AY, r. 341, b. 24, f. 58. The circular of the head of the Information section of the MFA Vukašin Životić to all Legations and to the General Staff, Greece No. 8 from 28 February 1926.

149 Ibid. The circular of the head of the Information section of the MFA Vukašin Životić to the General Staff and to the Legations in Sofia, Paris, London, Prague, Bucharest, Rome, Tirana and Istanbul, Greece No. 9 from 9 March 1926.

150 Plastiras was supported by majority of the Air forces and the Officers League's members in the Aegean Macedonia who were expecting his arrival. To prevent him to cross border, the Government reinforced all border troops towards the Kingdom of SCS and Albania with officers loyal to Pangalos. The Governor-General of Macedonia and several commanding officers were dismissed as Plastiras' supporters. AY, r. 341, b. 24, f. 58. The circular of the head of the Information section of the MFA Vukašin Životić to the General Staff and to Legations in Sofia, Tirana, Istanbul, Bucharest, Prague, Paris, London, Rome and Athens, Greece No. 11 from 9 March 1926; The circular of the head of the Information section of the MFA Vukašin Životić to all Legations and to the General Staff, Greece No. 12 from 22 March 1926; CSA, r. 322 k, inv. No. 1, a. u. No. 527, f. 74, 75.

151 Plastiras spent 20 days in Skopje and near the Yugoslav-Bulgarian borders, and rest of the time he was spending in Belgrade. CSA, r. 322 k, inv. No. 1, a. u. No. 527, f. 76.

152 ASASA, r. 14.387, items No. 9152 and 9782.

153 Ibid., item No. 9123.

improve,[154] and Belgrade informed Athens they could not trace Plasitars' movement on their territory in April 1926.[155] It was most probably the reaction of the MFA on the gathered information that Pangalos' Cabinet was searching the ways for closer economy cooperation with Romania and Bulgaria against Yugoslav interests.[156] The statement was assessed by the Greek Government as the indirect threat to the regime.[157] In early May, the bilateral negotiations were renewed, but without consent on crucial issues.[158] In late May, Antić advised new PM Nikola Uzunović to exploit rapprochement with Sofia in order to coerce Athens to accept Belgrade's terms.[159] Panta Gavrilović was expecting new internal rumbles, due to increased dissatisfaction with political and economy situation.[160] When Lyapchev rejected proposition for the Pact of Arbitration, Ninčić turn over to Greece but he acted nervously,[161] due to the failure of his attempt to gather Balkan states on the basis of the customs union and arbitration. After concurrence with Mitilineu at the Little Entente's Ministerial Conference, Belgrade and Athens reopened negotiations during June and July 1926.[162] The MFA was assessing inconsistency in the conduct of Greek authorities in the question of the FTZ in the Thessaloniki Port and the South Slavs minority in the Aegean Macedonia.[163]

Regarding the Yugoslav-Bulgarian rapprochement, Belgrade did not face opposition from Ankara. Rüştü Bey accepted the idea of the Balkan Locarno in principle. During 1925 and 1926, he was convinced that the

154 The circular of the head of the Information section of the MFA Vukašin Životić to all Legations and to the General Staff, Greece No. 15 from 15 April 1926.

155 CSA, r. 322 k, inv. No. 1, a. u. No. 527, f. 77.

156 РИСТИЋ, Између старих и нових изазова, p. 83.

157 Pangalos' Government had sent some of their best police agents to the Kingdom of SCS with an order to track down Plastiras. CSA, r. 322 k, inv. No. 1, a. u. No. 527, f. 77. Only after return of the latter to Paris, in summer 1926, Athens could conclude the threat of revolution was no longer. Ibid., f. 144.

158 ASASA, r. 14.387, items No. 9151, 9152 and 9782.

159 Ibid., item No. 8880.

160 AY, r. 341, b. 24, f. 58 The circular of the head of the Information section of the MFA Vukašin Životić to all Legations and to the General Staff, Greece No. 17 from 22 May 1926.

161 ASASA, r. 14.387, item No. 9008.

162 Ibid., items No. 9701, 9702 and 9704.

163 AY, r. 341, b. 24, f. 58. The circulars of the head of the Information section of the MFA Vukašin Životić to all Legations and to the General Staff, Greece No. 18 from 9 June 1926; Greece No. 19 from [1926]; Greece No. 20 from 12 July 1926; Greece No. 23 from 12 July 1926.

Kingdom of SCS and Turkey would lead the process.[164] Rüştü Bey openly stated to the Bulgarian Foreign Minister Hristo Kalfov and to Ninčić, in September and December 1925 respectively, that Ankara intended to cooperate with both South Slavic states in dealing with political issues in the Balkans and protecting the region from the Great Powers' threats. Therefore, he did not consider the Yugoslav-Bulgarian rapprochement as an impediment for the Turkish Foreign Policy.[165] During the official visit to Belgrade in late December 1925, his proposal for the bilateral military alliance between the Kingdom of SCS and Turkey was rejected. The Yugoslav statesmen promised to Rüştü Bey diplomatic and moral assistance in the case of the Italian-British-Greek assault on the Asia Minor.[166] From Belgrade viewpoint this stand was a barrier for Bulgarian and Greek participation in Asia Minor's military adventures.[167]

After consultations with Mitilineu, and simultaneously with renewal of bilateral relations with Athens, Ninčić devised new concept for his Balkan policy. As he believed in honest intention of the General Pangalos to revive friendly relations between Belgrade and Athens, new concept was based on the Little Entente's paradigm. Ninčić's plan was to forge Balkan alliance between the Kingdom of SCS, Romania and Greece with clear anti-Bulgarian orientation. The first step in this direction was settlement of the bilateral issues with Athens. In late June and early July 1926, he informed subordinates and issued instructions regarding the negotiations with Pangalos and Roufos.[168] After a month of discussions, both sides agreed to facilitate the process.[169] Antić and Gavrilović presented to Roufos draft Treaty of alliance and documents on some bilateral issues, on 6 August.[170] A week later, Pangalos was ready to close the deal on all issues.[171] The documents were signed on 18 August. The Greek public was dissatisfied with giving in to the excessive Yugoslav demands, and Pangalos' regime was overthrown by a *coup d'état* on 22 August 1926.[172]

164 IORDAN-SIMA, p. 316.
165 AY, r. 334, b. 8, f. 28, f. 240.
166 IORDAN-SIMA, pp. 319, 320.
167 ASASA, r. 14.387, items No. 8880 and 9008.
168 Ibid., items No. 9680 and 9791.
169 Ibid., items No. 9699 and 9700.
170 Ibid., item No. 9689.
171 Ibid., item No. 9690.
172 H. J. PSOMIADES, The Diplomacy of Theodoros Pangalos 1925–1926, in: *Balkan Studies*, 13, 1972, p. 13.

The MFA consequently gathered information that Rome was supporting the Greek opposition against the Yugoslav-Greek alliance.[173]

In early July 1926, Čolak-Antić informed Ninčić that one of results of the Little Entete's Ministerial Conference was the Bucharest public's support for the mutual Yugoslav-Romanian policy towards Bulgaria.[174] It seemed that path for tripartite Balkan alliance was cleared. Simultaneously with bilateral negotiations between Belgrade and Athens, Ninčić and Mitilineu initiated tripartite diplomatic cooperation in Sofia and in Geneva, in July and August 1926 respectively. The first was joint action before the LoN's Council against the Loan for the Bulgarian refugees.[175] The second was intervention in Sofia against the guerrilla actions of Bulgarian organisations on Yugoslav, Romanian and Greek soil. It turned out that in latter issue, Belgrade could not count completely on Bucharest and Athens.[176] The downfall of Pangalos and inability to fully align interests of three countries were the end of the second Ninčić's strategy for the Balkans. This was the probable reason for Ninčić to avoid the Romanian PM General Alexandru Averescu, during the LoN's sessions in Geneva, in September 1926. Therefore, Radić was contact with Romanian delegates.[177] Rüştü Bey changed his ground in 1927 and considered the Turkish-Romanian cooperation could lead to the formation of the Balkan Locarno.[178] Mussolini could facilitate his initiatives in the region with less effort,[179] after Ninčić's failure.

When Marinković started his second tenure as the Foreign Minister in April 1927, he did not discard the idea of the Balkan Customs Union. In May, he was considering economy as a useful tool for regulating important political issues. And for Marinković – as was the case with Ninčić – the most important was the Balkans.[180] Unlike his predecessor, he created proactive policy in the Central Europe. Under Marinković's

173 ASASA, r. 14.387, items no. 8779, 9709, 9712 and 9744.
174 AY, r. 395, b. 14, f. 142, f. 335–339.
175 РИСТИЋ, Између старих и нових изазова, pp. 86–88.
176 Ibid., pp. 88–95.
177 It should be noted that second probable reason was election of Ninčić as the chairman of the LoN's Assembly, so Radić became the first delegate of the Kingdom of SCS during the sessions. *Korespodencija Stjepana Radića 1919–1928, knjiga 2*, Zagreb 1973, doc. No. 474, pp. 615, doc. No. 476, p. 618, doc. No. 619.
178 IORDAN-SIMA, pp. 321–323.
179 BUCARELLI, pp. 103–115.
180 AY, r. 388, b. 14, f. 34, f. 372–374.

guidance, the MFA draw a conclusion on 13 February 1928 that to secure peace and guarantee the national security it was necessary to forge regional treaties with clearly defined guarantees as per the Locarno model. In line with the Yugoslav interests, the need for two such treaties was emphasized, one for the region of the Central Europe and other for the Balkans.[181] Marinković's point of view was that treaties without realistic guarantees or only with moral guarantees of the League of Nations did not have any significance for the security of the Kingdom of SCS. Thus he insisted that "we have to be tough in providing guarantees and evaluating their effectiveness".[182] Consequently, the instructions were given to the Yugoslav delegation in the Committee for the Preparation of the Conference on Disarmament to try – together with the delegations of Czechoslovakia, Romania and Poland – to persuade the League of Nations to make conclusions which would support the idea to secure peace at the regional level through the formation of alliances.[183] However, Marinković rejected Beneš's initiative from February 1928 to redesign the original Yugoslav-Czechoslovak alliance – designated to protect the Peace Treaty of Trianon – with the expansion for guarding the peace in Europe. Thus, he demonstrated accordance with Ninčić's views, who did not want to assign a greater importance to regional alliances than they had shown for the Yugoslav foreign policy.[184]

Based on his ideas from 1924 and on contemporary tendencies, Marinković was supporting the arbitration as an instrument for improving bilateral and multilateral relations. Based on the LoN's recommendations, the Little Entente signed tripartite Act of Conciliation, Arbitration and Judicial Settlement, in May 1929.[185] Application of two approaches was evident in the case of Greece. Marinković accepted the Convention on Trade and Navigation, signed in early November 1927, as the first step

181 S. MIĆIĆ, The influence of France and Italy's (Central)European projects on Yugoslavia's re-evaluation of regional pacts (1927–1933), in: *Istorija 20. veka*, 38, 2, 2020, p. 42.

182 AY, Records of the Permanent Delegation of the Kingdom of SCS by the League of Nations – Geneva (159), box 2, folder IV. Marinković's cable to the Delegation of the Kingdom of SCS, 16 February 1928.

183 MIĆIĆ, The influence of France and Italy's (Central)European projects on Yugoslavia's re-evaluation of regional pacts (1927–1933), p. 42.

184 MIĆIĆ, Shifting in the Yugoslav Foreign Policy from Regional Alliance to Neutrality, p. 81.

185 VANKU, pp. 53, 54.

towards political agreement. The issue of FTZ in Thessaloniki was resolved by conventions signed in October 1928, while the Pact of Friendship, Conciliation and Judicial Settlement was signed in late March 1929.[186] His successor Bogoljub Jevtić signed with Rüştü Bey Treaty of Friendship, Non-Aggression, Judicial Settlement, Arbitration and Consiliation in late November 1933, as part of the process of forging the Balkan Entente.[187]

Conclusion

For the Kingdom of SCS, the year of 1925 was marked with internal stability through forming of the Serbo-Croatian coalition government; and with hope for appeasement of international relations after the Locarno Treaties. Momčilo Ninčić was pursuing to exploit favourable international situation to search for new political agreement with Italy, and to prevent Great Power's utilisation of the Locarno model for the Balkans. He was devising his plan for negotiations with Italy and France based on Benito Mussolini's proposal from 1923 for the tripartite agreement, and on anti-German gathering. He was supported by the King Aleksandar Karađorđević and had some difficulties with the Prime Minister Nikola Pašić regarding his plans for negotiations in Rome and Paris. Regarding the defence of the Balkans from the Great Powers' interference, Ninčić had support other most prominent Yugoslav statesmen. He had to alter his hitherto Balkan concept of the Foreign Policy, to accommodate the most favourable outcome for the Kingdom of SCS. Ninčić was combining two concepts. One was using economy instruments for surmounting political difficulties, which were implemented in the project for the Balkan Customs Union. Other was proposing arbitration as political instrument with the same goal. The first approach was based as a countermeasure against the intentions of the Great Powers, particularly Italy. The second approach was following the tendencies among the Great Powers, but it was also based on ideas of Vojislav Marinković from 1924. Only after the failure of both projects, Ninčić changed his tactics. Instead of gathering Balkan Nations around Belgrade, he offered tripartite Balkan alliance to Romania and Greece with clear anti-Bulgarian orientation. This concept was most probably devised on the model of the Little Entente, which

186 Ž. AVRAMOVSKI, *Balkanska antanta (1934–1940)*, Beograd 1986, pp. 33, 34; PASZKIEWICZ, pp. 160, 186–188.

187 AVRAMOVSKI, *Balkanska antanta (1934–1940)*, p. 84.

was also tripartite alliance and had clear anti-Hungarian orientation at the time. When Marinković started his second tenure as the Foreign Minister, he was following similar main lines of the Foreign Policies as his predecessor. He was prepared to apply similar solutions for surmounting political issues in the Balkans, and the only difference was that he was creating proactive Central-European concept of the Foreign Policy.

Fascist Italy, Central and South-Eastern Europe, and the Project of a Danubian-Balkan Locarno

Stefano Santoro[1]

In the mid-1920s, a project was developed that aimed to create an agreement on the model of the Locarno Pact for central and south-eastern Europe, a so-called Danubian-Balkan Locarno. This project, which saw the theoretical adhesion of Italy, France, Great Britain and most of the countries in the area, ultimately proved impossible to implement, given the different and often contrasting interests of Italy, France and Yugoslavia in the Balkan area.

[Locarno Pact; Balkans; Italy; France; Great Britain; Yugoslavia]

Introduction

Italian fascism came to power in October 1922 with an extremist foreign policy program, aiming at a revision of the order traced at Versailles. However, having come to power, fascism substantially abandoned its initial radicalism as regards the international dimension, choosing instead to move within the context of the preservation of the post-war balance of power, collaborating with the western powers to stem the possibility of a resumption of German power politics.[2] In this perspective, for example, the Italian irredentism in Dalmatia, initially fueled by fascism, was essentially put aside. This prudent policy was also developed towards the Kingdom of SHS, the future Yugoslavia, with which relations had been

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2 A. CASSELS, *Mussolini's Early Diplomacy*, Princeton 1970; G. CAROCCI, *La politica estera dell'Italia fascista (1925–1928)*, Rome, Bari 1969; E. DI RIENZO, Una grande potenza a solo titolo di cortesia. Appunti sulla continuità tra tradizione diplomatica dell'Italia liberale e politica estera fascista 1922–1935, in: *Nuova rivista storica*, 2, 2017, pp. 431–456. See also A. VARSORI, I diplomatici italiani dal fascismo alla repubblica: continuità o rottura?, in: *Annali della Fondazione Ugo Spirito e Renzo De Felice. Il Presente storico*, 1, 2023, pp. 95–105.

rather difficult since its birth due to the definition of the border line between the two countries. The signing of the Treaty of Rapallo in November 1920 saw in effect a pragmatic approach prevailing on the part of Mussolini, who had supported the agreement with the neighboring state, seeing it as a necessary step towards a mutual advantage. On this point, among other things, there had been a split with Gabriele D'Annunzio and the supporters of a continuation of the resistance in Fiume/Rijeka against the choices of Giolitti's Italian government. Precisely by continuing this strategy, the fascist government now in power had decided to stipulate the Treaties of Rome in January 1924 with Yugoslavia, with the aim of reaching an agreement regarding the town of Fiume which, established as a free state with the Treaty of Rapallo, was then assigned in 1924 almost entirely to Italy, except for the port area of Porto Baross, which was ceded to Yugoslavia.

Mussolini's foreign policy was therefore largely in line with the foreign policy of pre-fascist Italy, aimed at guaranteeing what, in the wake of traditional Italian nationalist diplomacy, were considered the legitimate Italian interests in the Adriatic and the eastern Mediterranean. Furthermore, a certain influence continued to be exercised by the echoes of the politics of nationalities developed by Italy together with the exponents of the national movements of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in the last phase of the war: an anti-Habsburg cooperation which had its symbolic culminating moment in the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities held in Rome, in the Campidoglio Palace, in April 1918.[3]

With the exception of the Corfu incident in 1923, following the massacre of the personnel of the Italian diplomatic mission for the establishment of the Greek-Albanian border, which led to the bombing of the island and to a harsh diplomatic clash with Greece and England,[4] Fascist Italy's foreign policy, up until the Ethiopian crisis, remained fundamentally on a line of cooperation with the other powers. This collaborative option did not preclude, however, that if Italian interests were not given due consideration by France and England, Italy could also stand alongside the powers defeated in the war, from Germany to Hungary to the Soviet

3 A. CARTENY, Il congresso di Roma, per le "nazionalità oppresse" dell'Austria-Ungheria (1918), in: A. CARTENY –S. PELAGGI (eds.), *Stato, Chiesa e Nazione in Italia: contributi sul Risorgimento italiano*, Rome 2016, pp. 163–185.

4 J. BARROS, *The Corfu incident of 1923: Mussolini and the League of Nations*, Princeton 1965; O. FERRAJOLO (ed.), *Il Caso Tellini. Dall'eccidio di Janina all'occupazione di Corfù*, Milan 2005.

Union.[5] In this framework, Italy supported Hungarian revisionism, starting from the end of the 1920s,[6] especially with an anti-Yugoslav aim, in consideration of the deterioration of relations with Belgrade which could be traced back in large part to the rivalry between Rome and Belgrade for the control of Albania.[7]

Fascist Italy and the Locarno Agreements

Both international and Italian historiography, had and continue having divergent interpretations over time with respect to the structural or instrumental nature of fascist Italy's foreign policy, placing the emphasis now on the thesis of continuity with pre-fascist policy, now on the opposite idea of a clear discontinuity, in the name of territorial revisionism and international destabilization.[8] However, a large part of historiography agrees on the fact that within fascist foreign policy, at least until the end of the 1920s, more moderate tendencies continued to prevail, which derived from the presence, within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, of a largely pre-fascist personnel, of liberal-conservative tendencies, in particular highlighting the role played by the general secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Salvatore Contarini, in close relations with Carlo Sforza,

5 DI RIENZO, Una grande potenza a solo titolo di cortesia, p. 437; R. DE FELICE, *Mussolini il fascista. L'organizzazione dello Stato fascista (1925–1929)*, Turin 1968, p. 439; F. GRASSI ORSINI, La diplomazia, in: A. DEL BOCA – M. LEGNANI – M.G. ROSSI (eds), *Il regime fascista. Storia e storiografia*, Rome, Bari 1995, p. 285.

6 H. J. BURGWYN, *Il revisionismo fascista. La sfida di Mussolini alle grandi potenze nei Balcani e sul Danubio 1925–1933*, Milan 1979; A. BRECCIA, La politica estera italiana e l'Ungheria (1922–1933), in: *Rivista di studi politici internazionali*, 1, 1980, pp. 93-112; I. ROMSICS, Hungarian Revisionism in Thought and Action, 1920–1941: Plans, Expectations, Reality, in: M. CATTARUZZA – S. DYROFF – D. LANGEWIESCHE (eds.), *Territorial revisionism and the allies of Germany in the Second World War: goals, expectations, practices*, New York, Oxford 2013, pp. 92–101.

7 M. BORGOGNI, *Tra continuità e incertezza. Italia e Albania (1914–1939). La strategia politico-militare dell'Italia in Albania fino all'Operazione "Oltre Mare Tirana"*, Milan 2007; D. BAKIĆ, The Italo-Yugoslav Conflict over Albania: a View from Belgrade 1919–1939, in: *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 4, 2014, pp. 592–612; A. BASCIANI, Struggle for supremacy in Adriatic. Italy, SHS Kingdom and the Albanian question, in: S. SANTORO (ed.), *L'Italia e la Jugoslavia tra le due guerre*, *Qualestoria*, 1, 2021, pp. 123–137; A. MITROVIĆ, Yugoslavia, the Albanian Question and Italy 1919–1939, in: A. MITROVIĆ (ed.), *Serbs and the Albanians in the 20th Century*, Belgrade 1991, pp. 253–273.

8 For an interpretation highlighting discontinuities between liberal and fascist Italy's foreign policy, see E. COLLOTTI, *Fascismo e politica di potenza. Politica estera 1922–1939*, Milan 2000.

Foreign Minister of the last Giolitti government and supporter of a policy of understanding with Yugoslavia and with the countries heirs of the Habsburg Empire.[9]

It was also thanks to this diplomatic personnel that Fascist Italy came to stipulate the Locarno agreements. We can speak probably of a dialectic between the more moderate diplomatic career and Mussolini's activism, which however did not lead to open ruptures, as the objective shared with the pre-fascist personnel and Contarini himself was the pursuit of a policy of prestige which, while placing the policy of cooperation with France and England in the foreground, made it an instrument for the expansion of Italian influence in the Balkans and the Middle East, as well as in Africa.[10] While relations with France were more complex, those with Great Britain were more cordial, especially in the second half of the 1920s, even in the face of increased tensions between Italy and Yugoslavia. Indeed, from the end of the 1920s, Mussolini attempted to destabilize Yugoslavia, also through the support for Croatian, Macedonian and Albanian separatism, while at the same time financing Hungarian rearmament and the Austrian pro fascist Heimwehr, also with the aim of countering German expansionism towards central Europe and, in the first half of the 1930s, Nazi annexationist plans towards Austria.[11]

It was during the direction of Dino Grandi at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, from 1929 to 1932, that Fascist Italy adopted the doctrine of the "determining weight", to be enforced between France and Germany – while at the same time developing a privileged relationship with England –, with the aim of hindering German penetration towards central Europe and the Balkans in exchange for French support in establishing an area of influence in the Balkans as well as in Africa and the Levant.[12]

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9 G. CAROCCI, *La politica estera dell'Italia fascista (1925–1928)*, Rome, Bari 1969, pp. 18–31; A. CASSELS, *Mussolini's Early Diplomacy*, Princeton 1970, pp. 175–193; M. ANASTASI, *Salvatore Contarini e la politica estera italiana (1891–1926)*, Rome 2017; M. G. MELCHIONNI, La politica estera di Carlo Sforza nel 1920–21, in: *Rivista di Studi Politici Internazionali*, 4, 1969, pp. 537–570.

10 See J. JACOBSON, *Locarno diplomacy. Germany and the West, 1925–1929*, Princeton 1972; M.L. NAPOLITANO, *Mussolini e la Conferenza di Locarno (1925). Il problema della sicurezza nella politica estera italiana*, Urbino 1996.

11 On Italian-Yugoslav relations in the interwar period, see M. BUCARELLI, *Mussolini e la Jugoslavia (1922–1939)*, Bari 2006. On Italy's hegemonic ambitions towards Yugoslavia and central-eastern Europe, see L. MONZALI, *L'Italia, la questione jugoslava e l'Europa centrale (1918–1941)*, Florence 2010.

12 P. NELLO, *Dino Grandi*, Bologna 2003.

It was therefore in the wake of traditional pre-fascist policy that Italy joined the Locarno Treaty, having already recognized the Soviet Union in February 1924, the second great power after Labour MacDonald's England, initiating normal diplomatic and commercial relations.[13] In those years Mussolini developed a project aimed at establishing a vast area of Italian influence in central and south-eastern Europe, a Danubian-Balkan Locarno, with the aim of keeping together both the winners and the losers of the war, therefore on the one hand Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Greece, and on the other Hungary, Bulgaria and Austria. This agreement, to be developed under Italian aegis would in turn exclude France or in any case limit French influence in the whole area, as well as keeping it safe from the resurgence of the traditional German influence in the sector.[14]

Planning a Danubian-Balkan Locarno

The project of a Danubian-Balkan Locarno was developed, in often contradictory attitudes and through different phases, between the end of 1925 and the first months of 1926. However, it had its foundations in the years preceding the Treaty of Locarno, that is, in the Treaty of Rapallo of November 1920 between pre-fascist liberal Italy and the Kingdom of SHS[15] and in the Italo-Yugoslav Treaty of Rome of 1924,[16] as well as in the Treaty of Friendship between Italy and Czechoslovakia of 1924.[17] This was in some ways a line of continuity with respect to the policy of cooperation with the countries heirs of the Austro-Hungarian Empire set by Giolitti's Foreign Minister, Carlo Sforza, in the postwar years.[18] However, the Italo-Yugoslav negotiations were made difficult by the Italo-Yugoslav rivalry for the control of Albania.[19] In this regard, in 1925, surveys were started for a partition of Albania between the two countries: since Italy already started a series of economic agreements with Tirana, as well as stipulated a secret military agreement in August 1925, it was Rome that

13 See M. T. GIUSTI, *Relazioni pericolose. Italia fascista e Russia comunista*, Bologna 2023.

14 See F. LEFEBVRE D'OVIDIO, *L'Italia e il sistema internazionale. Dalla formazione del governo Mussolini alla grande depressione (1922–1929)*, Vol. 2, Rome 2016, pp. 619–629.

15 A. BROGI, Il trattato di Rapallo del 1920 e la politica danubiano-balcanica di Carlo Sforza, in: *Storia delle relazioni internazionali*, 1, 1989, pp. 3–46.

16 M. BUCARELLI, *Mussolini e la Jugoslavia (1922–1939)*, Bari 2006, pp. 27–34.

17 Pacte de collaboration cordiale entre le Royaume d'Italie et la République Tchécoslovaque, in: *L'Europa Orientale*, 8–11, 1924, p. 589.

18 G. GIORDANO, *Carlo Sforza: la diplomazia 1896–1921*, Milan 1987.

19 M. BORGOGNI, *Tra continuità e incertezza. Italia e Albania (1914–1939)*, cit.

had a position of strength with respect to Belgrade.[20] In the Mussolini's eyes, the Italo-Yugoslav Pact of Rome of 1924 could maintain its validity, but in an essentially tactical perspective. In short, Italy and Yugoslavia then gave an opposite interpretation to the Pact of Rome: for both, it sealed their own rights to exercise an area of influence in the Balkans, and for Belgrade it also implied the possibility of stipulating parallel agreements with France.

The project of a Balkan Locarno was conceived immediately after the Locarno conference, starting from the shared observation that the guarantee agreed with the Locarno treaties was limited to the western borders of Germany, which gave rise to concern about the existence of two categories of borders: that of the western German border, guaranteed, and that of the eastern German and Danubian-Balkan borders, not guaranteed. Naturally, this concern involved above all the Polish, Czechoslovak, Romanian and Yugoslavian governments. There was therefore talk of the need to establish an agreement like that of Locarno for central-eastern and south-eastern Europe, a sort of Danubian security pact. It was the British Foreign Secretary Austin Chamberlain who took the initiative in this direction as early as June 1925 in Geneva, in a meeting with the French Foreign Minister Briand, according to whom, given the instability of south-eastern Europe, the three powers – Italy, England and France – should commit themselves to a common diplomatic action in the Balkan questions. This proposal reached Mussolini shortly before the Locarno conference and was the subject of a conversation between Mussolini and Chamberlain on October 15, 1925: Chamberlain, moreover, placed great emphasis on the possibility of discussing it in person with Mussolini.[21]

The joint Anglo-French initiative highlighted the important role played by Italy in the Balkan issues. Chamberlain moved with several hotbeds of instability in the Balkan area in mind, from the Albanian question to the Yugoslav-Bulgarian disagreements over Macedonia, to those between Yugoslavia and Greece over Salonika, to the fear of a rivalry between Italy and France for hegemony in the Balkans. Mussolini responded positively to these proposals for the management of Balkan issues. It was always Chamberlain, on the other hand, who also involved the Czechoslovakian Foreign Minister Beneš in a project aimed at a security agreement between

20 BAKIĆ, pp. 598–600.

21 The Ambassador in London, Della Torretta, to the President of the Council and Foreign Minister, Mussolini, London, October 12, 1925, in: *I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani* (*DDI*), VII series, Vol. IV, doc. 152.

the successor countries of the Habsburg Empire. For his part, Beneš, meeting the Italian Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs Grandi in Geneva in September 1925, highlighted the usefulness of an agreement between Italy, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, also open to Austria, parallel to the Locarno Pact, with the aim of preventing the Anschluss in the future and a new projection of Germany towards central Europe. The Yugoslav Foreign Minister Ninčić had in turn spoken about it with Beneš in a meeting held in Bled on 21 October, where an agreement for Danubian-Balkan Europe corresponding to that of Locarno had been hypothesized. The Italian chargé d'affaires in Belgrade, Petrucci, had spoken about it with Ninčić, who reported to him on the discussions held in Bled with Beneš. With Beneš the discussion focused – Petrucci reported – on *"doing something in central Europe that corresponds to what was done in western Europe with the Treaty of Locarno"*, even if *"neither the form nor the extension to be given to this project had yet been established"*.

Ninčić then asked Petrucci to let Mussolini know *"that he would be very keen to come to an exchange of ideas on the aforementioned subject in the next month so that a line of conduct can be established that Yugoslavia would then propose to follow also with regard to the other states of central Europe"*. Actually, Ninčić did not yet have *"any project to propose"*, so he asked Mussolini *"if he wanted to let him know his opinion and his ideas on what could be the new agreements that could unite either Italy and Yugoslavia or Italy, Yugoslavia and other states, always in correspondence with the Treaties of Locarno"*. Furthermore, Ninčić had insisted that *"without the approval of Italy, a great power bordering Yugoslavia and greatly interested in central Europe, he and his government will not be able to take any decision on the matter"*. Petrucci added for his part the consideration that *"Yugoslavia, which did not intervene in the Locarno treaties, wants to conclude similar agreements that through Italy and Czechoslovakia will allow it to join the other great western nations"*. However, there was uncertainty in political circles and in Yugoslav public opinion as to whether it should be a treaty of Balkan arbitration extended to Romania and Czechoslovakia or whether it should instead be a guarantee pact in which Hungary should also take part *"which, like Germany in Locarno, would thus renounce any territorial claims towards Yugoslavia and Romania"*. Petrucci then asked Mussolini to let him know which directives the Italian Legation should follow in dealing with the important issue raised by Ninčić.[22]

22 The chargé d'affaires in Belgrade, Petrucci, to the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Mussolini, Belgrade, October 25, 1925, in: *DDI*, VII series, Vol. IV, doc. 164.

Italy, France and Yugoslavia: Different Strategies for the Balkans

Both the Italian and Yugoslav sides attributed a non-coinciding meaning to the hypothesis of a Danubian-Balkan Locarno. Italy intended to relaunch the Pact of Rome of January 1924 to which it attributed the recognition by Yugoslavia of an Italian hegemonic role in the Balkans, with the consequent exclusion of a Franco-Yugoslav agreement and the acceptance of an Italian privileged role with regard to the protection of Albania. On the Yugoslav side, on the contrary, the aim was to return to the Pact of Rome precisely by attributing to it the Italian renunciation of the position of an exclusive influence in Albania. Moreover, Yugoslavia planned to use French support also for the purpose of obtaining the Italian renunciation of the role of protection over Albania, by flanking the Pact of Rome with an agreement with France. These differences of opinion between the two countries, which were then compounded by other misunderstandings between Rome and Paris, would ultimately compromise the effective achievement of an agreement for a Balkan Locarno.[23]

Mussolini, strong in British support, therefore planned to establish a Balkan Locarno under Italian influence, excluding France. However, Chamberlain aimed on the contrary to draw Italy into the orbit of France and England. On the French side, then, the aims of this agreement were not considered sufficiently clear and the Italian ambassador in Paris, Romano Avezzana, suggested to Mussolini to *"drop the proposal or at most – if the British Government insisted on it – to formulate it in the vaguest possible terms"*.[24]

Chamberlain was convinced that a three-way agreement with Italy could bring stability to the region, but this hypothesis was viewed with suspicion by France, which on the contrary aimed to strengthen its network of alliances, already in place with the countries of the Little Entente (Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Romania), through a friendship pact with Yugoslavia. France essentially aimed to create a Balkan agreement under French aegis, possibly extended to include Italy.

In a meeting on January 10, 1926, Ninčić repeated to the Italian minister in Belgrade, Bodrero, his desire to reach an exchange of ideas with Italy *"to make the ties between Italy and Yugoslavia more intimate and to*

23 LEFEBVRE D'OVIDIO, pp. 619–620.

24 The Ambassador in Paris, Romano Avezzana, to the President of the Council and Foreign Minister, Mussolini, Paris, October 29, 1925, in: *DDI*, VII series, Vol. IV, doc. 166.

agree in a preliminary way on the possibilities of applying the Locarno principles to the states of central Europe". Bodrero responded to Ninčić what Mussolini had reiterated, namely that *"the power that alone can graft the fundamental principles of Locarno onto the situation of the Danubian* [countries] *is Italy"*. Ninčić for his part agreed and assured that he would telegraph it to the President of the Yugoslav Council Pašić, *"to obtain prior approval also in the event that a meeting was deemed appropriate"*.[25]

In a long conversation between Bodrero and Ninčić on January 15, 1926, the latter reported that the French minister in Belgrade previously mentioned to him that *"it would be appropriate for the powers of central Europe to provide for their security by establishing a Balkan Locarno, naturally under French aegis"*. For his part, Ninčić replied to the French minister that the Yugoslav government was linked to Italy by the Pact of Rome and, in view of the friendly relationship between the Italian and Yugoslav governments and the geographical position of Yugoslavia, would not and could not keep Italy out of any agreement. The French minister informed Ninčić that the French government was aware of Ninčić's objections and was therefore willing to reach an agreement with Italy to adopt the principles of Locarno in the Balkans and central Europe. Such an agreement, he added, would promote peace in that part of Europe and the French ambassador in Rome would be instructed to confer with Mussolini on the matter. Ninčić also stated that he did not want to inform the English government on the matter but that in any case it would approve initiatives aimed at ensuring peace in the Balkans.[26]

For his part, Mussolini seemed to clearly exclude the possibility of a three-way Italian-French-Yugoslav pact for the Balkans, stating that the 1924 Italian-Yugoslav friendship pact was already in force between Italy and Yugoslavia, while Italy was the guarantor of the French borders with the Locarno Pact. A Franco-Yugoslav friendship pact would also have, for Mussolini, *"unpleasant repercussions on Italian public opinion and could also provoke a different orientation in Italian politics"*.[27]

Again, on February 7, 1926 Mussolini wrote to Bodrero, communicating that he had several conversations with the Yugoslav minister in Rome

25 The Minister in Belgrade, Bodrero, to the Head of the Government and Foreign Minister, Mussolini, Belgrade, January 10, 1926, in: *DDI*, VII series, Vol. IV, doc. 222.

26 The Minister in Belgrade, Bodrero, to the Head of the Government and Foreign Minister, Mussolini, Belgrade, January 15, 1926, in: *DDI*, VII series, Vol. IV, doc. 223.

27 Considerations on the three-way friendship pact between France, Italy and Yugoslavia [Mussolini's draft], Rome, January 30, 1926, in: *DDI*, VII series, Vol. IV, doc. 230.

Antoniević on the hypothesis of a Balkan Locarno, underlining however *"that a Balkan Locarno is still very premature"*, and repeating to Bodrero *"that I am against a combination in which France enters"*, while, as far as Italian-Yugoslav relations were concerned, a supplementary or integrative convention to the Pact of Rome of January 1924 would be sufficient. In essence, Mussolini was indicating to Bodrero to follow a *"temporizing* [...] *tactic"*.[28]

The Italian ambassador in Paris, Romano Avezzana, explained to Briand, on March 5, 1926, the reasons that advised against a three-way agreement between Italy, France and Yugoslavia, but also that *"the conclusion of a two-way agreement between France and Yugoslavia was inappropriate at the very moment in which Italy was preparing to strengthen existing pacts between Rome and Belgrade"*. Briand responded by explaining that France was not thinking of alliance pacts that even French public opinion, sensitive to the spirit of Locarno, was not in favor of, but of simple affirmations of friendship that established arbitration as a means of resolving conflicts that might eventually arise between contracting states. Avezzana explained to Briand, however, that for Italian public opinion a Franco-Yugoslav pact *"would be considered aimed at neutralizing the Italo-Yugoslav agreement"*, reviving old grudges against France. To oppose so clearly the signing of a Franco-Yugoslav friendship pact, Avezzana used an argument suggested by Mussolini himself: Italy was planning to conclude a real alliance pact with France, so from this perspective it was necessary not to complicate Franco-Italian relations with Franco-Yugoslav agreements.[29]

This different vision of a hypothetical pact for a Balkan Locarno and in particular the hypothesis of a three-way Italian-French-Yugoslav pact, was confirmed by a conversation between the Italian ambassador in London, Della Torretta, and the British Secretary of State Chamberlain, which took place on March 6, 1926. On that occasion, Della Torretta explained that Mussolini considered a three-way pact impracticable, as it conflicted with the commitments of the Locarno agreement. Likewise, he highlighted the risks deriving from a Franco-Yugoslav pact. Chamberlain, however, pointed out that the French side saw this pact as a simple non-aggression and arbitration treaty, *"in perfect harmony with the Locarno commitments"*. Chamberlain believed that this discordant interpretation of the meaning

28 The Head of the Government and Foreign Minister, Mussolini, to the minister in Belgrade, Bodrero, Rome, February 7, 1926, in: *DDI*, VII series, Vol. IV, doc. 237.

29 The Ambassador in Paris, Romano Avezzana, to the Head of Government and Foreign Minister, Mussolini, Paris, March 5, 1926, in: *DDI*, VII series, Vol. IV, doc. 262.

to be attributed to a similar pact by the Italians and the French *"could be the result of a misunderstanding or equivocation"*, and so *"it seemed to him highly appropriate, also in the general interest of Italian-French relations"*, a clarification between the Foreign Office and Briand. According to Della Torretta, however, Chamberlain, due to the trust he placed in the French government, could hardly admit *"that the French government could actually have in mind the implementation of a policy in actual contrast with the Locarno pact and with the situation which it created"*.[30]

Central and South-Eastern European Countries

According to the considerations of the Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs Grandi, in Geneva at the beginning of March 1926 on the occasion of the extraordinary Assembly of the League of Nations, on the hypothesis of a Danubian-Balkan pact, Romania and Greece were in favour and Bulgaria and Hungary, defeated countries, would be satisfied to enter into this agreement, while with Austria the situation would be more uncertain as it was in the German orbit. Moreover, with Czechoslovakia it would be particularly difficult due to its link with France, as well as to the hostile attitude of Beneš. In the end, everything depended on the relations with Yugoslavia, for which *"the pivot of the situation therefore always remains Belgrade"*. On the other hand, for Grandi, *"in this environment where the vigorous policy of fascist Italy arouses distrust and fear"*, it was appropriate to *"proceed with caution"*.[31]

Mussolini returned to the subject to inform Scialoja, the Italian delegate to the League of Nations, about the discussions he had with Ninčić, in view of the Yugoslav diplomat's passage through Geneva on his return from Paris. As far as Italian-Yugoslav relations were concerned, it was a question of expanding the current pact of friendship and collaboration, furthermore a special agreement was foreseen for Albania, for which it was agreed that the projects should be prepared in Rome with the Yugoslav ambassador Antonievič to be submitted to Ninčić. As far as the three-way agreement in the spirit of Locarno between Italy, France and Yugoslavia was concerned, Mussolini recalled that he had always declared himself against its stipulation, as it would change Italy's position with respect to

30 The Ambassador in London, Della Torretta, to the Head of Government and Foreign Minister, Mussolini, London, March 6, 1926, in: *DDI*, VII series, Vol. IV, doc. 266.

31 The Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, Grandi, to the Head of Government and Foreign Minister, Mussolini, Geneva, March 9, 1926, in: *DDI*, VII series, Vol. IV, doc. 268.

the Locarno Pact. However, Mussolini reserved the possibility of stipulating an Italian-French agreement. Mussolini also recalled how he warned Ninčić against the stipulation of a Franco-Yugoslav treaty, receiving in response the observation that it would be difficult to avoid the pact with France given its insistence, but that he would willingly conclude an agreement with Italy like the one with France. Mussolini, therefore, recommended Scialoja to wait until the end of the meeting in Geneva to understand what was best to do. The point of reference for Mussolini was to be Chamberlain, as *"the person most interested in safeguarding the efficiency of the Locarno Pact and the consistency of the League of Nations"*.[32]

On the same day Scialoja responded to Mussolini, considering the conclusion of the Franco-Yugoslav treaty inevitable. This *"significantly weakens the first foundation of the grandiose edifice [that Mussolini] had designed. But, in* [his] *opinion, it does not destroy it"*. According to Scialoja, the international situation in central and south-eastern Europe was similar to that already envisaged by Grandi: Greece and Romania were very well disposed towards Italy, Hungary was grateful to Italy, Austria was tending towards the Anschluss, Czechoslovakia was not inclined, Poland was *"uncertain and threatened and a little outside the framework of the more southern states"*, while *"Albania is the servant-mistress of two masters with some more remote lovers"*. For Scialoja, Italy should immediately sign a treaty with Yugoslavia, even if the latter in turn signed a treaty with France. Furthermore, it was necessary to tighten ties with the Greeks and Romanians.[33] Mussolini's response was clear: the Italian delegation had to inform Chamberlain, Briand and Ninčić that, in the event of the signing of the Franco-Yugoslav agreement, this would have repercussions on Italy's situation with respect to the other states linked by the Locarno Pact and on Italian-Yugoslav relations.[34]

On the part of Greece there was indeed a full willingness to join a Balkan pact, counting on British approval.[35] After speaking with Scialoja,

32 The Head of Government and Foreign Minister, Mussolini, to the delegate to the League of Nations, Scialoja, Rome, March 10, 1926, in: *DDI*, VII series, Vol. IV, doc. 269.

33 The delegate to the League of Nations, Scialoja, to the Head of the Government and Foreign Minister, Mussolini, L. Geneva, March 10, 1926, in: *DDI*, VII series, Vol. IV, doc. 270.

34 The Head of the Government and Foreign Minister, Mussolini, to the delegate to the League of Nations, Scialoja, Rome, March 11, 1926, in: *DDI*, VII series, Vol. IV, doc. 271.

35 The Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, Grandi, to the Head of Government and Foreign Minister, Mussolini, Geneva, March 11, 1926, in: *DDI*, VII series, Vol. IV, doc. 272.

Briand postponed a Franco-Yugoslav agreement,[36] even though he still considered it imminent,[37] and Grandi pressured Chamberlain to effectively postpone the signing of the Franco-Yugoslav pact.[38] The Hungarian head of government Bethlen for his part confirmed to Grandi the willingness of Hungary to join a Danubian pact according to Italy's directives.[39] Similar assurances were also given on the Bulgarian side.[40]

The Italian government had a similar attitude to that with Yugoslavia, marked by a rivalry with France, also with Romania: Mussolini communicated to the minister in Bucharest Durazzo the need to press for a suspension of the negotiations in Paris for the conclusion of a possible Franco-Romanian pact while waiting for the Italian-Romanian talks begun in Rome to continue.[41] And for his part, the head of the Romanian government Averescu communicated that the agreement with France was ready to be signed, urging a simultaneous agreement with Italy.[42] But the question of the Italian-Romanian friendship treaty continued to be complex since Romania had already previously stipulated a treaty with France and, moreover, Italy did not want to compromise its relations with Soviet Russia, recognizing the Romanian annexation of Bessarabia, as insistently requested by Bucharest.[43]

Conclusions

Summarizing the passages examined so far, starting from the proposal by Chamberlain and Beneš, Mussolini hypothesized a draft agreement

36 The delegate to the League of Nations, Scialoja, to the Head of Government and Foreign Minister, Mussolini, Geneva, March 11, 1926, in: *DDI*, VII series, Vol. IV, doc. 273.

37 The delegate to the League of Nations, Scialoja, to the Head of Government and Foreign Minister, Mussolini, Geneva, March 12, 1926, in: *DDI*, VII series, Vol. IV, doc. 277.

38 The Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, Grandi, to the Head of Government and Foreign Minister, Mussolini, Geneva, March 13, 1926, in: *DDI*, VII series, Vol. IV, doc. 278.

39 The Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, Grandi, to the Head of Government and Foreign Minister, Mussolini, Geneva, March 11, 1926, in: *DDI*, VII series, Vol. IV, doc. 274.

40 The Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, Grandi, to the Head of Government and Foreign Minister, Mussolini, Geneva, March 13, 1926, in: *DDI*, VII series, Vol. IV, doc. 279.

41 The Head of the Government and Foreign Minister, Mussolini, to the Minister in Bucharest, Durazzo, Rome, April 2, 1926, in: *DDI*, VII series, Vol. IV, doc. 291.

42 The Minister in Bucharest, Durazzo, to the Head of Government and Foreign Minister, Mussolini, Bucharest, April 17, 1926, in: *DDI*, VII series, Vol. IV, doc. 299.

43 The Head of Government and Foreign Minister, Mussolini, to the Minister in Bucharest, Durazzo, Rome, July 23, 1926, in: *DDI*, VII series, Vol. IV, doc. 379.

that would have to be somehow inspired by the Treaty of Locarno and include all the countries of the Danubian-Balkan area, both winners and losers. The qualifying point of this project was the exclusion of other great powers, and particularly France, for which only Italy was to act as guarantor. The project, as we have seen, was submitted to the countries concerned by the Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs Grandi and by the Italian delegate to the League of Nations, Antonio Scialoja, in Geneva in March 1926. A pact of this kind, which explicitly excluded France, would pose serious difficulties, especially for the countries most closely tied to Paris, namely Yugoslavia, and particularly Czechoslovakia. For its part, in reaction to the two Italo-Albanian treaties of 1926 and 1927,[44] Yugoslavia signed the friendship treaty with France in November 1927, which definitively put Mussolini's project into crisis.

It was above all the Franco-Yugoslav treaty that definitively prevented the conclusion of a Balkan Locarno, which was desired by Mussolini but also supported by the secretary general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Contarini, gradually marginalized after the appointment of Dino Grandi, an exponent of the new fascist diplomacy, as undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Shortly thereafter, the resignation of Contarini, due above all to the deterioration of relations with Yugoslavia and the end of a plan of "cooperative nationalism" that the secretary general of Foreign Affairs attempted to carry forward throughout the Danubian-Balkan area, symbolized in some way the closure of a phase of the first fascist diplomacy.[45] Yugoslavia would consequently move increasingly in the direction of France, not renewing the Pact of Rome of 1924, and on the other hand Italy would begin a more dynamic and destabilizing season towards the neighboring Yugoslav kingdom, through support for the Croatian separatism of the Ustasha.

After the failure of the project of a Danubian-Balkan Locarno, between 1926 and 1927 Fascist Italy looked especially at Romania, whose head of government, Averescu, had sympathies towards Mussolini. The initial project of a Locarno of south-eastern Europe was therefore replaced in Mussolini's strategy by that of a "quadruple alliance" between Italy, Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria, always with the aim of making Italy the mediating and conciliatory power between the victorious and defeated

44 P. PASTORELLI, *Italia e Albania, 1924–1927. Origini diplomatiche del trattato di Tirana del 22 novembre 1927*, Florence 1967.

45 ANASTASI, pp. 133–150.

states in the Danubian-Balkan area, but this time excluding Yugoslavia, against which, indeed, such an alliance should have been oriented.[46] However, this project proved to be unrealizable because of the disagreements existing between these countries, especially between Hungary and Romania over the question of Transylvania. Concluding an agreement involving Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria was extremely difficult, because Romania didn't want to leave the Little Entente and France, which were territorial guarantors for Bucharest. Despite the sympathies that some Romanian leaders, starting with Averescu, showed for Italy, and which led to the stipulation of an Italian-Romanian friendship treaty in 1926,[47] Romania remained well aware of the fact that the only defense against Hungarian revisionism was the axis with France. Furthermore, the crisis between Italy and Yugoslavia contributed to worsening relations between Italy and Czechoslovakia, so in 1929, when the Italian-Czechoslovak agreement of 1924 expired, Mussolini decided not to renew it.[48]

In the end, Italy, precisely because of its ambitions for power in the eastern Adriatic and the Balkans, was not structurally able to replace France as the guarantor of balance in the Danubian-Balkan area and therefore as a point of reference, political, economic and military, for the anti-revisionist states of central and south-eastern Europe. In parallel with the reaffirmation of French influence in the area at the turn of the decade, Italy accentuated its projection towards Hungary and in support of revisionism throughout the area. The Italo-Hungarian friendship pact of 1927 represented in this sense a signal of great importance, given the centrality that the axis with Hungary would have for Italian foreign policy in central-eastern Europe throughout the 1930s – despite the existence of a competition with Nazi Germany – leading finally to the Italo-German support for the Hungarian cause on the occasion of the second Vienna Award in August 1940.[49]

46 BURGWYN, pp. 101–115.

47 L. RICCARDI, Il trattato italo-romeno del 16 settembre 1926, in: *Storia delle relazioni internazionali*, 1, 1987, pp. 39–72.

48 F. CACCAMO, Un'occasione mancata. L'Italia, la Cecoslovacchia e la crisi dell'Europa centrale, 1918–1938, in: *Nuova rivista storica*, 1, 2015, pp. 111–157.

49 H. J. BURGWYN, La troika danubiana di Mussolini: Italia, Austria e Ungheria, 1927–1936, in: *Storia contemporanea*, 4, 1990, pp. 617–687; G. RÉTI, *Hungarian-Italian Relations in the Shadow of Hitler's Germany, 1933–1940*, New York 2003.

In Locarno's Shadow: Germany and the Soviet Union

Robert Schmidtchen[1]

Since the Treaty of Rapallo in 1922, the German Reich and the Soviet Union had formed an unequal community of purpose. Although both states conducted trade relations with each other and jointly circumvented the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, the diplomatic relationship was not based on a particularly strong foundation of trust. On the one hand, Moscow was suspicious not only of the adoption of the Dawes Treaty but also of the negotiations on the Locarno Treaties. The USSR was uneasy about its partner's increasing orientation towards the West and tried to prevent it with offers and threats. On the other side was Berlin, which wanted to escape its foreign policy isolation and return to the circle of the major European powers. Stresemann's goals could not be achieved without rapprochement with the West, but for geopolitical reasons the Soviet Union was not to be dispensed with either, which is why the Reich tried to accommodate Russian concerns. This occasionally tense relationship between the two states will be traced against the background of the Treaty of Locarno from the eve of its conclusion to the Treaty of Berlin.

[Locarno; Germany; Soviet Union; Collective Security]

Introduction

With the Treaty of Rapallo in 1922, the disparate pairing of the German Reich and the Soviet Union broke through their foreign policy isolation. The agreement, which some contemporaries placed in the tradition of Bismarck's foreign policy,[2] was based on mutual realpolitik interests and requirements, but also on renunciation and limitation: Moscow, on the one hand, insisted on compliance with the territorial provisions of Article 116 of the Treaty of Versailles but waived its entitlement to German reparations. Germany, on the other hand, waived all claims to compensation for expropriated German assets in the RSFSR. Both states

1 German Federal Archives, Germany; email: Robert.Schmidtchen@proton.me.

2 F. H. SIMONS, *How Europe made Peace without America*, New York 1927, p. 322.

recognized each other politically and established political and economic relations. Soviet Russia was certainly not the Germans' ideal partner of choice. However, their economic and foreign policy options were limited by the Treaty of Versailles, which Moscow had not signed. Therefore, some of its provisions could easily be circumvented in the East. In addition, Moscow and Berlin, albeit for different reasons, shared a geopolitical and geostrategic interest, namely the revision of Poland's state borders. The RSFSR also hoped to prevent the Germans from an exclusive alliance with the West. In addition, from the revolutionary unrest to the failure of the so-called German October 1923, they hoped for a German spark for the world revolution. Berlins approach was also motivated by more than just economic interests or Russian help with border revision in the east. Good relations with Moscow meant security, because France could then not position Poland and Russia against the Reich. However, the relationship between the two states never remained free of tension when it came to the pursuit of their own interests. This was particularly evident in Stresemann's policy towards the West and his efforts to return the Reich to the stage of great international politics through the Treaties of Locarno and accession to the League of Nations. In an event-historical approach, the German-Soviet relations in 1924 are first presented. To this end, the European context is first presented, and then in particular the discussion about Articles 16 and 17 of the League of Nations Act. These remarks are followed by a detailed examination of the events of 1925 with its special challenges to German foreign policy. In this context, it is shown how two political trials, one in the German Reich and one in the Soviet Union, affected the relationship and dealings between Berlin and Moscow. Finally, the conclusion of the Berlin Treaty and its immediate implications are outlined.

Shifting Tides: German-Soviet Relations in 1924

In 1924, the Kremlin was by no means completely politically isolated: Russia and Great Britain had concluded a trade agreement in 1921, and London was also interested in incorporating the RSFSR into its own foreign policy considerations.[3] Moreover, other European countries were striving for a normalized relationship with the USSR. In the spring of 1924, England and Italy were almost in a race to recognize the new

3 S. CREUZBERGER, *Das deutsch-russische Jahrhundert. Geschichte einer besonderen Beziehung*, Hamburg 2022, p. 359.

state, followed by Paris in the autumn. Relations were less tense, and they were no longer comparable to those in 1922.[4] In France, however, there were reservations motivated by domestic and foreign policy, although Moscow may have been an attractive means of exerting pressure on the Reich.[5] Ulrich Graf von Brockdroff-Rantzau, German ambassador in Moscow, saw his mission there as revising the Treaty of Versailles,[6] and in the cultivation of German-Soviet relations. Two things stood him in good stead: his committed, generally competent staff with strong networks in Russia, which made his work on the ground, which was not always uncomplicated, easier. He also enjoyed a good reputation in the RSFSR and had had a good relationship with the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Georgi Chicherin, for several years.[7] However, he also warned against an overly one-sided orientation towards the East; in this he agreed with Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann, whose foreign policy priorities were the West. In the interests of good relations, a trade agreement was to be concluded with the RSFSR, or from the end of 1922 the Soviet Union, in addition to the military and armaments agreement.

Despite all of Moscow's interference in the Reich, German-Soviet relations were not seriously shaken until May 1924. Berlin police, in search of the fugitive communist Hans Botzenhard, searched for the Soviet trade mission where the fugitive had gone into hiding. According to then-trade mission employee David Dallin, they found all sorts of anomalies, but they did not find the man they were looking for.[8] Ambassador Nikolai Krestinsky complained to Stresemann about this "violation of extraterritoriality"[9] of the facility and its premises and threatened diplomatic consequences. The police had apparently informed neither the Foreign Office nor the Interior Ministry in advance, and the Foreign Minister attempted to appease the Soviet ambassador. However, he emphatically emphasized that the trade mission in no way possessed extraterritorial status. Just two

4 L. LUKS, *Geschichte Russlands und der Sowjetunion von Lenin bis Jelzin*, Regensburg 2000, pp. 241–243.

5 M. J. CARLEY, Prelude to Defeat. Franco-Soviet Relations 1919–39, in: *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques*, 22,1, 1996, p. 168.

6 Telegramm in geheimen Ziffern, 6 March 1925, p. 4, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (hereafter PA AA) RZ 102/29245, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, p. 196.

7 Ch. SCHEIDEMANN, *Ulrich Graf Brockdorff-Rantzau (1869–1928). Eine politische Biographie*, Frankfurt/Main u.a. 1998, pp. 583–585.

8 D. J. DALLIN, Soviet Espionage: Germany before the Second World War, in: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschehen*, 55, 1, 1955, p. 724.

9 Aufzeichnung Stresemanns, 7 May 1924, PA AA NL 306/8, Stresemann, Gustav, p. 211.

weeks earlier, the two had congratulated each other on the anniversary of the Treaty of Rapallo and expressed their desire for the expansion, stabilization, and improvement of German-Soviet relations.[10] Now they exchanged harsh words, and Moscow recalled Krestinsky. It exploited the incident ideologically and instrumentalized it propagandistically, but without going too far because it was dependent on Berlin. Although relations had normalized by mid-year following German concessions, a new shadow soon fell over them. The adoption of the Dawes Plan by the Reichstag in August affected not only purely foreign policy necessities but also fundamental domestic and economic interests of the Reich, which would not have been served well by refusal. Although good relations with the Soviet Union were important, good relations with the West offered more potential[11] because they pointed out the way out of foreign policy isolation and opened the door to a return to the international political arena. Stresemann's major task now consisted of both considered and careful tactics and maneuvering between East and West to implement his foreign policy goals. Moscow disapproved of the adoption of the Dawes Plan, in which Chicherin saw for nothing less than a "capitulation, a journey to Canossa"[12] and the Soviet government wondered whether the slow abandonment of Rapallo and the turning away from the Soviet Union would now follow. Gustav Hilger, an embassy employee in Moscow, explained in his memoirs that this point of view was shown by Rapallo's Soviet interpretation: namely, "as an alliance against the League of Nations"[13] – which by no means corresponded to the view in Berlin. To the Kremlin, it was clear that this development had to be prevented, and the Germans had to be persuaded to reconsider their course. Therefore, the Soviet Union offered the Reich the prospect of a re-evaluation of its foreign policy options, meaning France and Poland. The application for membership in the League of Nations put further strain on the relationship. Berlin explained the motivation behind its Western policy, but without convincing the Soviet Union, which generally rejected the League of Nations as an imperialist tool. Both Articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant

10 Stresemann an Krestinski, 17 April 1924, PA AA NL 306/8, Stresemann, Gustav, p. 106.

11 E. H. CARR, *German-Soviet Relations between the two World Wars 1919–1939*, Baltimore (MD) repr . 1979, pp. 78–82.

12 Quoted from Z. J. GASIOROWSKI, The Russian Overture to Germany of December 1924, in: *The Journal of Modern History*, 30, 2, 1958, p. 100.

13 W. ELZ (Hg.), *Erinnerungen Hilgers, Quellen zur Außenpolitik der Weimarer Republik 1918–1933*, Darmstadt 2007, pp. 103–104, p. 104.

of the League of Nations were the bone of contention: Article 16 meant mutual support in the event of war – from "financial and economic measures"[14] to the defense of the attacked alliance partner with one's own troops. In return, passage through the territory of League of Nations members was to be permitted if necessary. Article 17 made this provision applicable also in the event of the involvement of non-members. This was crucial for the Soviet Union, which wanted to shift its border with League of Nations member Poland by military means: If the Reich did not join the League of Nations, it would not be an enemy in the war, but a buffer state, and would also not participate in economic and financial sanctions. In that case, the consequences of an attack remained relatively manageable for the USSR. As a member of the League of Nations, however, the Reich would be an enemy in a war, involved in military deployments, and involved in sanctions. Therefore, the Kremlin viewed Germany's accession request as threatening and undesirable. Chicherin accused Britain of anti-Soviet policies and world imperialism of planning a war against the USSR instead of promoting peace.[15]

Berlin acknowledged these fears, however, was not interested in a war or sanctions against the Soviet Union anyway. The challenge now was to reconcile the desired League of Nations membership with relations with Moscow, without having to forego either.[16] The German liaison to the League of Nations, Harry Graf Kessler, argued that in the event of war, a neutral Germany, for domestic political and geostrategic reasons, would have to avoid a two-front war and be interested in a swift defeat of the Red Army. The Reich, as a member with a seat on the League of Nations Council, might, however, be able to find a way to deal with Article 16 and, to a certain extent, even protect the Soviet Union. Furthermore, it would minimize the danger of war itself and, moreover, protect its own territory in the event of war. Harry Graf Kessler, the German liaison at the League of Nations, argued that in the event of war, Germany, for domestic political and geostrategic reasons, had to maintain neutrality, avoid a two-front

14 The Covenant of the League of Nations, in: *Société des Nations – Journal Officiel*, 1920, p. 8.

15 Interview mit Tschitscherin in der Izvestia, 26 September 1924 [Abschrift], PA AA NL 306/17, Stresemann, Gustav, pp. 97–105.

16 H. G. LINKE, Schicksalsgemeinschaft? Die Sowjetunion im politischen Kalkül der deutschen Botschafter in Moskau 1922–2941, in: K. EIMERMACHER (Hg.), *Stürmische Aufbrüche und enttäuschte Hoffnungen. Russen und Deutsche in der Zwischenkriegszeit*, München 2006, pp. 163–208, p. 176.

war, and be interested in a swift defeat of the Red Army. At the same time, as a member with a seat on the League of Nations Council, the Reich could find a way to circumvent Article 16 and, under certain circumstances, even partially protect the Soviet Union. This would reduce the danger of war for Germany and, in an emergency, secure its own territory. In any case, his general ceterum censeo remained the German interest in a Soviet defeat in the event of war, because of the otherwise impending "victory of the world revolution"[17].

Berlin navigated the challenging task of keeping Moscow close with the negotiations for a trade agreement and preventing Soviet rapprochement with Poland and France. Relations between Moscow, London and Paris had deteriorated after a short period of improvement, because of domestic policy implications and the unresolved Soviet war debts despite the fundamental French interest in trade relations with the USSR.[18] However, these developments showed that a Soviet-French understanding could not be ruled out per se.

Berlin and Moscow did not bring the negotiations on the trade agreement to an end. However, the Soviet Union achieved a partial success in the summer of 1924 because it succeeded in declaring "for the time being a fifth of the premises of the trade mission extraterritorial"[19] on the extremely controversial question of extraterritoriality. Moreover, both sides agreed to hold confidential talks on the border revision at Poland's expense. The Germans did not consider their eastern border to be immovable even after they had joined the League of Nations and, as Kessler had explained in his memorandum, they promised Moscow protection if it supported the border revision. One consideration was that the new borders could possibly also ensure greater peace in Eastern Europe by "pushing Poland back to its ethnographic borders".[20] At the end of 1924, Erich Wallroth, head of the Eastern Department of the German Foreign Office, criticized the planned trade agreement and German-Soviet rela-

17 Denkschrift Harry Graf Kesslers, 7 October 1924, p. 3, PA AA NL 306/17, Stresemann, Gustav, p. 155.

18 M. J. CARLEY – R. K. DEBO, Always in Need of Credit. The USSR and Franco-German Economic Cooperation, 1926–1929, in: *French Historical Studies*, 20, 3, 1997, pp. 321–323.

19 SCHEIDEMANN, p. 635.

20 Telegramm in geh. Ziffern zum Bericht 37, 5 December 1924, p. 3, PA AA RZ 102/29245, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, p. 51.

tions. He considered the two states to be "comrades in destiny"[21] who had both placed great hopes in their relations. But the forecasts for the Soviet economy were poor and the ideologically stubborn Bolsheviks' claim to the former glory and power of the Tsarist Empire lacked any connection to reality. Referring to the "Russian excesses"[22] that had occurred, Wallroth emphasized Moscow's repeated interference in the Reich's domestic and foreign policy. He linked this to two warnings: German relations with the Soviet Union were not exclusive and should not be considered as such. Berlin should also not fall for the USSR's self-stylization as a great power, for even if Moscow liked to see and present itself in this way, this image was completely unfounded. While Wallroth's memorandum met Brockdorff-Rantzau's approval on some points, the ambassador found it to be almost maliciously negative overall. Instead, Schlesinger's almost simultaneous finding that relations with the Soviet Union were "an essential prerequisite for the successful liquidation of the Versailles war policy to liberate Germany from foreign occupation"[23] probably met the ambassador's approval.

Challenges on the Way to Locarno 1925

Moscow and Berlin thus negotiated first two, then three major issues: German accession to the League of Nations and Article 16 in the context of the border revision at Poland's expense, as well as the trade agreement. Moscow's desire for a neutrality agreement emerged in the course of 1925. In the Soviet Union, there were serious doubts about German neutrality in the event of the Reich's accession to the League of Nations. England was pulling the strings to isolate the USSR and make it compliant. Therefore, the talks on a security pact between England, France, and the Reich were hardly suitable for reassuring Moscow. This complex situation weighed heavily on the already difficult talks on the trade agreement: The Soviet Union demanded, among other things, the extension of extraterritoriality to further properties inside and outside Berlin. Further action was needed regarding customs policy, which in Moscow's opinion would be better discussed in Berlin. The Foreign Office, on the other hand, signaled its

21 Zwischenbilanz über die deutsch-russischen Beziehungen vom 15. 2. 1924, p. 2, PA RZ 102/29245, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, p. 55.

22 Ibid., p. 11, PA RZ 102/29245, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, p. 64.

23 Schlesinger an Brockdorff -Rantzau, 1 January 1925, p. 2, PA RZ 102/29245, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, p. 90.

willingness to hold talks in the USSR, but for German industry representatives, "participation in negotiations in Moscow"[24] was out of the question. The Reich Minister of Economics not only supported this argument but also preferred a different approach to this matter than the Foreign Office.

Two court cases further strained the already tense German-Soviet relationship from February 1925 onwards. On February 10, 1925, the Reich Court in Leipzig opened the trial against the so-called German Cheka. In the KPD environment and "under the protection of the Russian embassy",[25] GPU officer Peter Skoblewsky had played a key role in establishing a small group of individuals around Felix Neumann. This communist terror cell had carried out three unsuccessful assassination attempts in the Reich and planned further attacks on politicians, business representatives, and military personnel in the highest circles. As a key witness, Neumann now implicated not only leading German communists, but also the Soviet Union as a financier and supporter of communist subversive efforts in the Reich. The trial, which could not take place in camera "for domestic political reasons",[26] harbored enormous potential for foreign policy conflict. Even before the trial began, Krestinsky had protested unsuccessfully, and Moscow had made it clear that both the proceedings and the verdicts would have a direct impact on relations. Moreover, to have leverage, the GPU had looked for suitable Germans in the Soviet Union. It found them in the two Germans Karl Kindermann and Theodor Wolscht as well as the Baltic German Estonian national Maxim von Dittmar, which it arrested long before the start of the trial "on suspicion of political and economic espionage"[27] at the end of October 1924. All three possessed the necessary documents and were each either a member or a sympathizer of the KPD. However, one of them apparently carried a firearm,[28] and furthermore, they behaved in a naive and careless

24 Auszug aus dem Protokoll der Sitzung des Reichsministeriums vom 7. 2. 1925, Bundesarchiv (hereafter BArch), R 43-I/1112, Reichskanzlei, f. 4.

25 V. ISAEV, Prekäre Freundschaft. Moskau, Weimar und die OGPU, in: *Osteuropa*, 58, 3, 2008, p. 20.

26 Schreiben an Brockdorff -Rantzau, 23 February 1925, p. 4, PA AA RZ 102/29245, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, p. 155.

27 Funktelegramm vom 19. 12. 1924, PA AA RZ 208/31949, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, p. 16.

28 Gesprächsnotiz zum Telefonat mit von Sippelskirch, 20 January 1925, BArch R 1507/569, Reichskommissar für Überwachung der Öffentlichen Ordnung, f. 2.

manner. The GPU repeatedly arbitrarily arrested Germans on suspicion of espionage, but in this case, it cannot be ruled out with absolute certainty that they had not been "deliberately lured into a trap"[29] from the outset because of the Leipzig trial. In any case, the fate of the three prisoners was connected to that of Skoblewsky. Moscow followed the events in Leipzig and reacted accordingly. It began preparing a court case and prevented any contact with the prisoners, whose forced and forged confessions Litvinov presented to Brockdorff -Rantzau. There was outrage in the Reich, and after unsuccessful rescue efforts, Kindermann's father threatened retaliation against Soviet officials, so that the German intelligence service instructed the Baden police to proactively thwart "any act of violence that would be extremely detrimental to German interests",[30] if possible. It was now necessary to reconcile the Reich's domestic and foreign policy interests with internal security. Moreover, Stresemann and the Foreign Office were under pressure because of the incident and suspected of backing down to Moscow. A month-long trial of strength began between the Reich and the Soviet Union, which sought to use this opportunity to demonstrate its power and to intimidate. But as in Germany, there was a domestic political component, here in the form of a power struggle between the GPU and the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, who advised moderation. In April 1925, Moscow took particular offense at the prosecutor's speech because he addressed the issue of Soviet support for the defendants through diplomatic channels. "Moscow's Germany expert, Karl Radek"[31] vigorously countered this narrative, declaring all claims of an intended Soviet regime change in the Reich to be absurd and contrary to Moscow's actual geopolitical interests.[32] Berlin neither bowed to nor followed Soviet wishes and the destabilizing Soviet interventions became public knowledge. On April 22, the Reich Court imposed three death sentences, including those against Skoblewsky and Neumann. From that point on, if the Soviet leadership acted on its announcement, it could be assumed that the three prisoners in Moscow would meet the same fate.

29 ISAEV, p. 23.

30 Reichskommissar für Überwachung der Öffentlichen Ordnung an das Polizeipräsidium Abt. I.A., 26 January 1925, BArch R 1507/569, Reichskommissar für Überwachung der Öffentlichen Ordnung, f. 4.

31 CREUZBERGER, p. 361.

32 Der Leipziger Tschekaprozess, 29 April 1925, BArch N42/32, Schleicher, Kurt von, f. 56.

Parallel to these developments, both sides were determining their positions: Moscow pointed out the unfavorable German position if the Soviet Union had to defend itself "against the attack of one of its belligerent neighboring states",[33] which, of course, would claim that the aggression had come from the USSR. There were no doubts about Germany's good intentions, but very much about their half-life if the Reich became a member of the League of Nations, as it already treated the West differently than the Soviet Union. Berlin saw no reason to break away from the Treaty of Rapallo and the USSR, if it committed to overcoming the Treaty of Versailles. Good relations were considered desirable, and at the same time it was recognized that the Soviet rejection of League of Nations membership went further than Articles 16 and 17, as Moscow declared them incompatible with Rapallo. Both sides negotiated the future shape of their relations against this background but distrusted each other's arguments. In a secret meeting, the President of the Council of People's Commissars, Alexei Rykov, explained to the German ambassador that although the USSR was being courted by the Western powers, and France in particular, it would prefer better and more exclusive relations with the Reich despite all reservations.[34] Despite the problematic constellation of Soviet leadership and the Comintern, Brockdorff-Rantzau showed interest and consulted with Stresemann. The Foreign Minister authorized the ambassador to explicitly emphasize that the Reich's Western policy was not directed against Moscow, but "against French expansionist policy on the Rhine".[35] Berlin neither had any interest in foreign troops passing through its territory, nor was it prepared to take part in wars, punitive measures or sanctions. Moscow took note of these assurances without giving them too much credence: Litvinov, Chicherin's deputy and responsible for Western policy, pointed to London's Anti-Soviet policy and insinuated that the USSR was losing esteem in the Reich. In early April 1925, after criticizing German foreign policy, he threatened to end the good relations. In a conversation, not only were some of the concerns dispelled, but continued German interest in the Soviet Union was also assured. The bone of contention remained the application for membership in the League of Nations, because, from Moscow's perspec-

33 Russisches Memorandum. Von Botschafter Krestinski überreicht, 25 April 1925, p. 4, PA AA RZ102/29247, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, p. 15.

34 SCHEIDEMANN, p. 655.

35 Telegramm in geheimen Ziffern, 6 March 1925, p. 4, PA AA RZ 102/29245, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, p. 196.

tive, it would allow the Reich to be instrumentalized by England and France against the Soviet Union. The USSR would not break off relations, but they would deteriorate. This was coupled with a rejection of border revision along ethnic lines.[36]

Court cases and the application for membership in the League of Nations affected the talks on the trade agreement, in which both sides formulated proposals that seemed hardly acceptable or even unacceptable to the other side. At the end of May, German foreign policy wanted to see signs of Soviet concessions in negotiations and practice, but lobbyists from industry and business contradicted this, pointing to the continuing difficult conditions. A week earlier, the People's Commissar for the Army and Navy, Mikhail Frunze, had described the capitalist arms industry from the Baltics to Poland and the Black Sea as directed against Soviet peace efforts and as an expression of "attempts to form an anti-Soviet bloc and the preparation of an attack".[37] From this he deduced the necessity of military and arms-industrial autarky for the Soviet Union. The USA and England were seen as the driving forces, and Moscow therefore demanded again and more vehemently that the Reich make a clear foreign policy commitment. Stresemann repeatedly invoked the spirit of Rapallo but showed little interest in agreements that went beyond this due to his western-oriented objectives. France's rejection of Germany's wishes regarding Article 16 in mid-1925 emphasized the importance and necessity of continuing the work toward the West. When the Soviet Union again raised the possibility of joining the League of Nations and the proposed security pact, the German Foreign Minister was unable to make any concessions for lack of better alternatives. Instead, he attempted to reassure Moscow by assuring that German membership in the League of Nations would not happen "without first consulting Russia".[38]

The Soviet Union, however, had another means of exerting pressure. On June 22, it opened the show trial against Kindermann, Wolscht, and von Dittmar – but it did not bring charges against them for the original suspicion of espionage, but rather on a murder plot against leading figures of the USSR. Piquantly, the embassy employee Gustav Hilger was named in the indictment as an accomplice. Until the verdict was announced,

36 Telegramm, 8 April 1925, p. 3, PA AA RZ 102/29245, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, p. 368.
37 Abwehrrüstungen Rußlands, Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger (Abend-Ausgabe), 20 May 1925, BArch N42/32, Schleicher, Kurt von, f. 57.
38 Drahtmeldung, 22 June 1925, BArch N42/32, Schleicher, Kurt von, f. 55.

there was no conclusive and reliable evidence. Moscow mustered prominent state officials, and the prosecutor not only declared that with "the election of […] Hindenburg […] the organization Consul"[39] was in power in the Reich, but also that revolutionary ideology takes precedence over the bourgeois concept of codified law. The Foreign Office was under no illusion that the trial had been "drawn up as a caricature of the Cheka trial"[40] and that Hilger was intended to "serve as an exchange professor for Krestinsky".[41] The ensuing German protest did not go completely unheard, because when the court in Moscow passed the requested three death sentences on July 3, 1925, neither the Reich government nor the embassy nor Hilger were mentioned. The verdict caused unrest in the Reich, and Stresemann informed the embassy that, despite this verdict, the "requested demand for a declaration of honor in favor of Hilger and the embassy had not become invalid".[42] The Foreign Minister promised the Soviet Union that relations between the two states would fundamentally depend on Hilger's complete rehabilitation. Furthermore, the British press began to speculate whether the verdict had driven a wedge between Moscow and Berlin that could ultimately lead to a rupture. At this point, concerns and the feeling that they had perhaps gone too far began to spread among the Soviet leadership. Therefore, the execution of the sentence was suspended after a short time, and a review of the verdict was promised.[43] Brockdorff-Rantzau negotiated hard with Chicherin and was at first almost uncompromising. He blocked the conversation early on and shifted the focus to the Hilger case, making it clear that without a satisfactory resolution there would be no constructive and productive discussions with him. The People's Commissar expressed understanding and pointed out the suspension of the execution of the sentence, the publication of which the German ambassador was now demanding. Chicherin considered this impossible and explained to Brockdorff-Rantzau that his own position was vulnerable, implicitly hinting at the power struggle within the CPSU. If he had expected this to result in the ambassador's relenting, he was mistaken, as Brockdorff-Rantzau continued to exert considerable pressure on his counterpart and threatened to break off

39 Telegramm, 7 July 1925, p. 3, PA AA RZ 102/29247, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, p. 95.
40 Schreiben Dirksen's, 29 June 1925, p. 3, PA AA RZ 102/29247, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, p. 48.
41 Ibid.
42 Telegramm, 4 July 1925, p. 1, PA AA RZ 102/29247, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, p. 61.
43 ISAEV, p. 32.

all talks.[44] The People's Commissar unsuccessfully sought to use the fabricated evidence against the defendants and Hilger to lend greater weight to the Soviet position. He also emphasized that the ambassador's demeanor and choice of words would be perceived as an ultimatum in the Soviet Union. Brockdorff -Rantzau, however, did not allow himself to be tempted to deviate from his line. Finally, after an unproductive meeting in mid-July, he declared to his Soviet colleague that he felt he could no longer achieve anything under these circumstances and in the current climate in Moscow and would therefore leave the Soviet capital.[45] This does not mean that Brockdorff-Rantzau did not recognize the difficult position the People's Commissar faced in the Soviet Union or appreciated his efforts: He pointed to his commitment to crisis management, which he did not want to be made even more difficult. He combined this with a request to rein in on the press in the Reich, because its protest the treatment of prisoners, while justified in itself, was in Brockdorff-Rantzaus opinion taking on questionable forms that were detrimental to German-Soviet relations.[46] Although the Soviet government resisted German wishes in the Hilger case, it was making concessions. However, Brockdorff -Rantzau took a confrontational approach, as he saw a clear need for improvement: Due to the bumpy and difficult talks with the West, the impression of strained German-Soviet relations had to be avoided. Nevertheless, the ambassador considered it "incompatible with the dignity and prestige of the Reich to give in to the demands of the Russian government".[47] Stresemann contradicted the ambassador and tried to reassure him: Chicherin's recently submitted proposal was ultimately better than the ambassador was making it, because it met Germany's minimal demands. The foreign minister believed that Moscow knew it was "only playing the game of the Western powers"[48] through further intransigence. If Brockdorff-Rantzau left the Soviet capital, it would be a strong but also misguided signal at this point. If the Soviet Union continued to stall and block, he could still leave.

44 Telegramm, 7 July 1925, pp. 1–3, PA AA RZ 102/29247, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, pp. 80–82.

45 Telegramm, 15 July 1925, p. 4, PA AA RZ 102/29247, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, p. 118.

46 Telegramm, 18 July 1925, pp. 1–2, PA AA RZ102/29247, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, pp. 127–128.

47 Telegramm, 3 July 1925, p. 4, PA AA RZ102/29247, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, p. 230.

48 Telegramm, 4 August 1925, p. 1, PA AA RZ102/29247, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, p. 232.

These ideas became moot in early August 1925, when Litvinov and Krestinsky demanded a declaration of honor from Stresemann for German statements made during the Cheka trial. At this point, the Foreign Minister steered the conversation toward the trade agreement, arguing that, for domestic political reasons, extraterritoriality could only be established for the Soviet embassy. At that moment, the conversation was interrupted by a phone call announcing the publication of the declaration of honor for Hilger in the Russian press.[49] On the same day, Brockdorff-Rantzau again requested that the German press be influenced: derogatory reporting about the Soviet declaration of honor and its creation should be avoided because it would negatively affect relations. While he relied on the common sense of journalists and newspaper editors, he recommended, "if possible, muzzling the extreme newspapers"[50] in order to minimize potential risks. With the Hilger case resolved, the trade agreement and the Neutrality Pact, with its controversial preamble, moved into the spotlight. From the German perspective, the Soviet proposal went too far to be acceptable to the West. Litvinov was only temporarily satisfied with this, and the matter was postponed for further discussion.

By March 1925, Berlin and Moscow had made only little progress in tough negotiations because the Reich was playing tactics, negotiating with the West and stalling the Soviet Union, much to its displeasure. With the Hilger affair over, Stresemann and Brockdorff -Rantzau intended to accelerate treaty negotiations with Moscow. The timing seemed right, and the Soviet proposals required a response. Litvinov, visibly pleased, declared that Moscow was not forcing the Germans to choose between East and West. But the USSR was interested in a neutral Germany, even if it was a member of the League of Nations, because the Union would probably have to go to war. When asked, he named several neighboring European and Asian states, but it was clear that he meant Poland. Therefore, Moscow wanted an unambiguous preamble that went beyond what was possible in German terms. Berlin's intention to "refrain altogether from a political preamble"[51] was rejected by the Soviet Union. In the final weeks before the start of the Locarno Conference, contacts intensified once again. Moscow

49 Notiz, 8 August 1925, pp. 1–3, PA AA RZ102/29247, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, pp. 258–260.

50 Telegramm, 8 August 1925, PA AA RZ102/29247, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, p. 263.

51 Telegramm, 27 August 1925, p. 5, PA AA RZ 102/29249, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, p. 18.

was visibly nervous, Litvinov repeatedly protested Stresemann's western course and in autumn, Chicherin appeared to his German interlocutors to be "unusually aggressive and irritated".[52] In this situation, the French press tried to drive a wedge between Moscow and Berlin by claiming that there was hardly any German-Soviet common ground and that Poland was probably a better foreign policy partner for the Soviet Union. At the very least, Chicherin probably considered both Poland and the revision of Germany's eastern border to be a suitable means of exerting pressure on the Reich. Since the summer of 1925, Warsaw and Moscow had been holding talks on a non-aggression pact, and the People's Commissar declared good relations to be a Soviet interest because "an anti-Bolshevik front, as England intended, would be impossible without Poland".[53] The two sides had not yet reached an understanding, but some Polish circles believed "that Germany was the eternal enemy and that a compromise with Russia should therefore be sought".[54] German diplomats assumed that a war between Poland and the USSR was likely sooner or later but pointed out that Germany's accession to the League of Nations would influence relations between the two states. At the end of September 1925, Chicherin traveled to Warsaw. In principle, there was only "a tactical maneuver aiming to strengthen Moscow's bargaining position with Berlin".[55] Since April, the western neighboring state had taken on the role of a clear security threat as well as that of an "economic competitor"[56] in the official Soviet interpretation. In fact, the Soviet Union looked at its neighbor with argus eyes. In the eyes of leading representatives of the state, Poland wanted a war in which it wanted to draw its allies or even the European Western powers on its side.[57] In the run-up to this visit, Izvestia printed articles by Radek critical of Germany as well as favorable contributions about Poland. Soviet-backed acts of sabotage and espionage on

52 ROSENBAUM, p. 154.

53 Rauscher an Auswärtiges Amt, 30 June 1925, p. 2, PA AA RZ 102/29247, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, p. 42.

54 Ibid., p. 5, PA AA RZ 102/29247, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, p. 45.

55 W. MATERSKI, The Second Polish Republic in Soviet Foreign Policy (1918–1939), in: *The Polish Review*, 45, 3, 2000, p. 336.

56 Y. V. KOSTYASHOV, The "Polish question" in Soviet-German relations in the second half of the 1920s (based on the materials of the USSR consulate in Königsberg), in: *Baltic Region*, 3, 2013, p. 101.

57 D. SHEARER, 1918–1933. Patterns of Violence and Foreign Threat, in: *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 66, 2, 2018, p. 191.

Polish soil, the execution of the "two Polish officers to be exchanged"[58] as well as the border violation by a small Polish military unit and the firefight on Soviet territory in early 1925 seemed to have been forgotten.[59] From Warsaw, the People's Commissar traveled to Berlin, where he wanted to speak with the Reich President. The Germans were anxious not to appear as the worse hosts. Because the Polish government treated Chicherin with all due honors and provided him with a saloon car, the staff of the Foreign Office recommended doing the same.

In Berlin he had two long talks with Stresemann. At the end of September, the Foreign Minister explained to him that the desired extraterritoriality was extremely unpopular and that Moscow's influence on German domestic politics was perceived as disruptive and burdensome. Chicherin took note of these statements but referred to Litvinov. He also relativized Stresemann's criticism, arguing that the III. International and not the Soviet Union was responsible for the influence. The signing of the otherwise complete trade agreement was delayed by disagreements, which Chicherin further aggravated by Brockdroff-Rantzau's alleged offer of a German-Soviet military operation to break up Poland. The People's Commissar expressed a lack of understanding for Berlin's foreign policy and offered to work together to find a solution to the Polish question.[60] He also criticized Stresemann and the German reactions to Moscow's offers. In the case of the proposed neutrality pact, those would "perhaps be suitable for a toast",[61] but not for bilateral agreements. Only Stresemann's assurance that the signing of the Locarno Treaties would not change the intended border revision made the People's Commissar more conciliatory. At the beginning of October, the German Foreign Minister informed Chicherin and Krestinsky that the trade agreement was on the right track after the Soviet Union withdrew her extraterritoriality demands beyond the embassy. The Reich Ministers of both the Interior and Justice had repeatedly expressed their concerns on this issue, most recently on October 1. Despite their reservations, they recognized the

58 Rauscher an Auswärtiges Amt, 30 June 1925, p. 5, PA AA RZ 102/29247, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, p. 45.

59 Polnisch-Russische Grenzzwischenfälle, Dortmunder Zeitung (Morgen-Ausgabe), 1 January 1925.

60 J. P. BIRKELUND, *Gustav Stresemann. Patriot und Staatsmann. Eine Biographie*, Hamburg, Wien 2003, p. 401.

61 Aufzeichnung Stresemanns über das Gespräch mit Tschitscherin, 30 September 1925, p. 7, PA AA RZ 102/29249, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, p. 89.

importance of the treaty, which was "unanimously adopted"[62] that same day. Regarding the ethnographic borders, Chicherin claimed that this had been a serious German proposal. Stresemann countered, presenting documents, that it had been a Soviet idea and unequivocally rejected this approach. Moscow's reservations about Article 16 remained unresolved: Chicherin told the newspaper Berliner Tageblatt that England would abuse this article to position France and the Reich against each other as well as against the Soviet Union.[63] Stresemann repeatedly assured that the Reich would never recognize the borders of what was occasionally referred to as the "seasonal state"[64] designated Poland and committed himself to Rapallo. However, he rejected the secret treaty proposed by the Soviet Union. For the preamble to a neutrality pact, Chicherin suggested using the Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty of 1922 as a blueprint. However, Brockdorff-Rantzau had already made it clear to Litvinov in August that the treaty neither had been ratified by Czechoslovakia, nor was it in the Reichs interest.[65] Stresemann could not be persuaded to change his foreign policy course, nor was he impressed by the prospect of talks between Moscow and Warsaw and Paris. On October 6, Chicherin met with Reich President Paul von Hindenburg, who, however, hardly allowed himself to be drawn into a political debate. Hindenburg was mainly interested in the potential of German-Soviet economic relations, as well as the status and development of infrastructure, agriculture, and Moscow's policy on Asia. He consistently rebuffed attempts to involve him in a discussion of German foreign policy or German-Soviet relations.[66] The case of the two imprisoned Germans also gained momentum again, as Chicherin was determined to fully support them, which is why "Kindermann and Wolscht would probably be pardoned".[67] Both their death sentences and

62 Auszug aus dem Protokoll der Sitzung des Reichsministeriums vom 1. Oktober 1925, BArch R 43-I/1112, Reichskanzlei, f. 191.

63 Unterredung mit Tschitscherin. Rußland und die Paktkonferenz, in: *Berliner Tageblatt and Handels-Zeitung*, 2 October 1925.

64 Polens neue Außenpolitik, in: *Berliner Tageblatt and Handels-Zeitung* (Abend-Ausgabe), 24 July 1926.

65 Der Botschafter in Moskau Graf Brockdorff-Rantzau an das Auswärtige Amt, 27 August 1925, in: R. THIMMEet al. (Hg.), *Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik 1918–1945* (hereafter ADAP)*, Serie A: 1918–1925, Bd. XIV (14. August bis 30. November 1925)*, Göttingen 1995, p. 100.

66 Telegramm, 8 October 1925, pp. 1–3, PA AA RZ 102/29249, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, pp. 113–115.

67 Ministerialrat Wallroth an die Botschaft in Moskau, 7 October 1925, *ADAP, Bd. XIV*, p. 330.

that of Skoblewsky on the German side were commuted to several years imprisonment in October 1925.

After the signing of the Locarno Treaties, the Soviet press attacked the Reich as vicarious agent of England and France, which had self-degraded itself and was hardly a friend of the USSR anymore. Yet, Stresemann had achieved not one, but two major successes in Locarno: Firstly, the inviolability of Germany's borders with France and Belgium, and the renunciation of force in the event of a dispute.[68] The Reich concluded similar agreements with Poland and Czechoslovakia, but these continued to allow for border revision in the east. Furthermore, the British and French declaration of protection only applied in the event of a German attack. Secondly, Stresemann achieved a special regulation of Article 16 – in the opinion of the "four Allied delegation leaders",[69] it must be ensured that its application is compatible with the individual German "military situation and takes account of its geographical location".[70] In other words: within a certain margin of maneuver, the Reich itself decided whether and when to apply Article 16. Stresemann nevertheless failed to achieve his maximum goal as the Versailles War Guilt Article was not revised. However, these results made it possible to implement the repeated assurances made to Moscow if necessary. Furthermore, the final protocol of the treaty regulated the Reich's accession to the League of Nations. The Soviet Union, however, took a different view of the Locarno Treaties, which it saw as US capitalism and imperialism in general on the rise and the Reich trapped between France and England.

Against this backdrop, the Soviet Union and the German Reich signed the long-awaited trade agreement on October 12, 1925. While not all economic differences had been resolved, the political side agreements were more important: They formally provided greater legal certainty for Germans, as well as German property in the USSR, and the German jurisdiction over Soviet corporations in the Reich.[71] The agreements results did not restore pre-war conditions, but according to the Foreign

68 Treaty of Mutual Guarantee between Germany, Belgium, France, Great Britain and Italy (Annex A), in: F. J. BERBER (Hg.), *Locarno. A Collection of Documents*, London, Edinburgh, Glasgow 1936, pp. 50–51.

69 Telegramm, 16 October 1925, p. 1, PA AA RZ 102/29247, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, p. 140.

70 Ibid.

71 Aufzeichnungen zu den deutsch-russischen Wirtschaftsverhandlungen, p. 4, BArch R 43-I/1112, Reichskanzlei, f. 133.

Office, neither an uncompromising approach nor a tough stance would have led to better results. Rather, foreign policy conditions made it necessary not to give Moscow the impression the Reich was turning away from the East.[72]

The Treaty of Berlin

Locarno, however, gave this impression. Brockdorff-Rantzau agreed with Stresemann that the focus of foreign policy should not be on the East exclusively. However, the ambassador criticized the Locarno Treaties and Germany's overly Western-oriented foreign policy, which, in his opinion, not only overestimated the benefits of Locarno, but also underestimated Soviet potential and misjudged the consequences for the Reich: Moscow was disgruntled and joining the League of Nations would significantly limit the fulfillment of treaty obligations towards the Soviet Union. Hence, the ambassador considered it reckless to then possibly ignore the League of Nations covenant, because the Reich would "thus jeopardize its existence for the second time, and this time definitively".[73] A German-Soviet treaty was intended to appease and reassure Moscow. The problem lay in their respective sensitivities: Berlin believed it was offering more than the Soviet Union acknowledged and declared that it would not be blackmailed. Furthermore, the Soviet press also strained relations. Moscow demanded binding statements and once again brought Poland and France into the picture. Relations with France had become volatile in 1925, however, because Paris wanted to participate in economic agreements directed against the Soviet Union for domestic, foreign, and colonial policy reasons.[74] In the French capital, Chicherin learned that the premise for Franco-Soviet relations was the repayment of the Tsarist Empire's debts. Neither London nor Berlin believed Moscow could do this, and the Soviet Union demanded loans for it. France, in turn, would only have been willing to give credit after Moscow's debts had been repaid, but it was hardly economically able to do so anyway.[75] Stresemann raised with Krestinsky the constant attacks on the Reich President and himself, as well as false claims in Izvestia and Pravda in December 1925. The Soviet

72 Aufzeichnungen zu den deutsch-russischen Wirtschaftsverhandlungen, pp. 7–9, BArch R 43-I/1112, Reichskanzlei, f. 136–138.

73 Notiz Brockdorff-Rantzaus, 7 November 1925, p. 4, PA AA RZ 102/29248, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, p. 11.

74 CARLEY, pp. 169–170.

75 CARLEY – DEBO, pp. 323–324.

ambassador simply replied that "the truth probably lies somewhere in the middle".[76] The two could not find common ground on any issue. After the renewed proposal of the Soviet-Czechoslovak treaty as a template, Stresemann explained that this treaty was not registered with the League of Nations. Kestinsky succinctly replied that the Reich could then take on a pioneering role with the German-Soviet treaty. When he, in turn, pressed for the conclusion of a neutrality treaty, the German Foreign Minister refused: According to Locarno, the Reich could declare itself neutral if necessary, and he would not conclude an agreement simply to appease Moscow. Soviet political rhetoric in 1924 and 1925 repeatedly portrayed threats to the USSR due to capitalist and imperialist aggression, encirclement, and the intention to go to war. Although the Locarno Treaties served this narrative, truly far-reaching and deeper fears of war probably only emerged in Moscow in the second half of 1926.[77]

Nevertheless, by the end of 1925, the fronts between the Reich and the Soviet Union had hardened: the GPU had taken action against German diplomatic institutions in the Caucasus, among other places, and Chicherin, whom his German interlocutors in Berlin found increasingly difficult, negotiated in France and succeeded in convincing Paris to take a seat at the negotiating table from February 1926. Shortly before Christmas Eve 1925, he then openly declared in the KPD newspaper *Rote Fahne*: "The League of Nations is the enemy".[78] Turning away from the USSR was not in Germany's interest: Berlin's foreign policy and its successes in the West "were almost hostile acts for the Soviet government"[79] – this interpretation could make it much more difficult to achieve German geopolitical interests and, under certain circumstances, seriously jeopardize them.[80] Therefore, the Reich government tried to show the Kremlin that Germany was still interested in good relations. For Wallroth, the Soviet Union became increasingly less important for the Reich, and although his critical views did not prevail, an "important assumption of German

76 Besprechung Stresemanns mit Krestinski, 11 December 1925, p. 3a, PA AA RZ 102/29250, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, p. 4.

77 J. P. SONTAG, The Soviet War Scare 1926–27, in: *The Russian Review*, 34, 1, 1975, pp. 66–69.

78 Eine Erklärung Tschitscherins für die Rote Fahne, in: *Die Rote Fahne*, 23 December 1925, PA AA RZ 102/29250, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, p. 170.

79 P. KRÜGER: Das doppelte Dilemma: Die Außenpolitik der Republik von Weimar zwischen Staatensystem und Innenpolitik, in: *German Studies Review*, 22, 2, 1999, p. 263.

80 SCHEIDEMANN, pp. 675–677.

policy toward Soviet Russia"[81] was increasingly being questioned. In Brockdorff-Rantzau, however, Moscow had an advocate who did not hesitate to stand up to Stresemann. In a conversation, the ambassador presented his assessments and opinions to the Reich President. During this conversation, he indicated that he would ask for his resignation if necessary. Hindenburg confirmed Stresemann's foreign policy but understood Brockdorff-Rantzau's reference to the strain on German-Soviet relations. He rejected his resignation for political reasons and because he considered him the right man in Moscow. He also confirmed the ambassador's right to act as an intermediary.[82] Although Stresemann welcomed this discussion, his reaction made it clear that the relationship between the Foreign Minister and the Ambassador was broken and that he was not particularly happy about Hindenburg's concession.[83] He also insisted that the German-Soviet treaty could only be negotiated in Berlin. While these talks were ongoing, the Reich's admission to the League of Nations turned out not to be the formality that German diplomats had thought it was. Not only France but also England supported Poland's claim to a permanent seat on the Council of Nations, to Berlin's displeasure. Moscow, however, happily took note of this development, as well as Berlin's subsequent intensified efforts to secure a German-Soviet treaty, and encouraged these efforts. In both England and France press reports on the treaty appeared even before it was signed because of German tactical considerations. However, this calculation only partially came to fruition, and the governments in both London and Paris reacted with little enthusiasm. However, they neither attempted to intervene, nor did Franco-German relations suffer as a result.

The Treaty of Berlin in April 1926 became the basis of German-Soviet relations as "a renewal and expansion of the Treaty of Rapallo".[84] Building on this, they further agreed on close political and economic coordination and expanded their military cooperation. Moreover, they finally

81 J. D. CAMERON, To Transform the Revolution into an Evolution. Underlying Assumptions of German Foreign Policy towards Soviet Russia, 1919–27, in: *Journal of Contemporary History*, 40, 1, 2005, p. 22.

82 Hindenburg an Stresemann, 28 November 1925, pp. 1–2, PA AA RZ 102/29248, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, pp. 29–30.

83 Stresemann an Hindenburg, 1 January 1926, pp. 1–2, PA AA RZ 102/29248, Deutsches Reich-Zentrale, pp. 54–55.

84 I. O. JOHNSON, *Faustian Bargain. The Soviet-German Partnership and the Origins of the Second World War*, New York 2021, p. 85.

succeeded in reaching a compromise on the contentious issue of neutrality that both sides could live with.[85] Furthermore, the Reich declared in the Additional Protocol that it would "counter with the utmost vigor any efforts that were directed […] unilaterally against the USSR".[86] Following the declaration received in Locarno, Stresemann was able to comfortably assure that German participation in sanctions against the Soviet Union depended on whether the USSR was the aggressor from the German point of view or not.[87] From the German point of view, the treaty thus satisfied the Soviet demand, while the Kremlin assessed it as an important foreign policy element for the Soviet Union: Moscow had relations of comparable quality with no other Western state, and with the treaty, London, "then considered by the Kremlin to be the greatest threat to Soviet security",[88] lost influence on the empire. On top of that, the Germans awarded "a three-year, 300-million-mark credit to Soviet trade agencies",[89] which, however, was soon used up. At this point it became clear that little had changed because of the Berlin Treaty. Moscow asked for more money and longer payment periods, otherwise it would do business with other partners with whom the USSR had economic relations. The Germans even tried to persuade companies from other countries to become involved in the Soviet Union and acted as intermediaries – but in the second half of 1926 London was on the verge of breaking off its relations with Moscow and in Paris disillusionment set in, followed by reluctance and declining interest in the USSR.[90] The German Foreign Office observed this development with concern and forbade new loans for the Soviet Union until further notice. In the years that followed, German-Soviet relations remained volatile and were, not least, subject to "the peculiar logic of the Soviet regime"[91] and its policies. But in September 1926, Kindermann and Wolscht were released as part of a prisoner exchange negotiated under the Berlin Treaty, while Dittmar as an Estonian, did not fall under German jurisdiction in the first place and also had died in prison in the meantime.

85 Gesetz über die Ratifikation des deutsch-russischen Vertrags, 24 April 1926, in: *Reichsgesetzblatt*, Teil 2, 30, 1926, p. 360.
86 Ibid., p. 361.
87 Ibid., p. 362.
88 JOHNSON, p. 85.
89 CARLEY – DEBO, p. 320.
90 M. J. DEBO, Episodes from the Early Cold War. Franco-Soviet Relations 1917–1927, in: *Europe-Asia Studied*, 52, 7, 2000, pp. 1292–1297.
91 CREUZBERGER, p. 368.

Architectural Appeasement: A Material History of Fascism and the League of Nations as told by its *Palais des Nations* (1926–1938)

Daniel R. Quiroga-Villamarín[1]

Despite the resurgence of interest in the history and practice of the League of Nations, we still know quite little of the concrete buildings in which this pioneer international organization attempted to create a shell for itself and the nascent liberal rules-based international order. As part of these efforts, the League invested heavily in the creation of its own Secretariat and Conference complex – which it inspirationally baptized the *Palais des Nations* ("Palace of Nations" in French). But by the late 1930s, when the building was finalized, much had changed in the climate of international relations – leading, eventually, to the collapse of international order and the return of World War. In my article, I trace a material history of the parallels between the League's construction of its *Palais* and the collapse of the multilateral international order it had erected. In particular, I focus on debates surrounding (i) the exceptional participation of German architects (in a broader context marked by the so-called "spirit of Locarno") in the League's architectural competition, and (ii) the sanctions deployed against Italian raw materials – crucially needed for construction of the *Palais* itself – after the Fascist invasion of Ethiopia of 1935. In this way, I engage with the history of European and Global collective security arrangements from a rather heterodox different perspective: the League's built environment.

[Theory and History of International Law; Locarno Treaties; History of the League of Nations; Law and Architecture; Collective Security; Modern European History]

> *From the very beginning, delegates spoke of the new building as a concrete symbol of the League's importance on the world stage […but a]s the political and economic crises oof the 1930s became more severe, there were cases of* transference *in which the building project came to stand for a growing disquiet about the League's viability.*[2]

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[2] C. N. BILTOFT, Decoding the Balance Sheet: Gifts, Goodwill, and the Liquidation

> *But I knew that the fate of all Europe was linked to the fate of the little country that just happened to be my native land […] A country whose rulers had once governed Europe, now partitioned and mutilated, Austria was, I repeat, the keystone in the wall.*[3]

Introduction: A Temple for Peace

To feel at home, international organizations – just like human beings – need a roof over their heads. The League of Nations – one of the first structures of international law's "move to institutions" created in the wake of the Great War of 1914[4] – took quite a long time to find its home.[5] After a brief stint in Sutherland House in London, the secretariat of this international institution temporarily installed itself at the *Hôtel National*, facing the calm shoreline of the *Lac Léman* in Geneva, Switzerland.[6] The League's tenure in this site – later renamed *Palais Wilson*, in homage of the US President who had championed the idea of the League but failed to get his own polity to join it[7] – was quite longer than expected.[8] It was meant to be merely a placeholder while the League constructed its own purpose-built and carefully designed edifice: the *Palais des Nations* (in French, "Palace of Nations").[9] The high hopes the institution endowed in this new venue can be seen in the language it used when it opened, in July 1926, the competition to select its architect(s). The new building ought to "be designed not only to provide accommodation of the most

of the League of Nations, in: *Capitalism: A Journal of History and Economics*, 1, 2, 2020, pp. 79–404, p. 380. Emphasis in the original.

3 S. ZWEIG, *The World of Yesterday: Memoirs of a European*, London 2024, pp. 427–428.

4 D. KENNEDY, The Move to Institutions, in: *Cardozo Law Review*, 8, 5, 1987, pp. 841–988. See, generally, R. HENIG, *The Peace That Never Was: A History of the League of Nations*, London 2019; P. JACKSON – W. MULLIGAN – G. SLUGA (eds.), *Peacemaking and International Order after the First World War*, Cambridge 2023.

5 D. R. QUIROGA-VILLAMARÍN, Placeholders: An Archival Journey into the Interim Histories of International Organisations, in: D. R. QUIROGA-VILLAMARÍN – N. MANSOURI, *Ways of Seeing International Organisations: New Perspectives for International Institutional Law*, Cambridge 2025.

6 League of Nations Activities, in: *Current History*, 13, 3, 1920, pp. 363–367.

7 G. SLUGA, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, Philadelphia 2013, p. 54.

8 QUIROGA-VILLAMARÍN, Placeholders: An Archival Journey into the Interim Histories of International Organisations.

9 See further D. R. QUIROGA-VILLAMARÍN, 'Architects of the Better World'; Democracy, Law, and the Construction of International Order (1919–1989). PhD thesis in International Law and History, 2024. Chapter IV. See also C. BILTOFT, Sundry Worlds within the World: Decentered Histories and Institutional Archives, in: *Journal of World History*, 31, 4, 2020, pp. 729–760, p. 740.

modern and practical kind for all the organisations essential to the League's work but also to symbolise in style and outline the pacific ideals of the twentieth century."[10]

But by the time the building was finally ready, in 1938, much had changed in the world. This can be best seen in the pages of the special issue the Parisian newspaper *L'Illustration* devoted to the inauguration of the *Palais*, which had to report on the beauty of the building at the same time as *Anschluß* of Austria.[11] Indeed, the lofty ideals that had inspired this temple of peace were increasingly at odds with the airs of war sweeping Europe – and eventually, the globe.[12] Just a couple of years later, the League – which had been unable to stop the increasingly aggressive conduct of the Axis Powers – was itself left paralyzed by the outbreak of a second, even Greater, World War (thereafter, WWII).[13] "By 1940, the building had become something of a pristine haunted house."[14] Moreover, the very erection of the *Palais* had been riddled by contradictions and controversies. The failure of the League's Jury of Architects (JoA) to select a winning design and the subsequent process of internal negotiation had been "one of the most illuminating episodes in the history of contemporary architecture".[15] As the roaring twenties gave way to the terrible thirties, the League's venue had been a protagonist in some of the most important transformations of the period. Its architecture and materiality were not merely a *reflection* of international politics – the *Palais des Nations* was, itself, "politics in matter".[16]

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10 "Annex C.L. 63. 1926" in League of Nations Archives (LoNA) R1540/32/40855/28594, 102. The French text (at page 101) is even richer: *mais encore pour cette conception traduise la haute destination d'un monument qui, par la pureté de son style, l'harmonie de ses lignes, est appelé à symboliser la gloire pacifique du XXème siècle*. Thereafter, any cited archival materials are scanned on file with the author. I thank Jacques Oberson, Nikolay Prensilevich, and Pierre-Etienne Bourneuf at the United Nations Archives at Geneva for their assistance during my research.

11 *L'Illustration (journal hebdomadaire universel)*, n. 4963–4996 of 16 April 1938. Rare book on file with the author.

12 D. R. QUIROGA-VILLAMARÍN, Within International Law's Sistine Chapel: José María Sert y Badia's 'The Lesson of Salamanca' in, and as, International Legal History (1936), in: *Max Planck Institute for Legal History and Legal Theory Research Paper Series* No. 2023–03, 2023.

13 M. HOUSDEN, *The League of Nations and the Organization of Peace*, London 2014. See Chapter 6 in particular.

14 BILTOFT, p. 381.

15 S. GIEDION, *Space, Time, and Architecture; the Growth of a New Tradition*, Cambridge 1954, pp. 519ff. Giedion, I must note, was also both judge and party in this controversy.

16 E. WEIZMAN, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation*, London 2017, p. 5.

For that reason, the years that followed 1926 witnessed a complex process of negotiation and contestation around the creation of "international Geneva" – and its role in both the *local* "urban physiognomy" of the city and an emerging *global* imaginary of governance and world order.[17] In this process, states and empires played a crucial role. But the same is true – as we will see – for subnational authorities (such as the Canton and Republic of Geneva); ambitious individuals and disciplinary constellations (i.e. associations of organized architects); and private business-oriented actors (like contractors, philanthropists, and workers). What is more, this was a process that was thoroughly juridified, as every step of the way raised all sorts of legal problems.[18] The League had to face questions, for instance, related to: the delegation of authority within the League; the status of its properties and construction-related operations under Swiss and international law; the criteria for the selection of architects in the competition; or the avenues for disgruntled participants to challenge the rulings of the Jury. As will see later, the League also had to contend with the conflict of its mandate as a collective security institution and its role as an entity which depended on raw materials from sanctioned states for the finalization of its own temple of peace. The making of the *Palais*, in sum, was not merely a side quest in European and Global history. It engaged directly, and indirectly, with some of the most pressing questions related to the League's role in the world stage in an era of increasing inter-imperial animosity.

And yet, the process of the erection and consecration of the *Palais*, has not managed to garner the attention of global historians – let alone international legal scholars. Despite the veritable renaissance of literature on the League and its role in the history of international ordering,[19] our understanding of the spaces which claimed the mantle

17 "Letter from the Genevese *Conseil d'Etat* to the Secretary-General," 23 January 1926, in LonA R1540/32/42531/28594/Jacket1, 42. I use the terms "local" and "global" to question them, not to reaffirm them. See L. BENTON, Made in Empire: Finding the History of International Law in Imperial Locations: Introduction, in: *Leiden Journal of International Law*, 31, 3, 2018, pp. 473–478. See also M. HERREN, Geneva, 1919–1945: The Spatialities of Public Internationalism and Global Networks, in: H. JÖNS – P. MEUSBURGER – M. HEFFERNAN, *Mobilities of Knowledge*, Cham 2017, pp. 211–226.

18 I take this notion of the juridification of diplomacy from G. J. SIMPSON, *Law, War and Crime: War Crimes Trials and the Reinvention of International Law*, Cambridge 2007.

19 See, among others, S. PEDERSEN, Back to the League of Nations, in: *The American Historical Review*, 112, 4, 2007, pp. 1091–1117; P. CLAVIN, *Securing the World Economy:*

of the "international" still remains quite shallow.[20] Most accounts of the history and architecture of the organizations have been – masterfully, to be sure – written by scholars within or adjacent to these institutions, producing often celebratory narratives about the "pacific glory" of these sites.[21] Conversely, in my contribution to this collective project on the centenary of the Locarno Treaties and their legacy in relation to collective security in Europe and beyond, I reconstruct a material history of the League's *Palais* in relation to the emergent Fascist threat. Historians and lawyers, by and large, tend to think of the League (and the so-called liberal rules-based international order) as Fascism's radical Other.[22] In my contribution, however, I trace the ways in which the League attempted to accommodate the rapidly changing circumstances of these terrible dec-

The Reinvention of the League of Nations, 1920–1946, Oxford 2015; J. A. TOOZE, *The Deluge: The Great War, America and the Remaking of the Global Order, 1916–1931*, New York 2015; S. PEDERSEN, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire*, Oxford 2017; S. JACKSON – A. O'MALLEY (eds.), *The Institution of International Order: From the League of Nations to the United Nations*, Abingdon 2018; C. N. BILTOFT, *A Violent Peace: Media, Truth, and Power at the League of Nations*, Chicago 2021; O. ALONI, *The League of Nations and the Protection of the Environment*, Cambridge 2021; P. S. MORRIS (ed.), *The League of Nations and the Development of International Law: A New Intellectual History of the Advisory Committee of Jurists*, Abingdon 2021; P. BOURNEUF, *Genève: Berceau de La Société Des Nations*, Geneva 2022; A. SANTOS – Y. SANTOS (eds.), *The League of Nations Experience: Overlapping Readings*, Berlin 2024.

20 D. R. QUIROGA-VILLAMARÍN, 'Suitable Palaces': Navigating Layers of World Ordering at the Centre William Rappard (1923–2013), in: *Architectural Theory Review*, 27, 1, 2023, pp. 19–40.

21 J. PALLAS, *Histoire et architecture du Palais des Nations (1924–2001): l' art déco au service des relations internationales*, Genève 2001; C. COURTIAU (ed.), *XXe: un siècle d'architectures à Genève promenades*, Gollion 2009; J. KUNTZ, *Genève Internationale: 100 Ans d'architecture*, Genève 2017, pp. 62–75; C. COURTIAU, The Palais Des Nations, in: O. HIDALGO-WEBER – B. LESCAZE (eds.), *100 Years of Multilateralism in Geneva: From the LoN to the UN*, Geneva 2020, pp. 344–363.

22 The important and recent work on fascism as an alternative form of internationalism, ratifies, perhaps, this trend. See J. STEFFEK, Fascist Internationalism, in: *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 44, 1, 2015, pp. 3–22; M. HERREN, Fascist Internationalism, in: G. SLUGA – P. CLAVIN (eds.), *Internationalisms*, Cambridge 2016, pp. 191–212; C S. KUNKELER – M. K. HAMRE, Conceptions and Practices of International Fascism in Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands, 1930–40, in: *Journal of Contemporary History*, 57, 1, 2022, pp. 45–67; M. K. HAMRE, 'Nationalists of All Countries, Unite!': Hans Keller and Nazi Internationalism in the 1930s, in: *Contemporary European History*, 33, 2, 2024, pp. 477–496; M. K. HAMRE – S. PROSCHMANN – F. F. ØRSKOV, Editorial Introduction: Approaches to Transnational and International Fascism: Actors, Networks, and Ideas, 1919–1945, in: *Fascism*, 13, 1, 2024, pp. 1–12.

ades, engaging in what I call "Architectural Appeasement." To do so, after this introduction, I focus on debates surrounding (2) the exceptional participation of German architects (in a broader context marked by the so-called "spirit of Locarno") in the League's architectural competition, and (3) the sanctions deployed against Italian raw materials – crucially needed for construction of the *Palais* itself – after the invasion of Ethiopia of 1935. This allows me to (4) conclude with some remarks of the inner life of international institutions – past, present, and future.

The Spirit of Locarno: The German Exception in the Architectural Competition

The *Palais* was but one of the first of a long line of buildings that claim to represent "the international." Think, for instance, of the main Headquarters of the United Nations (UN) in New York City – the institution, and building, created to succeed the League's early Geneva-based experiment.[23] But in all of this occasions, the relationship between the nationality of the architect commissioned (and more broadly, about the organization's staff) came to haunt the internationalist pedigree of the endeavour.[24] For instance, as I have explored with more detail elsewhere in relation to the building of the International Labour Organisation which preceded the *Palais* for a few years, the fact that this competition was only open to Swiss architects raised all sorts of protests from foreign architects.[25] While these concerns were brushed off due to considerations of expediency, when it came to the *Palais*, the League concluded instead that it wanted to hold a public architectural competition that would guarantee a broad and fair participation – in line with its commitment to what was called then "publicity".[26] Indeed, even before the League formally opened the competition on 25 July 1926, questions of fairness

23 See, generally, QUIROGA-VILLAMARÍN, "'Architects of the Better World'; Democracy, Law, and the Construction of International Order (1919-1989)." Chapter V; O. TOULOUMI, *Assembly by Design: The United Nations and Its Global Interior* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2024).

24 K. DYKMANN, How International Was the Secretariat of the League of Nations?, in: *The International History Review*, 37, 4, 2015, pp. 721–44. On the relationship between modern architecture and internationalism, see M. CRINSON, *Rebuilding Babel: Modern Architecture and Internationalism*, London 2017.

25 QUIROGA-VILLAMARÍN, 'Suitable Palaces', p. 24.

26 P. B. POTTER, League Publicity: Cause or Effect of League Failure?, in: *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 2, 3, 1938, pp. 399–412.

and equal participation have long concerned its officials.[27] For example, to avoid "any undue advantage given to competitors in countries near Geneva, the programme [of the competition was] dispatched from Geneva to as to arrive in all countries approximatively the same date".[28]

It would be more precise to write, however, that the programme was dispatched to *member states*, not *all countries*. After all, despite the League's aspirations to become a universal organization, its membership was quite limited – especially in relation to the Great Powers.[29] The same was true for large swathes of the colonized world, although the League did atypically allow for the membership of certain colonial territories.[30] But the biggest challenge the League faced in terms of membership was that of the "American absentee presence at Geneva"[31] – closely followed, perhaps, by that of the German polity.[32]

By 1926, it was clear the US would never join the League. As mentioned above, despite the intimate relationship between the nascent institution and the agenda of Woodrow Wilson, his failure to convince his Republican opponents (especially in the US Senate) to ratify the Covenant entailed that this polity would only be able to peek "through the keyholes" of the structure it had itself created in Europe.[33] In relation to Germany, the hopes of the victors of the Great War – as best expressed in Jan Smuts's ruminations on the League – were this polity would join the institution as soon as she had a "stable democratic Government".[34] An initial bid for German membership in Versailles had been rebuffed – and after the territorial losses of this polity *vis-à-vis* Belgium and Poland around it become difficult "to mention the League in Germany without being laughed at

27 Architectural Competition Press Release, 31 July 1926, in LoNA 1540, p. 1.

28 Draft Letter to the Government of New Zealand, December 1924, in LoNA 1540/32/40855/28594, p. 5.

29 D.R. QUIROGA-VILLAMARÍN, Challenging the Global Herrenhaus: The Unending Quest to Democratize International Relations within, and beyond, the United Nations, in: *University of Vienna Law Review*, forthcoming in 2025.

30 T. GIDNEY, *An International Anomaly: Colonial Accession to the League of Nations*, Cambridge 2025.

31 C. A. BERDAHL, The United States and the League of Nations, in: *Michigan Law Review*, 27, 6, 1929, pp. 607–636, p. 609.

32 W. SCHWARZ, Germany and the League of Nations, in: *International Affairs*, 10, 2, 1931, pp. 107–207.

33 BERDAHL, p. 609.

34 J. SMUTS, The League of Nations: A Practical Suggestion, in: D. HUNTER (ed.), *The Drafting of the Covenant. Vol. Two*, London 1928, pp. 23–60, p. 41.

[… around] 1921 and 1922".[35] But by late 1924, the recently-appointed German Foreign Ministry Gustav Stresemann opted for a new approach towards the normalization of diplomatic relations – and my argument is that the League engaged with these efforts not only in relation to its institutional organs but also the materiality of its building itself.[36]

In that sense, the difference in approach undertaken by League officials between the US and Germany is quite significant. Despite some protests from US architects who tried to brandish their pro-League credentials to be eligible to compete, no exceptions were made.[37] The same severity was applied, of course, to architects from Eastern and Central European empires who had suddenly found themselves stateless in the wake of the Great War.[38] In principle, architects from the defeated German Republic should have received the same treatment. And yet, the League's extensive involvement in certain internationalized or occupied German-speaking territories (with potentially interested architects) already showed that a different approach was needed. In this sense, the potential participation of architects from the occupied Saar district and Free City of Danzig was the first real question the League had to face in this regard.[39] This issue was first raised by the League's High Commissioner at Danzig (the Dutch national Joost van Hamel), which forwarded a written request prepared by the Free City's Senate to the Secretary-General, who in turn presented it before the Council in March 1926.[40] In his missive, the High Commissioner noted that the very fact that the City was under the League's "protection" prevented it from joining the institution. It would

35 SCHWARZ, pp. 197–198.

36 See further Letter from Gustav Stresemann to Eric Drummond, 6 February 1926. US Library of Congress, Control number 2021667902. As consulted on 5 March 2025 at https://www.loc.gov/resource/gdcwdl.wdl_11597/?r=-1.022,0.075,3.045,1.498,0. See further K. H. POHL, *Gustav Stresemann: The Crossover Artist*, New York 2019.

37 Letter to Mr. Onderdonk, 14 January 1925, in: LoNA 1538, p. 1.

38 Report by M. Guani, 28 October 1924, in: LoNA 1537, p. 1.

39 For further context on these rather unusual legal zones, see respectively A. T. PARK, Administering the Administrators: The League of Nations and the Problem of International Territorial Administration in the Saar, 1919–1923, in: *The International History Review*, 44, 3, 2022, pp. 540–558; R. SOMOGYI, Poland and the Local Poles in the Free City of Danzig between the Two World Wars, in: *Acta Humana*, 11, 1, 2023, pp. 77–92.

40 Note du Secrétaire Général, 1 June 1926, in: LoNA 1542/32/504010/28594, p. 50. In this process, the intervention of the High Commissioner on behalf of the protectorate he supervised was crucial. See Extract of a Letter from Dr. Van Hamel to Mr. Colban, 29 March 1926, in: LoNA 1542/32/504010/28594, pp. 93–94.

be difficult to believe, he argued, that the City's status under the League's umbrella denied the subjects of the City "especially placed under its protection" the same rights enjoyed by those of member states.[41] Van Hamel, who also had worked previously in the League's legal section, stressed that the importance of the City's *Technische Hochschule* in his request.[42] Later in July, the League's Council approved a report drafted by the Uruguayan delegate Alberto Guani to permit the exceptional eligibility of architects from these two territories. While "from a strict legal point of view" such architects were technically not eligible to participate, Guani argued that once should take into account their "special situation vis-a-vis the League".[43] Moreover, whereas the US had deliberately decided not to join the League, these two territories (which were regulated by complex international agreements and were not, *per se*, sovereign) never had the opportunity to even rebuff the League itself.

In this regard, their situation was not entirely different from the polity we now call Weimar Germany. As contemporary observers noted, it "is probably true that Germany would have been admitted to the league of Nations at the time of its organization but for French influence".[44] In a memorandum prepared by the Dutch national Adriaan Pelt to his superior, the French national and Under-Secretary-General Joseph Avenol, the former noted that it was difficult to deny that Germany's situation had changed after the Fall of 1924.[45] After years in which this polity had been treated as the pariah of the post-1919 order,[46] Stresemann's efforts would eventually culminate in what we now call the Locarno treaties

41 Ibid, p. 51.

42 Ibid. And as Clark has noted, such German-speaking Polytechnical Institute was a "cultural icon" of the Free City and was later subsidized by the Weimar Republic to project soft power over the territory. See E. M. CLARK, The Free City of Danzig: Borderland, Hansestadt or Social Democracy?, in: *The Polish Review*, 42, 3, 1997, pp. 259–276, p. 265.

43 Report by M. Guani, 15 April 1926, in: LoNA 1542/32/504010/28594, p. 18.

44 C. P. PATTERSON, The Admission of Germany to the League of Nations and Its Probable Significance, in: *The Southwestern Political and Social Science Quarterly*, 7, 3, 1926, pp. 215–237, p. 215.

45 Note pour le Secretaire General Adjoint M. Avenol [from Adriaan Pelt], 16 April 1926, in: LoNA 1542/32/50903/28594, pp. 42–47, p. 44.

46 A feeling that was, in turn, reciprocated by some German scholars. The most famous example, perhaps, is C. SCHMITT, *La question clé de la Société des Nations; Le passage au concept de guerre discriminatoire: deux textes*, Paris 2009; C. SCHMITT, *Positionen und Begriffe: im Kampf mit Weimar – Genf – Versailles, 1923–1939*, Berlin 2014.

of 1925: a series of international agreements that sought to normalize Germany's status in the European continent.[47] Given that the security-related aspects of these treaties are explored with more detail in some of the other contributions to this collective project, I will focus on the way the so-called "spirit of Locarno" and this brief moment of "pactomania" tessellated with the question of the architecture of the *Palais*.[48]

Crucially, the whole architecture of the Locarno deals was tied to Germany's admittance into the League – into having, quite literally, a seat at the table.[49] For Berlin did not want just a basic membership, but it demanded their own seat at the League Council, as was the case for Great Powers. For that reason, when "Berlin […] was finally persuaded to apply for membership in the League, it was with the supposed understanding that such Council membership would be accorded".[50] With this in mind, the League convened a Special Session of its Assembly with the sole purpose of admitting Germany in March 1926. Instead, "it failed to transact its business and rewarded the German delegation […with] ten days of embarrassing but instructive waiting".[51] For Germany's bid for a permanent Council seat were matched (and perhaps raised) by other three polities: Poland, Spain, and Brazil.[52] This triggered a diplomatic and constitutional crisis that delayed Germany's final admission to the League until September 1926.

This explains why Eric Drummond, the League's first Secretary-General, noted in May 1926 that any question of the participation of German architects would be "of some difficulty and it would not be wise […] that the matter should be brought before the Members of the Council

47 W. MACDONALD, The Locarno Agreements, in: *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 126, 1926, pp. 59–61.

48 J. B. DUROSELLE, The Spirit of Locarno: Illusions of Pactomania, in: *Foreign Affairs*, 50, 4, 1972, pp. 752–764.

49 MACDONALD, p. 59. See also O. TOULOUMI, A Seat at the Table: United Nations and the Architecture of Diplomacy, in: *Architectural Theory Review*, 27, 1, 2023, pp. 41–61.

50 D. P. MYERS, Representation in League of Nations Council, in: *American Journal of International Law*, 20, 4, 1926, pp. 689–713, pp. 689–690.

51 B. WILLIAMS, Special Assembly of the League of Nations, in: *American Political Science Review*, 20, 3, 1926, pp. 634–643, p. 634. See generally C. KIMMICH, Germany and the League of Nations, in: *The League of Nations in Retrospect*, Berlin 1983, pp. 118–127.

52 MYERS, p. 690. See further L. V. PÉREZ GIL, El Primer Decenio de España En La Sociedad de Naciones (1919–1929), in: *Anales de La Facultad de Derecho*, 15, 1998, pp. 175–218; C. LEUCHARS, Brazil and the League Council Crisis of 1926, in: *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 12, 4, 2001, pp. 123–142.

without having previous knowledge" of their positions.[53] In particular, Drummond thought it would be entirely "undesirable" for the issue to be "publicly known beforehand that is will be discussed, as the result is still doubtful."[54] Later in June, once he had a better sense of the temperature within the Council, Drummond officially submitted a memorandum in which he expressed his opinion "that the Council might perhaps desire to take account of the special position of German architects" due to its special "position".[55] The rather convoluted phrasing shows how politically sensitive the matter was for everyone involved. One of Drummond's staff members rightly anticipated that his superior wanted to "cut down to an absolute minimum the 'historique' of this question."[56] Ultimately, after a complex process of legal and political negotiation, this specific exception was made by the Council, effectively prefiguring Germany's admission to the that League organ (and with permanent seat, too!) later that year.

Be that as it may, this whole scuffle did not have immediate effects for the League's final building. By 1927, the Jury decided that the architectural competition, just like the Great War that had preceded it, would be one without victors. This body was composed by leading architects from member states, but it was unable to conclusively decide on a single design.[57] After discussing the legal issues raised by this with Drummond, the JOA – under the leadership of its President, the Belgian Victor Horta – decided instead to give nine prizes on equal footing.[58] Out of these finalists, two were submitted by German architects: project 298 as designed by Erich zu Putlitz, Rudolf Klophaus, and August Schoch (from Hamburg) and project 332 by Emil Fahrenkamp and Albert Deneke (from Dusseldorf).[59] In the complicated process of selection that followed after

53 Note by the Secretary General, 14 May 1926, in: LoNA 1542/32/504010/28594, p. 36.
54 Ibid.
55 Memorandum by the Secretary-General on the Admission of German Architects to the Competition for the Erection of a League of Nations Building, C.310.1926. 7 June 1926, in: LoNA 1542/32/50903/28594, pp. 14–15, p. 14.
56 Letter to Pelt, 4 May 1926, in: LoNA 1542/32/50903/28594, p. 30.
57 It also included the Austrian Josef Hoffmann. I've explored elsewhere with more detail the legal and political debates surrounding the composition of the Jury. See QUIROGA-VILLAMARÍN, 'Architects of the Better World', Chapter IV.
58 Report of the Jury — Architectural Competition for the Erection of League of Nations Building at Geneva, 5 May 1927, in: LoNA 1544/59230/28594, pp. 2–5, p. 4.
59 Ibid., p. 4. In German, see further S. VON MOOS, 'Kasino Der Nationen': Zur Architektur Des Völkerbundspalasts in Genf, in: *Werk-Archithese*, 65, November 1,

the debacle of the competition, neither of these projects were considered for the next round of the selection process. And perhaps luckily so, as both zu Putlitz and Fahrenkamp went onwards to work (even if uneasily) in Nazi Germany's architectural establishment – and in the staging of the 1936 Olympics in particular.[60]

The League also shunned those architects that were aligned with the emerging "modern movement". This included, very famously, project 273 as designed by the then-Swiss "starchitect" le Corbusier (in tandem with his cousin Pierre Jeanneret). But it also included project 152, which was nonetheless given an honourable mention. This latter was prepared by Hans Wittwer and Hannes Meyer. The later would later come to serve as the second Director of the famous *Bauhaus* school in Dessau in 1928–1930.[61]

Instead, after a long period of indecision, the League concluded that "the plan which, in its opinion, was most nearly satisfactory from the practical and aesthetic points of view, was that bearing no. 387, submitted to the competition jointly by [the French Henri Paul] Nenot [… and the Swiss Julien] Flegenheimer".[62] The League, moreover, invited Nenot and Flegenheimer to revise their proposal in conjunction with other first prize laureates: Carlo Broggi (Italy), Camille Lefèvre (France), and Giuseppe Vago (Italy) – a sort of architectural *entente*.[63] Ultimately, no German architect – neither of those who went on to have important careers in the modernist Left (like Meyer) or the Nazi right (like Fahrenkamp) – had a say in the design of the *Palais*.[64] But the League's efforts to accommodate

1978, pp. 32–36; W. OECHSLIN (ed.), *Das Wettbewerbsprojekt Für Den Völkerbundpalast in Genf 1927*, Zürich 1988.

60 P. JELAVICH, Review Article: National Socialism, Art and Power in the 1930s, in: *Past & Present*, 164, 1999, pp. 244–265, p. 254. See further T. FRIEDRICH, *Hitler's Berlin: Abused City*, New Haven 2016, p. 416 (in relation to Fahrenkamp's troubled relationship with the *Reich* and his posterior de-Nazification trial).

61 E. KASA, Tropes in Meyer and Wittwer's Project for the League of Nations, in: *Nordic Journal of Architectural Research*, 1, 2023, pp. 17–46.

62 Report submitted to the Assembly by the Special Committee, 26 September 1928 in: LoNA R3443/18B/7242/441, pp. 6–9.

63 The latter was original of Hungarian origin and had only changed his name in 1920 from József Vágó. See further A. LAMBRICHS, *József Vágó, 1877–1947: un architecte hongrois dans la tourmente européenne*, Bruxelles 2003).

64 Mayer, to be sure, was originally from Basel (Switzerland). He belonged, through his connections to the *Bauhaus*, in the constellation of Weimar Germany's avant-garde leftist architecture scene.

Weimar Germany in line with the spirit of Locarno only anticipated posterior efforts in relation to Italian architects and raw materials in the terrible thirties. To this we turn now.

Don't Sanction Yourself: Italian Marble and the Erection of the *Palais*

"The day of misfortune has occurred. The day has dawned when the great pacts which are the guardians of world peace have been violated."[65] In this manner, the Ethiopian delegation concluded one of the many missives it sent the League of Nations – this one, was transmitted by the Secretary-General to all Council members. The context of this speech was the Italian invasion of the former polity – an act of brazen aggression that was recognized as such by a unanimous vote of the League Council.[66] The League, already diminished by the Japanese invasion of Manchuria some years before, rightly understood that this conflict would constitute the litmus test for the future of the organization.[67] As the Fascist troops poured into his country and used all sorts of prohibited weaponry against his forces and civilians, Haile Selassie I – the last emperor of Ethiopia – would himself go to plead before the League in Geneva.[68] With good cause he could claim, years later, that the start of WWII could be dated back to 1935 with the Italian invasion of another League member as much as it could be 1939 in relation to the last partition of Poland between Germany and the Soviet Union.[69] Ultimately, both him and the League were unable to save his country, but his *cri de cœur* in Geneva did garner international attention – earning him the cover of *Time Magazine* on 6 January 1936.[70]

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65 "Communication from the Ethiopian Government, Note by the Secretary General," C.477.M.234.1935.VII, 2 November 1935 in LoNA R3671-1-20692-20692. 50-53. 53.

66 For a collection of the most important documents, see Report of the Council of the League of Nations – The Italo-Ethiopian Dispute, in: *American Journal of International Law*, 30, S1, 1936, pp. 1–26.

67 R. HOFMANN, Imperial Links: The Italian-Ethiopian War and Japanese New Order Thinking, 1935–6, in: *Journal of Contemporary History*, 50, 2, 2015, pp. 215–233.

68 D. R. QUIROGA-VILLAMARÍN, A White Knight in Shining Armour? Ethiopia, International Organisations, and the Global Colour Line, in: D. R. QUIROGA-VILLAMARÍN – N. MANSOURI (eds.), *Ways of Seeing International Organisations: New Perspectives for International Institutional Law*, Cambridge 2025.

69 Of course, from an Asian perspective, these two dates seem rather late. See M. BARNHART, The Origins of the Second World War in Asia and the Pacific: Synthesis Impossible?, in: *Diplomatic History*, 20, 2, 1996, pp. 241–260.

70 A. SBACCHI, Haile Selassie and the Italians 1941–1943, in: *African Studies Review*, 22, 1, 1979, pp. 25–42, p. 27.

By 1935, it was not clear to contemporaries that Manchuria and Ethiopia (and later, of course, the outbreak of the Spanish Civil war) were but watering stations in a long march towards WWII – even if, of course, the writing already started to appear on the walls. And for that reason, the League adopted a series of measures that attempted to protect Ethiopia and uphold the project of a liberal and multilateral international order. Even if the League failed on both counts, the manner the institution (and certain member states) attempted rally around its values can and should be productively studied – if anything, because they might teach us important lessons in our own times of sanctions and trade wars. Ultimately, historians have largely concluded that the League (and the British leadership, in particular) created "the worst of all words": they failed to save Ethiopia while at the same time alienating Mussolini, pushing Italy into alignment with Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan.[71] The sanctions, ironically, led Italian civilians to – by and large – rally behind their leader's colonial adventure, as they held the international community had turned against them.[72] But at that time, the League adopted a rather serious package of sanctions and other measures that highlighted that, at least for a small window of time, it seriously threw its weight behind the Ethiopian cause.

And rightly so! As the Ethiopian missive quoted above noted, Africa's last independent polity had relied "upon the guarantee of collective security embodied in the Covenant" and has "neither arsenals nor arms and munition".[73] And even if it did have some defensive capabilities, these paled in comparison to those of the Italian Kingdom – which had, after all, being counted among the victors of the previous Great War. As a result, the "unjust war imposed upon Ethiopia for the defence of her very existence is a most unequal struggle".[74] In a way, the measures undertaken by the League did not soften, but rather exacerbate this inequality of arms. For the tools chosen by the League were economic sanctions: what

71 G. B. STRANG, 'The Worst of All Worlds:' Oil Sanctions and Italy's Invasion of Abyssinia, 1935–1936, in: *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 19, 2, 2008, pp. 210–235, p. 228.

72 Ibid.

73 Communication from the Ethiopian Government, Note by the Secretary General, p. 51. The other remaining independent African polity was, of course, Liberia. But given that it was historically linked to the US abolitionism, I see an added value in distinguishing Ethiopia as the Continent's sole purely indigenous polity by 1935.

74 Ibid.

Mulder has rightly called the "Economic Weapon".[75] But these measures have to be understood in the context of a preexisting global economy to which Italy already better integrated than Ethiopia.[76] Also, while these measures were mandated by the League and compliance was expected by its membership, they were not opposable to third parties (such as the US) under international law – and, in particular, rules related to belligerent neutrality. Without United States participation in the system, it was clear to all that Italy could easily recoup some of its losses by augmenting its trade with the North American giant – to the detriment of former trade partners in Europe that complied with the sanctions mandate.[77] Moreover, because of previous experience with protectionist tariffs adopted in the wake of the Great Depression, Italy also had a quite sophisticated apparatus to retaliate against sanctioning states.[78]

Be that as it may, the League Council rapidly adopted four important measures on 7 October 1935 – which were ratified by the League Assembly three days later.[79] In the light of article 16 of the Covenant, the League adopted five proposals – and in a later session in November, modified and considering expanding them.[80] And this "economic siege" lasted until 15 July 1936. By then, Ethiopia had been effectively occupied (even if resistance fighting continued until the end of WWII) and Italy had clearly shunned the multilateral and liberal international order. Infamously, it would leave the League on 11 December 1937.

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75 N. MULDER, *The Economic Weapon: The Rise of Sanctions as a Tool of Modern War*, New Haven 2022. In relation to Ethiopia, see R. PANKHURST, The Italo-Ethiopian War and League of Nations Sanctions, 1935–1936, in: *Genève-Afrique*, 13, 2, 1974, pp. 5–29.

76 G. W. BAER, Sanctions and Security: The League of Nations and the Italian-Ethiopian War, 1935–1936, in: *International Organization*, 27, 2, 1973, pp. 165–179.

77 And for that reason, the US's position was carefully studied throughout the process. See Information concerning U.S.A. – Coordination of Measures under Article 16 of the Covenant, 31 October 1935, in: LoNA R3668-1-20311-20311-J1. 111-113.

78 W. G. WELK, League Sanctions and Foreign Trade Restrictions in Italy, in: *The American Economic Review*, 27, 1, 1937, pp. 96–107.

79 Dispute between Ethiopia and Italy: Co-ordination of Measures under Article 16 of the Covenant – Principal Documents of the First Session (October 11th–19th, 1935), 24 October 1935, in: LoNA R3668-1-20311-20311-J1, pp. 131–142.

80 Dispute between Ethiopia and Italy: Co-ordination of Measures under Article 16 of the Covenant – Proposals and Resolutions adopted during the Second Session (October 31st–November 6th, 1935), 7 November 1935, in: LoNA R3668-1-20311-20311-J2, pp. 67–70.

The first of these measures, entitled proposal I, banned all export or arms, munitions, and implements of war to *both* countries.[81] It also called upon all members of the League to "take such steps as to secure that [such items] exported to countries other than Italy will not be re-exported directly or indirectly to Italy or Italian [colonial] possessions".[82] While well-intended in theory, in practice it reinforced the existing inequality of arms between one of Europe's leading colonial powers and Africa's last independent kingdom. Proposal II, conversely, was only directed to Italy.[83] Pursuant to it, member states had to undertake a series of financial measures intended to cut all monetary ties to Italy. Under the terms of Proposal III, League members also had to prohibit the importation of all goods (with the exception of gold and silver) "cosigned from or grown, produced or manufactured in Italy or Italian possessions, from whatever place arriving[84]. This, of course, raised all sorts of legal questions – and for that reason, the League tasked its legal Sub-Committee with the task of drafting a report on the relationship between these sanctions and existing international obligations, such those derived from private contracts, commercial treaties, and treaties of friendship and non-aggression.[85] Proposal V imposed a strict embargo on certain exports to Italy, which included transport animals, rubber, and all sorts of minerals and metals.[86] Finally, pursuant to Proposal VI, the League also called for mutual support amongst sanctioning member states – for the severance of trade relationships would, naturally, not only hurt the Italian economy but also that of its former trading partners.[87]

These measures came into effect on 18 November 1936 – and suddenly, 51 countries collectively decided to cease key trading relations with the Kingdom of Italy. Amongst "member states, there were only three real abstentions, Austria, Hungary, and Albania, though Switzerland, Paraguay and Nicaragua had announced reservations".[88] In fact, even if it

81 Dispute between Ethiopia and Italy: Principal Documents of the First Session, p. 135.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid., p. 136.
84 Ibid., p. 137. This also included goods that acquired at least 25% of their value within Italian territory or possessions but excluded the personal belongings of Italian travellers.
85 Ibid., Annex I at pp. 140–141.
86 Ibid., p. 138.
87 Ibid., p. 139.
88 A. NEVINS, A Way Out for Italy, in: *Current History (1916–1940)*, 43, 4, 1936, pp. 390–395, p. 392.

served as the host state of the League, Switzerland raised serious concerns about its "unique" and special position as a historically neutral state in relation to some of the sanctions imposed.[89] When called into account before the Council, the Catholic Conservative delegate Giuseppe Motta explained that Swiss solidarity "with the League was complete" and had taken a series of surrogate measures that attempted to comply with the multilateral regulations "while avoiding losses incompatible with Switzerland [legal] position" – especially in relation to the embargo of Italian goods.[90] His French colleague noted without any sympathy that his people "were preparing to make extremely heavy sacrifices, which would involve the complete stoppage of Italian imports into their countries and in all probability the complete cessation of their exports".[91] The South African delegate, in turn, noted that rightly "or wrongly, the impression had got abroad, in the streets of Cape Town or in the streets of London, that the Swiss attitude in this matter had been obstructive" of the League's collective efforts.[92]

These concerns were not without merit. One might wonder how the League could claim to impose sanctions for the sake of global collective security if it did not manage to impose them of its very host state. Peace begins at home, after all! And at home, things were not going quite well. For the League's own *Palais* required the continuous import of Italian goods – and marble, in particular. As Martini has shown,[93] the Italian architect Carlo Broggi (in his capacity as one of the five architects selected for the final design and execution of the *Palais* in the wake of the catastrophic competition reviewed above) served as bridgehead for the penetration of Fascist aesthetics into League's inner sanctum.[94] In particular, his close relationship with the artist Antonio Mariani

89 Examination of Special Cases mentioned in the Replies of Governments to the Proposals of the Co-ordination Committee (continuation) – Switzerland, Co-ord/com. XVII/2nd Session/P.V.4, 2 November 1935, in: LoNA R3665-1-20306-20307, pp. 184–191, p. 189.

90 Ibid.

91 Ibid., p. 190.

92 Ibid.

93 F. MARTINI, Losing Gilding and Memory: On the Nature of Some Dissimulated Gifts to the Palais Des Nations in Geneva (1930–1971), in: P. KÖHLE – N. VERMOT-PETIT-OUTHENIN (eds.), *At Your Earliest Convenience Institutional Memory: Politics of the Gift at the Palais Des Nations*, Zurich 2023, pp. 121–137.

94 Ibid., pp. 130–132. Of course, he was not the only one! See QUIROGA-VILLAMARÍN, Within International Law's Sistine Chapel.

effectively allowed the latter to work as a Mussolini's trojan house within the League's site – their correspondence, as Martini noted, "keeps track of the meticulously planning put in place by Broggi and Mariani to ensure Italy's place in the architecture of the" *Palais des Nations*.[95] His *pièce de résistance* was meant to be a tripartite marble sculpture *bas-relief*, which would be dedicated to *libertas* and *universitas*. At the end, the project —just like the correspondence between Broggi and Mariani came to an abrupt halt after the Italian war of aggression in 1936.[96] But Mariani had the last laugh, as because of his lingering influence the League continued to be dependent on Italian marble for the erection of its *Palais* – and, as such, it is "unclear whether, despite the [sanctioning] embargo, some Brescia marbles still discreetly delivered to Geneva".[97]

In sum, the League sanctions proved to be not only too weak to curtail Italian aggression, but they were even left without effect in relation to the institution's everyday operations themselves. In its second session of November 1936, the League's sanctions committee evaluated the possibility of adding oil into the list of sanctioned products – providing, since then, a fertile ground for scholars to speculate on whether this measure would have, in fact, made any difference for the terrible war of aggression that was being waged in the Horn of Africa. For my purposes, it suffices to note that even the very material blocks of marble with which the League fashioned a shell for itself,[98] and its cause of peace ended up, ironically enough, fuelling the very concrete international conflict it sought to prevent. As it often happens, the temples of peace are erected upon the spoils of war.[99]

Concluding Remarks: The Keystone of Europe

Our multilateral and liberal international order – also sometimes described as "rules-based" – has been traditionally understood by scholars as Fascism's radical Other. This is, after all, the founding myth behind the creation of the UN. Didn't we learn, after the scourge of two great

95 MARTINI, p. 131.
96 Ibid., p. 132.
97 Ibid.
98 To use Walter Benjamin's definition. See W. BENJAMIN, *The Arcades Project*, Cambridge 1999, p. 221. See further D. R. QUIROGA-VILLAMARÍN, *Endroits* of Planetary Ordering: Violence, Law, Space, & Capital in the Diplomatic History of 19 th Century Europe, in: *German Law Journal*, 24, 7, 2023, pp. 1169–1183.
99 QUIROGA-VILLAMARÍN, 'Suitable Palaces.'

wars, that the only way to prevent the return of a third one was to closer ranks and cooperate to prevent the return of nationalism and militarism? In these tense and difficult times, so far from the brief window of Great Power cooperation upon which the UN's constitutional architecture was erected,[100] it makes sense to "hold fast" to this promise.[101]

But a closer look into the everyday operations of liberational international institutions, I argue, complicates this rather lofty narrative.[102] As I have shown in relation to the League in this article, in its quotidian operations this institution actively engaged – rightly or wrongly – with the emerging Fascist threat that was already haunting Europe and that would eventually bring the League's international security architecture crashing into the ground. This is true, I have argued, even in relation to the League's very material site of dwelling: the *Palais des Nations*. And in these efforts to engage in what I have called "architectural appeasement," the League's borders *vis-à-vis* Fascists actors and ideas seem rather porous. In this light, the institution does not appear necessarily as a radical other of the international far-right, but in many ways as a resource, or at least as a fellow traveller, to certain of its projects. For many years, a proud member of the League's Building Committee was the Fascist Marquis de Calboli – who had arrived at Geneva after serving for 4 years as Mussolini's *Chef de Cabinet*.[103] A more infamous example was that of Joseph Avenol, long accused of "betraying" the League "from within" in light of his posterior Vichy sympathies.[104] And, as I have shown with more detail elsewhere, a similar story can be told of the complex relationship between the League Council's artwork and the Francoist allegiance of its painter José María Sert y Badia in the wake of the Spanish Civil War.[105]

In these concluding remarks, I am but scratching the surface of a deeper history of fascist entanglement with the inner life of the League. In fact,

100 A. PETERS, The Russian Invasion of Ukraine: An Anti-Constitutional Moment in International Law?, in: *Ruch Prawniczy, Ekonomiczny i Socjologiczny*, 86, 2, 2024, pp. 5–36.

101 D. R. QUIROGA-VILLAMARÍN, 'Holding Fast to the Heritage of Freedom': The Grotian Moment(s) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Early United Nations (1941–1949), in: *Grotiana*, 44, 1, 2023, pp. 94–115.

102 QUIROGA-VILLAMARÍN, Placeholders: An Archival Journey into the Interim Histories of International Organisations.

103 E. TOLLARDO, International Experts or Fascist Envoys? Alberto Theodoli and Pietro Stoppani at the League of Nations, in: *New Global Studies*, 10, 3, 2016, pp. 283–306.

104 To paraphrase J. BARROS, *Betrayal from within; Joseph Avenol, Secretary-General of the League of Nations, 1933–1940*, New Haven 1969.

105 QUIROGA-VILLAMARÍN, Within International Law's Sistine Chapel.

it is rather remarkable that, despite their parallel renaissance, there has been relatively little cross-fertilization between the explosion of literature on fascist internationalism[106] and that on liberal international institutions.[107] My working hypothesis, which I hope others will help me test, is that there is much more to be learned about the ways in which these two seemingly contradictory projects tessellated throughout the twentieth century, both within and beyond the League. The UN and its vast "family" of organizations, in this sense, remains relatively unexplored in this regard. And yet, one only needs to scratch the surface to find that one of the holders of its highest office – that of the institution's Secretary-General – was himself at the centre of accusations of Nazi infiltration deep within the "glass palace" of the liberal international order.[108] One, moreover, that came from the polity that Zweig (as noted in the epigraph), serves for better or worse as a keystone in European History.[109] Given that in our own days we increasingly have found ourselves using the present tense to describe the role of Fascist actors in the international order, much has to be learned for the future from a more deep engagement with the past ways in which the black- and brownshirts have crept deep into the temples of liberal peace. Hopefully, we have now learned that little can be gained through appeasement – architectural, or otherwise.

106 STEFFEK, Fascist Internationalism; HERREN, Fascist Internationalism; KUNKELER – HAMRE, Conceptions and Practices of International Fascism in Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands, 1930–40; HAMRE, 'Nationalists of All Countries, Unite!'; HAMRE – PROSCHMANN – ØRSKOV, Editorial Introduction.

107 PEDERSEN, Back to the League of Nations; CLAVIN, *Securing the World Economy*; TOOZE, *The Deluge*; Pedersen, *The Guardians*; JACKSON – O'MALLEY, *The Institution of International Order*; BILTOFT, *A Violent Peace*; ALONI, *The League of Nations and the Protection of the Environment*; MORRIS, *The League of Nations and the Development of International Law*; BOURNEUF, *Genève: Berceau de La Société Des Nations*; SANTOS – SANTOS, *The League of Nations Experience*; QUIROGA-VILLAMARÍN, Placeholders: An Archival Journey into the Interim Histories of International Organisations.

108 K. J. KILLE, Kurt Waldheim, 1972–1981, in: M. FRÖHLICH – A. WILLIAMS (eds.), *The UN Secretary-General and the Security Council: A Dynamic Relationship*, Oxford 2018, pp. 94–115. In German, see G. BAUER, Der Unterschätzte Generalsekretär: Zur Amtszeit Kurt Waldheims (1972–1981), in: *Vereinte Nationen: German Review on the United Nations*, 30, 1, 1982, pp. 1–5. In his own words, see K. WALDHEIM, *Im Glaspalast Der Weltpolitik*, Düsseldorf 1985.

109 ZWEIG, pp. 427–428.

The USSR and the Possibility of Extending the Locarno Pact in Southeast Europe (1924–1927)

Aleksandar Životić[1]

The emergence of the idea of an arbitration agreement and a guarantee pact between the Balkan countries was initially connected on the Soviet side with the desire of the Greek government to find a replacement for the treaty of alliance with Yugoslavia denounced in 1924. Great Britain supported the proposal, but France opposed it. Neither Yugoslavia nor Bulgaria supported the proposal. Soviet diplomacy actively followed the new changes in the Balkans, believing that it was about the division of interest zones between Italy as a British ally and France in the Balkans itself. The rapid collapse of Soviet policy in Albania resulted in a Soviet initiative in 1926 related to the attempt to establish diplomatic relations with the Balkan countries. France strongly opposed this, preventing the establishment of Soviet influence in the Balkans. With the institutionalization of the Italian presence in Albania in 1926/27. through the Tirana Pacts, it brought Yugoslavia closer to Greece and France and distanced the Soviet Union from the Balkans.

[Soviet Union; Balkans; Locarno; Yugoslavia; Bulgaria; Greece; Turkey]

Introduction

The agreements of the former victors, the Entente powers, with the defeated Germany in Locarno in October 1925 had a significant impact on the development of international relations in Europe in the following decade, until Hitler's rejection in 1936. The fact that it was impossible to continue the Versailles policy towards Germany became obvious in the form in which it was formulated after the virtual failure of 1919. The Franco-Belgian attempt to force Germany to pay reparations by occupying the Ruhr area (1923). The steps that followed – the Dawes Plan (the "bankers plan") and the agreement of Paris and Brussels to withdraw their troops from the Ruhr in exchange for guarantees of their borders with Germany – created the conditions for the expansion of the Weimar

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Republic's participation in European political life. Such a turn of events could not have gone unnoticed by the USSR, for which Germany was the only political partner in Europe after Rapallo, except for Lithuania. The reaction of the USSR to Europe's turning to Locarno as an independent topic in contemporary Russian historiography has not been particularly discussed, although it is inevitably touched upon by authors of works on the relations of the Soviet Union with France, England, Germany and Poland in 1925. Traditionally, Soviet historians considered the "Balkan Locarno" to be a means of English diplomacy for "creating an anti-Soviet union in the Balkans and at the same time expelling French influence from there".[2] In modern Russian historiography, differences in the variations of the "Balkan Pact" are emphasized and it is recognized that behind the general name there were different plans, often competing with each other.[3] Recognizing this fact and referring to materials from the former Soviet archives allows us to shed more light on the history of the "Balkan Locarno" project in the second half of the 1920s and to follow the course of the struggle that took place around its implementation.

The end of the First World War, the disappearance of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires and the creation of a series of nation-states changed the geopolitical picture of the Balkans in a drastic way. In particular, the emergence of the Yugoslav state as a supranational state of the South Slavs changed the Balkan geopolitical colour, giving it new foreign policy impulses. The first days of the existence of the Yugoslav kingdom also brought with them a series of spatial and geopolitical challenges. On the global level, it was the most loyal and reliable French ally in the Balkans. British distancing from the Balkans and the American withdrawal from Europe deprived it of valuable allied support, while the disappearance of Tsarist Russia and the emergence of Soviet Russia, with which it had no relations, represented the strongest blow to the Yugoslav state. Deprived of Russian support, and in the projection of the great powers situated as one of a series of countries that acted as a barrier to the spread of Bolshevism in Europe, the Yugoslav kingdom was made particularly vulnerable. At the same time, its central position in the Balkans and

2 С. НИКОНОВА, Англия и Балканский блок (1924–1927 гг.), in: *Империализм и борьба рабочего класса. Сборник статей памяти академика Федора Ароновича Ротштейна, Москва*, 1960, p. 405.

3 О. ИСАЕВА, «Балканское Локарно» и «Балканский союз» – две модели региональной безопасности, in: *Новая и новейшая история. Межвузовский сборник*, 17, 1998, p. 204.

control over the transport hubs of the European southeast made it a kind of point of resistance to the spread of German influence towards the south and east of Europe. The pronounced aspirations of Hungary and Austria for re-claiming power gave Yugoslavia a special geopolitical significance. With the support of France, through a system of bilateral relations with Czechoslovakia and Romania, the newly created Yugoslav state became a barrier to the restoration of the Habsburg monarchy. The Little Entente, conceived in this way, also meant for Yugoslavia a strong allied support in France, Romania and Czechoslovakia. However, the greatest challenge and the most pronounced danger was posed by Italy. Its efforts to gain a firm foothold on Balkan soil through Dalmatia and secure a secure Adriatic hinterland while keeping Yugoslavia away from the sea produced a series of tensions in relations between the two countries. A special area in which the Yugoslav-Italian rivalry was manifested was Albania. The struggle for influence in that country was more than a struggle for political primacy. For Italy, it was a space through which it could practically step onto the Balkan mainland and, by simultaneous pressure in the north and south, as well as absolute control of both sides of Otranto, make the Adriatic its own gulf, and make Yugoslav access to the sea meaningless. The conflict with Italy ended with the establishment of the border line, the achievement of an interstate agreement, and a temporary Yugoslav victory by bringing its favourite Ahmed Bey Zogu to the Albanian throne. In the east, Bulgarian dissatisfaction and discontent with the provisions of the peace treaty in Neuilly-sur-Seine brought constant instability to the almost thousand-kilometre-long border. Temporary attempts at appeasement and finding a solution did not bear fruit, so that until the mid-1930s, this issue, along with the ever-threatening Italian problem, represented the greatest Yugoslav security risk. The southern and most reliable neighbour, Greece, which represented a source of additional strategic capacity for Yugoslavia and an alternative Yugoslav outlet to the Mediterranean and the world's seas, found itself in a difficult situation due to the conflict with Greece and minor interstate misunderstandings, which further complicated Yugoslavia's strategic position in Europe and the Balkans. In contrast, Greece, squeezed between Bulgaria and Turkey, found its natural ally in the Yugoslav kingdom.

Soviets and Locarno

Official Moscow, burdened by the fear of "the existence of a solid anti-Soviet front", considered that a block of imperialist countries was

created in Locarno, which "directed its spear towards the USSR". Back in the period of preparation for the Locarno conference, Soviet diplomacy tried to thwart the Locarno agreement, prevent the rapprochement of Germany and Western countries, and counter the eventual weakening of Soviet-German relations. On the Soviet side, the preservation of existing tensions was considered desirable. In his speech at the Third Congress of Soviets in May 1925, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs Chicherin warned Germany that its rapprochement with the Western countries on the Soviet side would be perceived as joining the anti-Soviet front and, accordingly, would produce negative consequences for German-Soviet relations.[4] A series of Chicherin's articles in the newspaper "Izvestiya", mostly unsigned or under the pseudonym "Informed", contained a sharp criticism of British European policy with the obligatory emphasis on its anti-Soviet orientation. He pointed out that Great Britain is trying to use Germany as an anti-Soviet tool. Also, he tried to influence Poland so that it would direct its policy against Locarno by emphasizing "the treacherous policy of Great Britain against Poland". He insisted on the position that Great Britain intended to compensate for the separation of Germany from the SSR to the detriment of Poland. Nevertheless, the agreement in Locarno encouraged Soviet diplomacy to conclude that overcoming international isolation and turning the Soviet Union into a credible partner of European countries can only be achieved if there is at least a temporary abandonment of the ideology of world revolution and interference in the internal affairs of other countries.

Immediately after the Locarno conference and before the publication of its decisions, the Soviet officialdom came out with its comments. Izvestia's position was unambiguous: England had implemented its point of view on all issues, including tying Germany to itself and creating tense relations between it and the USSR. Three days later, "Izvestiya" supplemented its assessment with the statement: "Locarno has shown that a new grouping of international forces is emerging." Pravda also negatively assessed the agreements as a whole and their consequences for Soviet-German relations: "Locarno means Germany's voluntary capitulation to England […] Locarno does not mean the formal destruction of Rapallo, but a path along which it will hardly be possible to continue the policy of Rapallo […] From the point of view of world politics, Locarno means, first of all,

4 III Всесоюзный Съезд Советов. Речь наркома по иностранным делам. тов. Г. В. Чичерина, in: *Известия*, 110, 16 May 1925.

Germany's subordination to England, not only in relation to the USSR, but also in relation to the Near and Far East and in relation to France. England will be the regulator of Franco-German relations, […] it will vigilantly monitor to prevent Franco-German rapprochement, which could become the beginning of a continental bloc against England."[5] As is known, the USSR attached exceptional importance to the clarity and certainty of formulations. Most likely, at that time there was no single point of view regarding the stage of the process of changing the balance of power in the international arena.

In this sense, Locarno signifies the beginning of the complete liquidation of French hegemony in bourgeois Europe. No matter how one approaches the assessment of Locarno, it is a "major victory for England, covered by the banner of pacifism, but rich in the seeds of future conflicts". This third appeal of the Soviet officialdom to various aspects of the Locarno process ended with an editorial in Pravda on October 24. Without going into details and arguments, the newspaper stated: "[…] the edge of the Locarno Treaty is directed against the USSR […] The father of the guarantee treaty is England, which acts in the most hostile manner against the USSR. England's main concern is to prevent a German-Soviet rapprochement. It is enough to know this to understand that, acting as a defender of the German borders, England cannot help but pursue a policy hostile to the USSR, cannot help but try to subordinate Germany to its influence, cannot help but demand an anti-Soviet turn in German policy in exchange for its patronage […] Germany was weak as a friend, but it would not have become strong just because, following the English example, it would have bared its teeth at the USSR. It would have paid for its hostile policy against the USSR differently than England, and not only on the territory of the USSR, but also throughout the East, without whose markets there can be no talk of restoring German industry."[6] It is important that this assessment does not contain any direct reproaches against Germany, although until recently the Soviet officialdom was not very kind to it. And this could only mean one thing: the USSR accepted the reformatting of the European political scene that took place in Locarno as a reality and began to develop relations with Germany under the new conditions.

5 К. РАДЕК, Международное обозрение, in: *Известия*, 117, 24 May 1925.
6 Локарнские договоры, in: *Известия*, 241, 21 October 1925.

In November and early December 1925, "Izvestiya" and "Pravda" devoted several more editorials to Locarno, including in connection with the final signing of the Locarno agreement package in London on December 1. But no new arguments against Locarno appeared, and the level of emotion had significantly decreased compared to the end of June and the beginning of October. The official Soviet assessment of Locarno was publicly formulated in the political report of the Central Committee of the RCP(b) to the XIV Party Congress on December 18. The speaker, I. V. Stalin, did not deviate from the official assessments, thereby indirectly confirming that the newspaper comments on the Locarno process were not the personal opinions of their authors. He emphasized that Locarno "is only a continuation of Versailles, and its only goal can be to preserve the 'status quo' […] by virtue of which Germany is a defeated country, and the Entente is the winner. The Locarno Conference will legally consolidate this order". Stalin expressed his firm conviction that "growing and advancing" Germany would never reconcile itself to its oppressed position, that the Versailles Treaty and Locarno "will share the fate of the old Franco-Prussian Treaty, which tore away […] Alsace-Lorraine from France". He several times linked Locarno with the possibility of war in Europe: "if the Dawes Plan is fraught with revolution in Germany, then Locarno is fraught with a new war in Europe," "we think that Locarno is a plan for the alignment of forces for a new war, and not for peace."[7]

The only unexpected moment in Stalin's interpretation of Locarno was that he limited the list of European "points of contradiction" that emerged after the war exclusively to Poland, naming them "Germany's loss of Silesia, the Danzig Corridor and Danzig, Ukraine's loss of Galicia and Western Volhynia, Belarus's loss of its western part, Lithuania's loss of Vilnius, etc.". Several conclusions can be drawn from this. Firstly, the USSR had no intention of continuing to flirt with Poland, at least in the short term, so Poland was presented as a country that had profited from the "carving up" of Europe. Secondly, in addition to Soviet Ukraine and Belarus, Lithuania, but above all Germany, were also named among the victims of this "carving up". It was no accident that Stalin expressed scepticism about the plans of the English Conservatives regarding the

7 Локарно и дело мира, in: *Известия*, 256, 11 November 1925; Локарно и СССР, in: *Известия*, 262, 17 November 1925; Интервью, данное замнаркоминдел тов. Литвиновым представителям иностранной прессы 23 ноября, in: *Известия*, 268, 24 November 1925; Гарантийный договор подписан, in: *Правда*, 275, 2 December 1925; После Локарно, in: *Известия*, 276, 3 December 1925.

use of Germany in the future: "The English Conservatives think of both maintaining the 'status quo' against Germany and using Germany against the Soviet Union. 'Didn't they want too much?'" These subjects were not further developed in the report of the Central Committee of the RCP(b). Thus, the Soviet official newspapers Izvestia and Pravda quite adequately reflected the evolution of Soviet foreign policy in relation to the Locarno process. Having begun with harsh criticism of the idea of a guarantee treaty and Germany's entry into the League of Nations due to fears of losing an ally, at the end of the year they abandoned harsh criticism of it, since Moscow had set a course for the earliest possible conclusion of a new political treaty with Berlin. As for the Locarno agreements, the attitude towards them as an instrument of English domination in Europe remained negative.[8]

Balkan Node

Recognizing this fact and turning to materials from former Soviet archives allows us to shed more light on the history of the "Balkan Locarno" project in the second half of the 1920s and trace the course of the struggle that unfolded around its implementation. The Soviets achieved an extremely significant success in the fight to break through international isolation in 1924. Announced at the end of the previous year, this was followed by international recognition of the Soviet Union by the governments of Great Britain, Italy, and France, which facilitated the Soviet international position, brought it out of a state of international isolation, and brought it into the position of a full-fledged partner in international relations. Regarding the Balkans, the Soviet side suspected the existence of a secret Italian-Yugoslav agreement on the division of spheres of interest in Albania. According to this assumption, Shkodra and the Tarabos fortress fell into the Yugoslav zone of influence, while Italy recognized Kosovo as an integral part of the Yugoslav state. On the other hand, they assumed that Vlora and the coastal area were included in the Italian zone of influence.[9]

In this regard, Soviet diplomacy did not wait long for the reactions of the new Albanian government. Already on July 15, 1924, the Soviet mission in Rome was visited by the Albanian chargé d'affaires there and

8 Г. Ф. МАТВЕЕВ – Е. Ю. МАТВЕЕВА, Локарнский поворот 1925 г. глазами советских газетных комментаторов и политиков, in: *Вестник Московского университета*, 8, 3, 2020, История, pp. 120–121.

9 Положение в Албании, Архив внешней политики Российской федерации (AVPRF), f. 67, o. 3, p. 101, d. 6, l. 5–9.

handed over a letter from his government containing a proposal for the establishment of diplomatic relations between Albania and the Soviet Union. The Soviet envoy in Rome, Yurenyev, proposed that the Albanian proposal be accepted and negotiations begin, which would be conducted in Rome, at the Albanian request.[10] On 18 July 1924, the Collegium of the Soviet People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs took the view that no negotiations should be held since the Soviet Union had no claims on Albania, but that diplomatic relations should simply be established. Soviet diplomacy took the view that Albania could be important for the Soviet Union as a territorial base for strengthening Soviet political action in the Balkans. Although Albania was separated from Bulgaria by Yugoslav territory, from the Soviet point of view it was important as a base for further action in Yugoslavia and for maintaining contact with "political elements close to Radić", as well as for maintaining contact with "national elements in northern Greece". For this reason, it was proposed to establish diplomatic relations with Albania without conducting any further negotiations.[11] Chicherin relied essentially on the opinion of the Soviet representative in Rome, Yurenyev, who believed that Noli's government was unstable because it had not fully mastered the entire state apparatus. In addition, it kept closer to the coast and therefore sought to secure Italian support. He believed that Albania was of "colossal importance" for the USSR due to its geographical position, which allowed for further action in Yugoslavia, Greece and Bulgaria while monitoring Italian action, as well as British, French and American interests directed primarily towards Albanian oil sources. He informed Moscow that Noli's government had been recognized by Italy and France. He proposed the establishment not of formal and legal relations with that country, but of concrete recognition of Noli's government. The proposal of the NKID collegium was accepted by the Soviet Politburo on July 24, 1924, thus creating the necessary conditions for establishing regular diplomatic communication between the two countries.[12]

The situation on the ground quickly escalated. Soviet envoy Krakoviecki arrived in Albania on December 16, 1924. That same evening, the

10 Р. П. ГРИШИНА, *Национальный вопрос на Балканах через призму мировой революции. В документах центральных архивов начала – середины 1920-х годов, II*, Москва 2003, pp. 85–86.

11 Ibid.

12 Письмо К. К. Юренева Г. В. Чичерину, 22 июля 1924 г, AVPRF, f. 4, o. 2, p. 6, d. 110, l. 9–10.

Albanian government decided to receive the Soviet delegation, but the next day British, Italian, and Yugoslav protests followed. At the same time, the Yugoslav military threat in the north had reached "threatening proportions for the Noli government" according to Soviet assessments. Representatives of the British, Yugoslav, and Italian governments stated that if the Soviet delegation remained in Albania, they would consider the intervention of Zogu's forces as an internal matter of Albania and leave them to their own forces, while otherwise Great Britain promised to stop Zogu's intervention through diplomatic channels. Under the influence of the ultimatums, faced with setbacks on the fronts due to a lack of weapons and ammunition, the government, at its session on December 17, decided to ask the Soviet delegation to leave Albania to prevent the further occupation of Albanian territory, which was officially communicated to the Soviet envoy. In the given circumstances, the Soviet envoy decided to leave Albanian territory together with his associates, which he did on December 18, 1924, traveling to Rome, where he arrived on December 21.[13]A few days later, he informed the Soviet NKID in detail about the events in Albania, particularly negatively commenting on the policy of the Yugoslav kingdom towards Albania.[14] Soviet policy in Albania, faced with international ultimatums and unstable internal conditions in that country, burdened by ideological stereotypes and a lack of valid information, experienced a complete collapse. The only thing left for them at that moment was an attempt to organize a wider propaganda campaign among the accessible part of the European public, as well as an effort to have the Italian and French communists speak out against the "disintegration and occupation of the Albanian state territory" in their party publications and in parliaments.[15]

The new Yugoslav government of Ljuba Davidović, in which the foreign policy portfolio was headed by Vojislav Marinković, based its policy towards the Soviets on the principles of international law, emphasizing its readiness to regulate relations with them if the Soviet government harmonized its views with international legal norms and principles. On

[13] Телеграмма полпреда СССР в Албании А. А. Красовецкого, 22 декабря 1924 г, AVPRF, f. 3, o. 64. d. 45, l. 20.

[14] Телеграмма А. А. Красовецкого, М. М. Литвинову, 26 декабря 1924 г, AVPRF, f. 3, o. 64. d. 45, l. 21.

[15] Протокол No 66 заседания Президиума БКФ, 29 декабря 1924 г, Российский государственний архив социально-политической истории (RGASPI), f. 509, o. 1, d. 44a, l. 229–231.

the other hand, Prime Minister Pašić himself rejected any possibility of establishing relations, while the existing order reigned in the Soviet Union. Davidović's government and Minister Marinković repeatedly emphasized their commitment to regulating the disputed issues, but resistance from both sides became stronger, so that in the end the initiative completely died down. At the same time, French diplomacy took the position that Minister Marinković was a supporter of the policy of mutual recognition and the establishment of regular diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, but that neither he nor the Prime Minister, under the existing circumstances, would take the necessary steps in that direction. The new Pašić government, in which Ninčić again headed the foreign policy department, took an openly anti-Soviet and anti-Bolshevik position at the end of 1924. Minister Ninčić himself went a step further, and during a meeting with the British Minister Chamberlain, he confirmed the anti-Bolshevik beliefs of his government, emphasizing that the Yugoslav government was working on creating an anti-Bolshevik front. From the Soviet side, the new Yugoslav commitment to reactivating anti-Soviet and anti-Bolshevik statements was assessed as one of the means of political propaganda in moments of a sharp election campaign. They expected that the anti-Bolshevik campaign would subside after the elections and that the negotiation process would resume after creating a suitable basis for establishing normal relations. For their part, they were ready to begin talks on restoring diplomatic relations, without the intention of interfering in internal affairs.[16]

The Soviet side soon faced reality and acknowledged that "less is known about Albania than about Yugoslavia", and that the interests of Yugoslavia and Greece, the USA and Italy, and that Great Britain and France "are also not sitting idly by". The Soviets were particularly interested in the future of Albanian oil resources. It was concluded that nothing was known about this and that the fate of Albanian oil resources was completely uncertain for the Soviets.[17] Soviet diplomacy took the position that no contacts or negotiations should be established with the government of Ahmed Bey Zog.[18]

16 Письмо заместителя народного коммисара иностранных дел СССР полномочному представителю СССР в Польше П. Л. Войкову 6 марта 1925, in: *Документы внешней политики*, 8, 1963, p. 174.

17 Доклад полпреда СССР Устинова в НКИД, 10 января 1925 г, AVPRF, f. 4, o. 15, p. 103, d. 509, l. 15.

18 Протокол No 12 заседания Балканской комисии, 13 января 1925 г, AVPRF, f. 4, o. 7, p. 61, d. 827, l. 26–27.

The Soviets were particularly concerned about the success of the Yugoslav intervention in Albania, which they argued had broader international implications and was, by its very nature, a defeat for French policy in the Balkans, leading directly to the strengthening of British influence in Belgrade.[19] It was soon noted on the Soviet side that Yugoslav influence in Albania had begun to weaken and that Great Britain, through energetic political and economic action, had almost completely pushed Yugoslavia out of Albania. It was estimated that Italy, which was seeking to strengthen its positions through direct influence with Ahmed Bey Zogu, would take advantage of the weakening of the Yugoslav presence.[20]

The new role of the Soviet Union in international relations, based on distancing itself from Germany, readiness to resolve contentious issues in relations with France, and guarantees that it would not attack Poland and Romania, opened space for new thoughts on establishing diplomatic relations with the Soviets. In this regard, in November 1925, the Yugoslav envoy in Berlin was instructed to establish contacts with the Soviet envoy there, while he personally declared to the Austrian envoy in Belgrade that Soviet Russia was no longer what it had been and that it was now participating in the process of international cooperation. At the end of the year, Minister Ninčić and his French colleague Gröner agreed to establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union so that the Yugoslav envoy in Moscow would be with the French ambassador. Nikola Pašić went so far in his declarative stance as to claim that he almost met with Chicherin while they were both receiving treatment in Czechoslovakia during the summer of 1925. In the end, King Alexander himself gave his consent.[21] King Alexander and Nikola Pašić tried to keep this diplomatic initiative as secret as possible. Rumours were deliberately spread that Pašić was wavering in his intention to approach the Soviets, which was certainly intended to test the reactions of both the domestic public and the interested great powers. Rumours reached the British ambassador in Belgrade that the Yugoslav ambassador in Berlin, Živojin Balugdžić, had been holding talks with the Soviet minister Chicherin, but this news was resolutely denied, and the British ambassador was explained that it was

19 Доклад П. Лапинского в НКИД, 28 января 1925 г, AVPRF, f. 4, o. 9, p. 65, d. 908, l. 14–19.

20 Албания, AVPRF, f. 4, o. 2, p. 7, d. 114, l. 37–47.

21 V. VINAVER, *Jugoslavija i Francuska između dva svetska rata (Da li je Jugoslavija bila francuski „satelit")*, Beograd 1985, p. 84.

an independent move by Balugdžić, and that therefore it should not be given special attention. From a British perspective, an insurmountable obstacle to the establishment of regular relations between the Yugoslav kingdom and the Soviet Union was the activity of many Russian emigrants in Yugoslavia, as well as the unresolved issue of Serbia's debt to Tsarist Russia. The strong Yugoslav action in terms of rapprochement with the Soviets remained out of the sight of the British envoy, who resolutely claimed that no official steps had been taken during 1925 to recognize the Soviet Union, but he noted that there was strong public support for such a diplomatic step.[22] Soviet diplomacy reacted positively to the Yugoslav initiative. The Soviets were ready to begin official talks with Yugoslav emissaries via Berlin or Paris, depending on the wishes of the Yugoslav side.[23] In December 1925, Chicherin discussed the possibility of establishing regular diplomatic communication with the Yugoslav Kingdom with the French Minister of Foreign Affairs Briand in Paris. Chicherin reiterated his earlier position that the issue should be resolved as soon as possible and that he had already discussed it with Minister Ninčić several times, but that there had been no tangible results. He also informed Briand that Yugoslav diplomats were intensively probing the terrain towards the renewal of negotiations. Briand on that occasion firmly advocated mutual recognition of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, promising that he would encourage such efforts in Yugoslavia. He expressed hope that Yugoslav-Soviet relations would be established soon.[24] French diplomacy thus publicly demonstrated its opposition to the British focus on suppressing Yugoslav influence in Albania and distancing the Yugoslav kingdom from the Soviet Union.

At the turn of 1925 and 1926, the Yugoslav government attempted to establish contact with the Soviets through the Turkish Foreign Minister

22 Ž. AVRAMOVSKI, *Britanci o Kraljevini Jugoslaviji 1921–1930. Godišnji izveštaji Britanskog poslanstva u Beogradu 1921–1938, I (1921–1930)*, Zagreb 1986, p. 307.

23 Телеграмма зам. наркома по по иностранным делам СССР М.М. Литвинова полномочному представителю СССР в Италии Керженцеву о готовности СССР вести Королевством СХС о взаимном признании 25 ноября 1925, in: *Советско-югославские отношения 1917–1941*, Москва 1992, p. 179.

24 Из письма наркома по иностранным делам СССР Г. В. Чичерина в НКИД СССР о беседах с председателем совета министров и министром иностранных дел Франции А. Брианом об отношении Кориолевства СХС к СССР 16 декабря 1925, in: *Советско-югославские отношения 1917–1941*, p. 180; A. ŽIVOTIĆ, *Московски гамбит. Југославија, СССР и продор Трећег рајха на Балкан (1938–1941)*, Београд 2020, pp. 89–91.

Aras. For its part, the Soviets were ready to conduct negotiations through representatives in Berlin or Paris in accordance with the wishes of the Yugoslav government. Soviet diplomacy took the position that it would not act on this issue with a request to establish diplomatic relations, but that its actions would be based on the principle of responding to the Yugoslav initiative.[25] Namely, at the end of 1925, steps were taken that were aimed at sounding the ground in order to determine the Soviet position. The Turkish Foreign Minister Aras conveyed to Chicherin a message from King Alexander, Nikola Pašić and Momčilo Ninčić about Yugoslavia's readiness to enter negotiations on the establishment of diplomatic relations through Turkey. The Yugoslav side promised not to take aggressive steps towards the Soviet Union and declared that it was ready to consider the issue of future relations in agreement with the Little Entente allies, and that the format of future relations would be based on a basis similar to the existing Soviet-Turkish treaty.[26] Chicherin immediately replied that the Soviet government was ready to conclude a pact with Yugoslavia, such as it already had with Turkey, on the condition that the treaty must be directly signed by representatives of the two governments. The signing of a mutual treaty and, analogously, mutual recognition, were conditioned by the Soviets on the dissolution of the White Guard military organizations on Yugoslav soil. The problem was the Soviet insistence on open and direct talks, while the Yugoslav government insisted on keeping the negotiations secret until the necessary conditions for their disclosure were created.[27] The negotiations that had begun were quickly interrupted due to the intensified campaign of the Belgrade press against the Soviet Union, which was accused of inciting various political parties and movements to overthrow the existing social order. The Soviet government sharply denied the writings of the Belgrade press, denying any Soviet interference in the internal political life of the Yugoslav

25 Телеграмма заместителя народного комиссара иностранных дел М. М. Литвинова полномочному представителю в Италии П.М. Керженцеву 25 ноября 1925 г, in: *Македонското прашање во советската надворешна политика (1922–1940). Документи, II*, Скопје 2008, pp. 726–727.

26 Запись беседы Народного Комиссара Иностранных дел СССР с Послом Турции в СССР Закин беем, 7 января 1926, *Документы внешней политики*, 9, 1964, pp. 13–14.

27 Телеграмма Временного Поверенного в Делах СССР в Турции Л. И. Величко Народному Комиссару Иностранных дел СССР Г. В. Чичерину, 16 января 1926, in: *Документы внешней политики*, 9, 1964, p. 27.

kingdom.[28] In early May 1926, the Turkish envoy in Vienna informed his Soviet counterpart that the Yugoslav side had indeed expressed full readiness to establish diplomatic relations at the end of the previous year due to the increased fear of a Soviet-Italian rapprochement to the detriment of Yugoslav interests. He emphasized the position that Yugoslav diplomacy had abandoned the intended steps as soon as it became convinced that the Italian-Soviet negotiations had fallen into crisis. Although the opposition demanded the restoration of diplomatic relations during 1926, the government's decision remained unchanged. The death of Nikola Pašić, who was a staunch and loyal friend of the Russian emigration and of the former regime in Russia in general, represented for many diplomatic representatives in Belgrade a new opportunity for the continuation of the Yugoslav-Soviet negotiations on mutual recognition that had begun.[29] The British envoy in Belgrade believed that the fear of possible Italian aggression could force the Yugoslav government to find one of the ways out of the situation in the East, that is, that it would certainly try to find a new foothold in the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union and the Attempt to Create a Balkan Pact

The emergence of the idea of an arbitration agreement and a guarantee pact between the Balkan countries was initially associated with the desire of the Greek government to find a replacement for the alliance treaty with Yugoslavia denounced in 1924. At the end of July 1925, Greek Foreign Minister K. Rendis proposed concluding an agreement between the Balkan countries based on the model of the Locarno agreements that were being prepared at that time.[30] However, at the 6th session of the League of Nations Assembly in September 1925, the Greek delegation did not dare to voice this plan, since it was unable to secure the support of British diplomacy.[31] Open support for the Greek plan could have led to a cooling in Anglo-French relations, which was unacceptable at the final stage of discussing the pact with Germany. However, at the Locarno Conference itself in October 1925, A. Chamberlain declared the desira-

28 Заявление Народного Комиссариата Иностранных дел СССР об антисоветских измышленях югославских правительственных кругов, 23 марта 1926, in: *Документы внешней политики*, 9, 1964, p. 168.

29 Ž. AVRAMOVSKI, *Balkanska Antanta (1934–1940)*, Beograd 1986, p. 30.

30 *The Manchester Guardian*, July 24, 1925.

31 Mr. Selby (British Delegat on, League of Nations) to Mr. Nicolson, 8 September 1925, The National Archives (TNA), Foreign Office (FO) 371/10768, C 11658/798/19.

bility of a guarantee pact for the Balkans on the model of the Rhineland, noting that the initiative should come from the governments of the Balkan countries.[32] The success in Locarno inspired the Foreign Office to apply a similar model in South-Eastern Europe, which would have made it possible, to "blunt" the contradictions between the Balkan countries created or aggravated by the Versailles system, while maintaining the inviolability of the post-war status quo.[33] The plan voiced by the British minister implied that no great power would be able to impose its will on the Balkan countries alone and indirectly govern them, which made it possible to maintain the status quo in the region without additional involvement of British forces.[34] Chamberlain's proposal was supported by the Greek government, but for various reasons did not find supporters in either Bulgaria or Yugoslavia. In November 1925, the British ambassador to Sofia, W. Erskine, noted that "the Balkan Pact, at least for the time being, was a chimera".[35]

In January 1926, when the Greek government, in order to provoke Belgrade to discuss the project of the "Balkan Pact", spread rumours about Turkey and Yugoslavia preparing an agreement in the "spirit of Locarno", the Balkan countries and the great powers returned to it. Despite the quick denial of the rumours by the Yugoslav side, the Foreign Office was concerned about the possible participation in the pact of Turkey, which was seen as a conduit for Soviet influence in view of the conclusion of the Soviet-Turkish Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality in December 1925.[36] A direct consequence of this was the idea of a partnership between England and another great power, which would help promote the idea of a "Balkan Locarno".[37]

Italy could have become a partner, which led to the Anglo-Italian rapprochement in 1926–1927. It manifested itself during the discussion of the draft Franco-Italian-Yugoslav non-aggression agreement in

32 Berlin, Sonnabend, 31. Oktober 1925, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts (PAAA). R 70048/Wolffs Telegraphisches Büro. 76. Jahrgang – Nr. 1931.

33 C. DANEVA-MOCHOVA, La Politique de Locarno de l'Angleterre et de la France dans les Balkans en 1925 et 1926, in: *Etudes Historiques*, 1, 1960, p. 461.

34 AVRAMOVSKI, *Britanci o Kraljevini Jugoslaviji 1921–1930*, p. 385.

35 Bulgarian attitude towards proposed Balkan security pact. Minute by Erskine, Sofia, 5 November 1925, TNA, FO 371/10701, C 14240/14170/62.

36 Proposed Balkan pact. Mr. Kennard (Belgrade) to Mr. Howard Smith, 21 January 1926, TNA, FO 371/11239, C 1012/308/62.

37 *The Times*, January 6, 1926.

February-March 1926, in which British diplomacy saw a continuation of the French policy of "encirclement" and "the opposite of the principles set out in Locarno".[38] The refusal of British diplomacy to support the French project led to its failure. Also, with the participation of British diplomats, Greek-Yugoslav negotiations intensified, leading to the conclusion of a treaty of friendship and cooperation on August 17, 1926. However, the coup of G. Kondylis on August 24, 1926, led to the refusal of the Greek parliament to ratify the treaty, because of which the opportunities for closer interaction between Greece and the Little Entente were significantly reduced. The resolution adopted by the 7th session of the League of Nations Assembly (September 1926) on the application of the Locarno Agreement model to various regions of the world "as fundamental rules governing the foreign policy of each nation" also remained declaratory.[39]

By the end of 1926, British diplomacy increasingly relied on supporting the agreements promoted by the Italian side. The signing of the Tirana Pact of Friendship and Security between Italy and Albania on November 27, 1926, led to increased tension between Rome and Belgrade, and only with the participation of British diplomats was the conflict avoided. In the future, Italian diplomats actively used the slogan of the "Balkan Locarno" to disguise B. Mussolini's desire to create a sole sphere of influence in the Balkans based on Albania, Hungary and Bulgaria. However, England did not abandon hopes for an agreement between the Balkan countries themselves, as indicated by the Foreign Office memorandum of 26 April 1927. For this reason, British diplomacy supported the emerging Yugoslav-Bulgarian rapprochement. Its limitations became obvious in the autumn due to the inability of the Bulgarian government to control the actions of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO), which actively opposed the "Balkan Locarno".

At the end of 1927, the fault line between Italian and French interests in the Balkans once again made itself felt. On 11 November 1927, a Franco-Yugoslav Treaty of Friendship and Arbitration was concluded, in response to which Italy signed the Second Tirana Pact with Albania on 22 November, de facto turning the latter into an Italian protectorate. The Yugoslav side was openly considering rapprochement with the Soviet

[38] Security of Central and South-Eastern Europe. Foreign Office memorandum (Mr. Bateman). December 31, TNA, FO 371/12112, C 1202/1202/62.

[39] Д. В. РОДИН, «Балканское Локарно» во внешней политике Великобритании в 1925–1926 гг, in: *Новая и новейшая история*, 6, 2020, p. 118.

Union in the circumstances that arose as a result of the signing of the Pact of Tiran.[40] The official Soviet condemnation of the pact, its characterization as a fascist threat to world peace, as well as the conclusion that Great Britain had accelerated Mussolini's actions with its policy and brought Yugoslavia into a state of isolation, were another sign that one should seek a way out of the given situation and in rapprochement with the Soviet Union.[41] The feeling of being threatened by Italy created a special atmosphere in which rapprochement with the Soviets was seen as a possibility of creating a counterweight. Stjepan Radić actively advocated a policy of reliance on the Soviets under pressure from Italy, while the radicals, who were traditionally unsympathetic to the Soviets, were also close to such thinking. Moreover, King Alexander himself was close to such reasoning, as can be concluded from the writings of Živojin Balugdžić, Yugoslav envoy in Berlin, who actively advocated the thesis that rapprochement with the Soviets would have a positive impact on the relaxation of the situation in the Balkans resulting from Britain's active policy of supporting Italy and its policy towards Yugoslavia. It was quite clear that linking up with the Soviets would represent a significant factor in deterring Mussolini from further aggressive steps in the Balkans, and that such a step would lead to a confrontation with Great Britain, which, among other things, used Mussolini's policy in the region as one of the factors preventing the potential spread of Soviet influence. At a time when the Soviet press was openly writing about the alleged British preparations for war against the Soviet Union due to the breakdown of Soviet-British negotiations, French diplomacy was widely speculating that the Yugoslav government intended to establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union through Turkey. In connection with this, in April 1927, the announced trip of the influential commander of the Royal Guard, General Petar Živković, to Turkey was also linked.[42]

Its conclusion aggravated the split of the Balkan Peninsula into two warring groups – French and Italian – and demonstrated to London that B. Mussolini was increasingly moving away from the line of cooperation with Great Britain. True to the principle of the balance of power, the

40 С. МИШИЋ, *Албанија: пријатељ и противник. Југословенска политика према Албанији 1924–1927*, Београд 2009, pp. 158–161.

41 И. А. ХОРМАЧ, *СССР – Италия 1924–1939 гг. Дипломатические и экономические отношения*, Москва 1995, pp. 117–119.

42 M. BJELAJAC, *Vojska Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca-Jugoslavije 1922–1935*, Beograd 1994, p. 77.

latter now openly came out in support of France. As Deputy People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs of the USSR M. M. Litvinov noted, England "will continue to encourage the existence of two groups on the European continent, blackmailing one against the other". In the context of the growing split of South-Eastern Europe into two camps, the idea of a "Balkan Locarno" began to play a special role. On the one hand, it was used by Italy to strengthen its position in the Eastern Mediterranean and create a "Balkan Pact" of Albania, Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria and Hungary under the Italian protectorate. On the other hand, with English support, the slogan "The Balkans for the Balkan peoples" was gaining strength, adopted by Yugoslavia to counter Italian expansion in South-Eastern Europe. In January 1928, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Yugoslavia, Marinković, declared his readiness for rapprochement with Greece and Bulgaria. In Greece, this slogan was supported by E. Venizelos, who proclaimed the establishment of "cordial relations" with his neighbours as the basis of his policy. The results of the efforts of E. Venizelos and Marinković, which found support in London and Paris, were the Greek-Romanian Treaty of Non-Aggression and Arbitration (March 1928) and the Greek-Yugoslav Treaty of Friendship, Conciliation Procedure, and Judicial Settlement of Disputes (March 1929). The British press openly supported these agreements, contrasting them with the "revision of the peace treaties, which became the principle of Italian policy in the Balkans". Thus, by the end of the 1920s, the conditions for the further development of the idea of a "Balkan Locarno" had been created in the Balkans, which in 1930 was transformed into the idea of the Balkan Conferences. Both the "winners" and "losers" of the world war took part in them, which was entirely in keeping with the "spirit of Locarno".

Conclusion

After a series of international recognitions by the great powers during 1924, the Soviet Union sought to regulate relations with the countries of the European Southeast. It sought to establish new vectors of political and military influence using the traditional geopolitical levers of the former Russian Empire. The emergence of the idea of an arbitration agreement and a guarantee pact between the Balkan countries was initially connected on the Soviet side with the desire of the Greek government to find a replacement for the treaty of alliance with Yugoslavia denounced in 1924. At the end of July 1925, the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs made a proposal to conclude an agreement between the Balkan countries on

the model of the Locarno Agreements, which were being prepared at that time. Great Britain supported the proposal, but France opposed it. Neither Yugoslavia nor Bulgaria supported the proposal. In this connection, British diplomacy believed that Italy could become a new British partner in the Balkans. Soviet diplomacy actively followed the new changes in the Balkans, believing that it was about the division of interest zones between Italy as a British ally and France in the Balkans itself. In this regard, the Soviets tried to strengthen their influence in Albania, where the interests of Yugoslavia and Italy clashed. The rapid collapse of Soviet policy in Albania resulted in a Soviet initiative in 1926 related to the attempt to establish diplomatic relations with the Balkan countries. The new role of the Soviet Union in international relations, based on distancing itself from Germany, readiness to solve disputed problems in relations with France, as well as a guarantee that it will not attack Poland and Romania, opened space for new thoughts on the institutionalization of the Soviet presence in the Balkans. France strongly opposed this, preventing the establishment of Soviet influence in the Balkans. With the institutionalization of the Italian presence in Albania in 1926/27 through the Tirana Pacts, it brought Yugoslavia closer to Greece and France and distanced the Soviet Union from the Balkans.

The Independence of Kosovo from the Perspective of History

Sylë Ukshini[1]

This article provides a comprehensive historical analysis of Kosovo's path to independence, situating it within the broader context of Balkan historical developments, Yugoslav state disintegration, and evolving international norms. Tracing the roots of Kosovo's contested status to the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913 and the imposition of Serbian rule, the study examines how successive regimes pursued policies of assimilation, demographic engineering, and political subordination, culminating in systemic repression during the Milošević era. The paper argues that Kosovo's statehood emerged not as an abrupt rupture but as the outcome of a prolonged historical process shaped by institutional exclusion, armed conflict, and international intervention. It assesses the significance of the 1999 NATO military campaign, the establishment of the UN administration under Resolution 1244, and the role of the Ahtisaari Plan in structuring Kosovo's 2008 declaration of independence. Furthermore, the article analyzes the 2010 International Court of Justice advisory opinion, which affirmed the legality of Kosovo's declaration under international law, thereby reinforcing its legitimacy and accelerating international recognition. Ultimately, the study contends that Kosovo's independence represents both a corrective to century-old geopolitical injustices and a critical test case for the principles of self-determination, sovereignty, and post-Cold War state formation.

[Kosovo; Yugoslavia; Ottoman Empire; NATO; Statehood]

Introduction

The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire marked a decisive turning point for the Albanian national movement, generating aspirations for the establishment of an independent Albanian state. Yet the collapse of Ottoman authority also exposed Albanian-inhabited territories to partition by neighboring states eager to assert territorial claims. Therefore, nearly half of the Albanian population – primarily concentrated in Kosovo

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– was incorporated into the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (later the Kingdom of Yugoslavia). As the historian Holm Sundhaussen notes, although Kosovo was occupied by Serbia during the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913, it "was never explicitly recognized as part of Serbia," highlighting the contested nature of its incorporation.[2]

Throughout the twentieth century, the Yugoslav state and successive Serbian governments implemented policies aimed at the ethnic homogenization of Kosovo, echoing earlier practices of forced displacement and demographic engineering witnessed during the Eastern Crisis of 1877–1878[3] and the Balkan Wars. These policies endured well into the 1990s and culminated in the Kosovo War (1989–1999). The 1999 NATO intervention – prompted by escalating violence and humanitarian concerns – was instrumental in halting Serbian military operations and laying the groundwork for Kosovo's eventual declaration of independence on 17 February 2008. Since then, the Kosovo issue has become a focal point in international legal scholarship, raising complex questions regarding the interplay between humanitarian intervention, sovereignty, and self-determination. It has also influenced the European Union's evolving approach to foreign and security policy in the post-Cold War era.[4]

The emergence of Kosovo as a sovereign state unfolded through a protracted and distinct trajectory. During the Cold War, the aspirations of Kosovo Albanians for self-determination from Yugoslavia and Serbia garnered no international support. However, the intensification of political repression and demographic colonization under Serbian rule catalyzed Albanian resistance, which gradually shifted from peaceful mobilization to armed struggle. Across both World Wars[5] and other moments of geopolitical transition, Kosovar Albanians consistently sought external support from European powers to advance their national and political aims.

2 Interview with Holm Sundhaussen, "Serbia should be liberated from Kosovo", F. SLAVKOVIÇ (ed.), Deutsche Welle (DW), November 24, 2007, https://www.dw.com/sq/serbia-t%C3%AB-%C3%A7lirohet-nga-kosova/a-2970635.

3 M. JAGODIĆ, *The Emigration of Muslims from the New Serbian Regions 1877/1878, Vol. II, Nº 2*, 1998, pp. 1–21.

4 S. UKSHINI, *Die Kosovo-Frage als Herausforderung der Gemeinsamen Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik (GASP) der EU: Seit dem Zerfall Jugoslawiens bis zur Unabhängigkeitserklärung des Kosovo*, Berlin 2020, p. 33.

5 N. MALCOM, *Kosovo : a short history*, New York 1998, pp. 262–291.

While Kosovo's self-declared republic during the early 1990s remained unrecognized by the international community – including the Badinter Commission, the European Union, and the United States – the political landscape shifted dramatically with the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the collapse of communist regimes across Eastern Europe. The emergence of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and the escalation of armed conflict in the late 1990s internationalized the issue, compelling NATO to intervene under the pretext of preventing ethnic cleansing and large-scale humanitarian catastrophe.[6] Following the intervention, UN Security Council Resolution 1244 established an international civil and military administration in Kosovo, effectively suspending Serbia's sovereignty and transferring de facto authority to international actors.

Within this framework, the Contact Group for the Balkans[7] – composed of the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, and Russia – elaborated a set of guiding principles for determining Kosovo's final status. These culminated in the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement, drafted by UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari, which served as the legal and political foundation for Kosovo's coordinated declaration of independence in 2008. Although the declaration was subsequently challenged by Serbia at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the Court's 2010 advisory opinion concluded that "it did not violate international law".[8]

Despite these developments, Kosovo's full integration into the international system has remained incomplete. The refusal of key global powers – particularly Russia and China – to recognize Kosovo's independence has impeded its accession to the United Nations and other international organizations. Thus, Kosovo's statehood continues to be shaped by contested recognition and geopolitical rivalry. More than the emergence of a new state, Kosovo's independence represents the final chapter in the post-socialist transformation of Southeastern Europe, completing the process of state fragmentation initiated by the collapse of Yugoslavia

6 I. H. DAALDER – M. E. O'HANLON, *Winning Ugly: NATO's War to Save Kosovo*, Washington 2000, pp. 126–181.

7 Guiding principles of the Contact Group for a settlement of the status of Kosovo, https://www.esiweb.org/pdf/kosovo_Contact%20Group%20-%20Ten%20Guiding%20principles%20for%20Ahtisaari.pdf [visited 2024–01–05].

8 Accordance with international law of the unilateral declaration of independence in respect of Kosovo-Summary of the Advisory Opinion, International Court of Justice, July 22, 2010, p. 15.

(dismemberment is the disintegration or distribution of a state),[9] in the early 1990s.

At the heart of the Kosovo question lies a fundamental tension between two competing principles: the right to self-determination, asserted by Kosovo Albanians, and the inviolability of territorial integrity, invoked by Serbia. For Belgrade, Kosovo's secession has been experienced as a profound political and national trauma. For Albanians, by contrast, Kosovo has long constituted a central element of the national imaginary – a symbol of historical grievance and an unfulfilled project of statehood. As Tim Judah insightfully observes, for the overwhelming majority of Kosovo's Albanian population, independence is not merely a political event – it is the rectification of a century-old injustice rooted in the 1912 Serbian conquest of Kosovo, which Albanians regard as a colonial imposition rather than a moment of "liberation". While Serbs assert that Kosovo is the symbolic and spiritual heart of their nationhood, Albanians counter that if Kosovo is indeed Serbia's heart, then it has long been beating within a foreign body – detached, imposed, and fundamentally alien to the national consciousness and political will of its majority population.[10]

Historical Geography and Demographic Foundations of Kosovo

The name "Kosovo" derives from a complex linguistic and historical lineage, with roots in both Turkish and Slavic usage during the Ottoman period. Historically, the term referred not to the present-day territory alone but to the *Vilayet of Kosovo*, a key administrative unit of the Ottoman Empire established in 1877. This vilayet encompassed a considerably larger area than modern Kosovo, including parts of what are now southern Serbia, northern Montenegro, western Macedonia, and eastern Albania. Its principal *sanjaks* (districts) included Üsküp (Skopje), Prizren, İpek

9 The dismemberment of a State takes place when its territory becomes the territory of two or more new States. Consequently, the predecessor State ceases to exist (see also States, Extinction of), and the newly formed States are regarded as its successors (Art. 18 Vienna Convention on Succession of States in respect of State Property, Archives and Debts; see also State Succession in Other Matters than Treaties). An example of dismemberment is the collapse of the Danube Monarchy of Austria-Hungary in 1918, which, in addition to various territorial cessions, resulted in the formation of the states of Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. The separation of Yugoslavia into seven states (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia) also describes the process of dismemberment.

10 T. JUDAH, *Kosovo What Everyone Needs to Know*, New York 2008, p. xix.

(Peja), Novi Pazar, and Taslidza (Pljevlja),[11] as documented in the Ottoman encyclopedia *Kamus-ul-ʿAlam*. The territory of present-day Kosovo spans approximately 10,887 square kilometers[12] and shares borders with Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia. Of particular strategic relevance is its western boundary with Albania, a country with which Kosovo maintains close ethnic, political, and military ties, including a NATO-aligned defense posture shaped by regional alliances such as with Turkey.

Kosovo's demographic profile has long been central to its contested status. Today, ethnic Albanians constitute approximately 95 percent of the population,[13] with the remainder including Serbs, Bosniaks, Turks, Roma, and other minority communities. The Albanian demographic predominance has historically generated political tension, particularly in relation to Serbian claims over the territory. This tension is deeply rooted in both competing national historiographies and broader questions of state formation in the Balkans.[14]

From the perspective of many Albanians, widely supported by segments of European scholarship,[15] Kosovo holds a foundational place in Albanian

11 S. FRASHËRI, *Kamus al a'lam (Enciklopedia-pjese te zgjedhura-the selected parts), Vol. 7*, Prishtine 1984, pp. 75–80.

12 M. VICKERS, *Between Serb and Albanian (A history of Kosovo*), New York 1998, pp. xiv–xiv.

13 Ibid.

14 In the north and northeast, it was bordered by Serbia, in the southeast by Macedonia, in the south by the Vilayet of Manastir, the southwest by the Vilayet of Shkodra, and in the northwest by Montenegro and Bosnia. The capital of the Vilayet of Kosovo was Prishtina from 1879 up to 1893, whereas from 1893 up to 1912, it was Skopje (Shkupi or Üsküp). See: E. HOXHAJ, *Politika etnike dhe shtetndërtimi i Kosovës*, Prishtinë 2008, p. 257.

15 Theses of Illyrian origin of Albanians is even more prevalent, as the Albanians living in the historic land Ilir and cultural continuity in these territories when history named Alban or Arben. For the Illyrian origin of the Albanians and the Albanian, the following scientists spoke out: Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Johann Erich Thunman, Josef Ritter von Xylander, Johann Georg von Hahn, Bartholomäus Kopitar, Theodor Benfey, Franz Miklosich, Lorenz Diefenbach, Jakob Philipp Fallmeraye. See: E. ÇABEJ, *Studime gjuhësore III*, Prishtina 1976, p. 34; E. ÇABEJ, Die Frage nach dem Entstehungsgebiet der albanischen Sprache, in: *Zeitschrift für Balkanologie*, X/2, 1974, pp. 7–32; A. BUDA, Die Ethnogenese des albanischen Volkes im Lichte der Geschichte, in: B. TÖNNES (ed.), Zur Frage der Ethnogenese der Albaner. Eine Nationale Konferenz in Tirana, in: *Südosteuropa. Zs. f. Gegenwartsforschung*, 31, 1982, pp. 413–425, (here 415–120); M. SUFFLAY, Biologie des albanesischen Volksstammes, in: *Ungarische Rundschau für historische und soziale Wissenschaften (1916–1917)*, pp. 1–26: N. JOKL, Albaner (Sprache), in: *Reallexikon der Vorgeschichte*, I, 1924, pp. 84–93; G. STADTMÜLLER, *Forschungen zur albanischen Frühgeschichte*, Wiesbaden 1966; K. GOSTETSCHNIGG,

historical consciousness. Albanians frequently identify themselves as descendants of the ancient Illyrians – an Indo-European people who inhabited the western Balkans, including the territories of modern Albania and Kosovo, from at least the first millennium BCE. The region corresponding to present-day Kosovo was known in antiquity as Dardania, a province inhabited by the Illyrian-Dardanian population. Following its incorporation into the Roman Empire, Dardania became a formal Roman and later Byzantine province, underscoring Kosovo's historical integration into broader imperial structures prior to the Ottoman conquest.

The modern toponym "Kosovo" entered widespread use after the Ottoman Empire's expansion into the Balkans in the late fourteenth century,[16] especially in the wake of the Battles of Kosovo in 1389 and 1448. The term persisted throughout the five-century period of Ottoman rule, ending only with the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913.[17] These wars decisively altered the region's political geography: Kosovo was conquered by the Kingdoms of Serbia and Montenegro and incorporated into their expanding state apparatuses.[18] As noted by historians Noel Malcolm[19] and Holm Sundhaussen, although Serbian narratives frame this as a "liberation," contemporary demographic data suggest that Orthodox Serbs constituted less than 25 percent of the population at the time. "A territory is not free. It is the people living there who are either free or not free," asserts Sundhaussen.[20] The well-known British historian Noel Malcolm also argues that Kosovo was not only violently occupied, but more importantly, it had never been legally part of Serbia. "Kosovo has never been legally incorporated into Serbia, not even by the standards of international law," explains Malcolm.[21] The overwhelming Albanian majority

Die Diskussion der Frage der albanischen Ethnogenese – Ein historischer Abriss, in: E. PISTRICK (ed.), *Deutsch-Albanische Wissenschaftsbeziehungen hinter dem Eisernen Vorhang*, Wiesbaden 2016, pp. 51–73.

16 Salname-yi Vilâyet-i Kosova, Kosova vilâyet matbaası, Kosova [Serbia], 1318 [1900]. On the website of Hathi Trust Digital Library, https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/003515309.

17 Ibid, 138.

18 S. UKSHINI, Austro-Hungarian Foreign Policy and the Independence of Albania, in: *West Bohemian Historical Review*, XI, 2, 2021, p. 181.

19 N. MALCOLM, Is Kosovo Serbia? We ask a historian, in: *The Guardian*, February 25, 2008; N. MALCOM, *Kosovo: A Short History*, London, pp. 217–263.

20 H. SUNDHAUSSEN, *Kosovo: Eine Konfliktgeschichte, in: Reuter and Clewing. eds. Der Kosovo Konflikt: Ursachen, Verlauf, Perspektiven*, Klagenfurt, p. 67.

21 MALCOLM, pp. 264–267.

did not welcome the change, and the term "conquest" more accurately captures the nature of this transition. Indeed, Kosovo was not legally annexed by Serbia in 1912 but remained under military occupation until after World War I, when it was integrated into the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.

Despite a clear Albanian majority within the former vilayet, the new Yugoslav state largely inherited Serbia's administrative and political approach to the territory. Kosovo remained part of various Yugoslav configurations – except for a brief period during the Second World War – until the dissolution of the federation in the early 2000s. During World War I, the region was alternatively occupied by Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian forces,[22] further disrupting the integration process envisioned by the Serbian political elite.[23]

Crucially, the ethno-national dynamics that later erupted into open conflict were not the defining feature of earlier periods of warfare in Kosovo. While the territory has witnessed numerous armed conflicts, it was not until the emergence of modern nationalism and the disintegration of the Ottoman imperial system in the nineteenth century that Albanian-Serb tensions became explicitly framed in ethnic terms. The violent ruptures of the Balkan Wars, followed by the complex state-building processes of the interwar and socialist Yugoslav periods, set the stage for the eventual eruption of ethno-political conflict culminating in the 1998–1999 war.

Kosovo under the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918–1941)

In the aftermath of the First World War and the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires, the territory of Kosovo was annexed to the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes – later renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Within this emergent Yugoslav framework, the Albanian population of Kosovo was perceived by the Serbian political elite not as an integral national minority but as an alien and potentially subversive presence. This perception shaped the exclusionary policies of the interwar state, which systematically marginalized Albanians across political, economic, and cultural domains.[24]

22 H. POULTON, Macedonians and Albanians as Yugoslavs, in: D. DJOKIĆ (ed.), *Yugoslavism: Histories of a Failed Idea, 1918–1992*, London 2003, p. 123.

23 Ibid., pp. 239–263.

24 L. GULYÁS – G. CSÜLLÖG, History of Kosovo from the First Balkan War to the End of World War II (1912–1945), in: *West Bohemian Historical Review*, V, 2, 2015, p. 237.

The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SCS) was a multiethnic polity of roughly 12 million inhabitants, including an estimated 600,000 ethnic Albanians. Administratively, Kosovo was fragmented across several jurisdictions: the counties of Zvečan, Kosovo, and southern Dukagjin were incorporated into Serbia proper, while northern Dukagjin fell under Montenegrin authority. This territorial division placed Kosovo within the Banates of Zeta, Morava, and Vardar,[25] effectively dispersing the Albanian population and preventing cohesive regional governance.

By 1921, the Albanian inhabitants of Kosovo had submitted a petition to the League of Nations, calling for unification with Albania. The petition cited extensive human rights violations, including claims that 12,000 Albanians had been killed and 22,000 imprisoned since 1918.[26] In parallel, an armed insurgency – the Kaçak movement – emerged, mobilizing for national unification. The Yugoslav authorities swiftly designated this resistance as unconstitutional and repressive measures were enacted. Simultaneously, a state-sponsored colonization program was launched with the explicit aim of altering the demographic composition of Kosovo.[27] Between 60,000 and 65,000 settlers, predominantly ethnic Serbs and Montenegrins,[28] were resettled in Kosovo during the interwar period, accounting for over 90% of all colonists.

The agrarian reform and colonization policies implemented in Kosovo and the Dukagjin Plain (as well as in parts of Macedonia) were, as Serbian author Radosav Rajović notes, conducted under markedly distinct conditions from those applied in other regions of the Kingdom such as Vojvodina and Slavonia. According to Rajović, the Belgrade authorities, in orchestrating these colonization efforts, systematically disregarded the interests and demographic realities of the local population – particularly the Albanian majority – thus underscoring the asymmetrical and externally imposed nature of these reforms.[29]

This policy of demographic engineering was accompanied by efforts

25 Published in the: Central Press Bureau of the Ministerial Council, Belgrade 1930.

26 MALCOLM, pp. 274–278.

27 M. OBRADOVIĆ, *Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija na Kosovu 1918–1941*, Priština 1981, pp. 153, 210, 215, 220.

28 A. PAVLOVIĆ, *Prostorni raspored Srba i Crnogoraca kolonizovanih na Kosovo i Metohiju u periodu između 1918. i 1941. godine* (PDF). Scindeks-clanci.nb.rs. Archived from the original (PDF) on 9 January 2024 [visited 2024–01–09].

29 R. RAJOVIQ, *Autonomia e Kosoves, Rilindja*, Prishtine, 1987, pp. 104–105.

to depopulate the indigenous Albanian population.[30] Between 1918 and 1941, estimates suggest that between 90,000 and 150,000 Albanians and other Muslim communities were forced to emigrate.[31] The ideological justification for such expulsions found expression in the writings of Vaso Čubrilović, a prominent Serbian academic and later a member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. In a 1937 memorandum, Čubrilović notoriously asserted: "At a time when Germany can expel tens of thousands of Jews and Russia can shift millions of people from one part of the continent to another, the shifting of a few hundred thousand Albanians will not lead to the outbreak of a world war."[32]

The geopolitical upheavals of the Second World War brought further transformations. Following the Axis invasion of Yugoslavia in 1941, the majority of Kosovo was integrated into the Italian-sponsored project of Greater Albania, while smaller portions of eastern Kosovo fell under Bulgarian and German occupation.[33] Although the Fascist occupation was neither ideologically embraced nor widely supported by the Albanian population, it was generally perceived as less repressive than previous Serbian rule.

Initially, the Yugoslav Communist leadership, including Tito, expressed support for the right of Kosovo Albanians to determine their own political future, including the possibility of unification with Albania.[34] This position culminated in the Bujan Conference (December 1943 – January 1944), where a resolution was adopted declaring: "Kosovo and the Dukagjin (Serbian: Metohija) Plateau constitute a region predominantly inhabited by an Albanian majority, which has historically aspired to unification with Albania, as it continues to do presently. It is thus regarded as a duty to indicate the proper path that the Albanian people must follow to realize these aspirations. The sole means for the Albanian population of Kosovo and the Dukagjin Plateau to achieve unification with Albania[35] lies in a joint struggle alongside other Yugoslav peoples

30 *Expulsions of Albanians and Colonisation of Kosova*. Kosova.com. August 31, 1995 [visited 2024–01–09].

31 Memorandum submitted by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, FRY/KOSOVO: SERBIAN PLANS FOR ETHNIC CLEANSING, HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND PRECEDENTS, January 9, 2024.

32 *Carnegie Endowment, Report*, 1914, p. 151.

33 MALCOLM, pp. 310–311.

34 R. ELSIE, *1944: The Resolution of Bujan*, in: albanianhistory.net [visited 2023–12–20].

35 F. HOXHA, *Fadil Hoxha në vetën e pare*, Prishtinë 2010, pp. 194–196.

against the brutal Nazi occupiers and their collaborators. This collective resistance is viewed as the only route to attaining freedom – a freedom that would enable all peoples, including the Albanians, to exercise the right to self-determination, including the possibility of secession."[36]

However, the promises made at Bujan were ultimately abandoned in the immediate postwar period. Following the withdrawal of Axis forces in late 1944, the Yugoslav Communist Party renounced the resolution, signaling a clear shift toward the reintegration of Kosovo into the Yugoslav federation. This reversal provoked widespread unrest. Armed resistance erupted in late 1944 as Kosovar Albanians protested the new Yugoslav order, which had failed to deliver the promised self-determination. In response, the Yugoslav authorities imposed a state of emergency in February 1945 and undertook mass arrests and detentions of those suspected of opposing integration.[37]

Despite earlier assurances, the leadership of the postwar Yugoslav regime, including prominent Albanian Communists such as Fadil Hoxha, acquiesced to Belgrade's policy line. The political leadership in Kosovo ultimately renounced the Bujan resolution, aligning instead with the emerging federal framework of socialist Yugoslavia.[38] The early postwar repression of Albanian dissent marked the beginning of a new era of centralized control over Kosovo, prefiguring the tensions that would resurface in later decades.

The Evolution of Kosovo's Autonomy in Socialist Yugoslavia

In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, despite the formal endorsement of the Bujan Resolution by elements of the Yugoslav Communist Party, Kosovo was subjected to a military regime under emergency provisions. In early 1945, the Prizren Assembly – functioning as a regional People's Council – under direct pressure from Yugoslav military authorities, proclaimed the "unification" of Kosovo with Yugoslavia, thereby nullifying the provisions of the Bujan Resolution that had called for the right to self-determination and potential unification with Albania.[39]

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid., p. 273.

[38] Fadil Hoxha, the key figure among the communist leaders of Kosovo, states in his memoirs that during the meeting held on July 8–10, 1945, all matters were unanimously accepted for Kosovo to be annexed to Serbia. For more details, see: HOXHA, pp. 272–273.

[39] Ibid., p. 273.

Soon thereafter, in August 1945, the communist government in Belgrade enacted legislation permitting the return and resettlement of Serbian and Montenegrin colonists, effectively reintroducing prewar demographic strategies aimed at reinforcing Serbian dominance in the region.

In the aftermath of World War II, Kosovo was treated in a manner akin to the former Soviet-occupied territories in Eastern Europe – reintegrated under a communist framework marked by deep mistrust toward the local population. Kosovo's incorporation into socialist Yugoslavia entailed imposition of strict ideological and security controls. The Albanian majority was viewed with suspicion, subjected to surveillance, repression, and political exclusion, reflecting a broader pattern of occupation-style governance aimed at consolidating central authority over a population perceived as disloyal or potentially subversive.

The 1946 Yugoslav Constitution, modeled after the 1936 Soviet Constitution, proclaimed the protection of minority rights and national equality as foundational principles of the new socialist state. However, in practice, two core structural deficiencies undermined these commitments in the case of Kosovo. First, Kosovo was not granted full territorial or political autonomy, thus leaving the Albanian national question unresolved. Second, the province of Vojvodina was granted a more favorable constitutional status, institutionalizing a hierarchical disparity between the two autonomous regions.[40] In this context, expressions of Albanian national identity were routinely suppressed under the broader umbrella of socialist centralization and ideological conformity.

The first two decades of socialist governance in Kosovo were marked by systematic political repression and social exclusion. Unlike other Yugoslav republics and provinces, where the Partisan movement had garnered local support, Kosovo stood out for its widespread resistance and lack of collaboration with the new regime.[41] This antagonism shaped the Yugoslav state's coercive policies, which were most vigorously implemented under the direction of Aleksandar Ranković, the Deputy President of Yugoslavia and head of the State Security Service (UDBA). The period from 1945 to Ranković's fall in 1966 – commonly referred to as the "Ranković era" –

40 Various Albanian sources estimate that during 1944–1946 36,000 and maybe as many as 47,000 Albanians were the victims of systematic mass executions by communists during the days of revolutionary fervour, and later through search and destroy missions, "pacification", "disarming", and "rehabilitation" programmes, police torture, and epidemics of typhoid fever affecting military units: VIKERS, p. 47.

41 JUDAH, p. 51.

constitutes the first phase of Yugoslav policy toward Kosovo, defined by surveillance, political repression, and demographic manipulation.

During this period, the Yugoslav authorities adopted a policy of identifying Kosovo Albanians as "Turks," thereby facilitating and legitimizing their emigration to Turkey under bilateral agreements.[42] German historian Peter Bartl estimates that more than 200,000 Albanians were displaced from Kosovo by 1966.[43] As Miranda Vickers notes, the Yugoslav government pursued a policy of "Turkification" to dilute Albanian national identity and reduce their demographic weight. This policy was executed through two primary instruments: the establishment of Turkish-language schools beginning in 1951 and the promotion of emigration to Turkey.[44] In many cases, Albanians were coerced into declaring Turkish ethnicity in official records – a practice designed to facilitate their removal and suppress Albanian political claims.

This demographic strategy was further supported by Serbian nationalist ideologues such as Vasa Čubrilović, who continued to advocate for the expulsion of Albanians in postwar Yugoslavia. In his 1944 memorandum, *The Minority Problem in the New Yugoslavia*, Čubrilović reasserted his prewar thesis, urging the Yugoslav leadership to resolve the "Albanian question" through large-scale expulsion, aligning his recommendations with broader trends of forced population transfers in postwar Eastern Europe. As he argued, "[…] we too will have the right to ask from our allies that our minority question be solved in the same manner, through expulsion."[45]

The 1963 Yugoslav Constitution introduced modest improvements in the legal status of Kosovo Albanians. Notably, the term "national minority" was replaced with "nationality," signifying a rhetorical shift toward more inclusive recognition. Institutional reforms followed, including the elevation of Kosovo's governing body from a "Regional Council" to a "Provincial Assembly," which brought it closer in status to Vojvodina. While Albanians gained greater access to provincial institutions, they

42 HOXHA, pp. 289–290.

43 P. BARTL, Die Albaner, in: M. W. WEITHMANN (ed.), *Der ruhelose Balkan. Die Konfliktregionen Südosteuropa*, München 1993, pp. 176–204 (here p. 199).

44 VIKERS, p. 149.

45 V. CUBRILOVIC, Problemi i pakicave në Jugosllavi 1944, in: F. SURROI (ed.), *Politika serbomadhe prej Garashaninit deri te Akademiak*, Prishtinë 2019, pp. 117–146, (here p. 124); V. CUBRILOVIC, *The Minority Problemin the New Yugoslavia, Texts and Documents of Albanian History*, http://www.albanianhistory.net/1944_Cubrilovic/index.html.

remained under close surveillance, and their political loyalty continued to be questioned by federal security agencies.

A decisive turning point came with the removal of Ranković at the Brioni Plenum in 1966, which marked the formal repudiation of the repressive policies that had defined the preceding two decades. For many Albanians, Ranković's dismissal was seen as a victory in their ongoing struggle for equality and recognition within the Yugoslav federation. This political opening laid the groundwork for the mass demonstrations of 27 November 1968, in which Kosovo Albanians for the first time publicly demanded republican status, the right to use national symbols such as the Albanian flag, and the establishment of an Albanian-language university. These protests signaled a renewed articulation of the Albanian national question within Yugoslavia's internal politics.[46]

In response to the growing assertion of Albanian identity and in the interest of maintaining federal cohesion, the Yugoslav leadership adopted a more conciliatory approach in the late 1960s and early 1970s.[47] This shift resulted in a number of significant reforms, including the recognition of educational, cultural, and linguistic rights. The culmination of this liberalizing trend was the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution, which granted Kosovo substantial autonomy.[48] While Kosovo was not formally designated as a republic, it functioned with many of the core attributes of one: it had its own parliament, government, central bank, and internal security structures. The period saw a process of rapid "Albanianization" of the provincial administration, with increasing numbers of professionally trained Albanians occupying key positions. Even so, Albanians constituted the largest ethnic group among political prisoners in Yugoslavia.[49]

Despite the expanded autonomy granted in 1974, Albanian dissatisfaction persisted, rooted in the continued denial of full republican status.[50] This grievance was particularly acute given that Kosovo's Albanian population exceeded the population of several recognized Yugoslav republics.

46 D. I. RUSINOW, *The Yugoslav Experiment, 1948–74*, Berkeley 1977, p. 245.

47 JUDAH, p. 57.

48 Ibid.

49 AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, *Yugoslavia: Ethnic Albanians-Victims of Torture an Ill-Treatment by Police*, New York 1992.

50 J. MARKO, Die Staatrechtliche Entwicklung des Kosovo von 1913–1995, in: J. MARKO (ed.), *Gorischer Knoten Kosovo: Durchschlagen oder entwirrenm? Völkerrechtliche, rechtsvergleichende und politikwissenschaftliche Analysen und Perspektiven zum jüngsten Balkankonflikt*, Baden Baden 1999, pp. 16–18.

The absence of full constitutional equality reinforced perceptions of Albanians as second-class citizens within the federation.[51] Activists and political dissidents advocating for republican status faced state repression, and Albanians continued to make up a disproportionate share of political prisoners during this period. As disillusionment with the federal compromise grew, clandestine Albanian organizations began to shift their objectives – from demanding greater autonomy to calling for republican status as a steppingstone toward eventual unification with Albania.

These aspirations culminated in the 1981 student demonstrations, which marked the first major post-Tito political crisis within Yugoslavia. Initially triggered by socioeconomic grievances, the protests quickly escalated into a mass movement demanding republican status and national self-determination. The demonstrations were met with a harsh security response and have since become the subject of sustained scholarly and political debate regarding their causes and consequences. They revealed both the growing strength of the Albanian national movement and the deepening fractures within the Yugoslav political order.

By the mid-1980s, the so-called "Kosovo Serb question" had emerged as a central issue in Serbian political discourse. Although Serb emigration from Kosovo had long been a structural trend – driven largely by economic migration to urban centers such as Niš, Belgrade, and Kragujevac – it[52] began to be reframed through a nationalist lens. State policy began to pivot toward a more repressive orientation, increasingly converging with the narrative of rising Serbian nationalism. This shift was epitomized by the political rise of Slobodan Milošević, who became head of the League of Communists of Serbia in 1986. Milošević's ascent coincided with the ideological consolidation of centralist and authoritarian tendencies, particularly among those seeking to preserve Serbian dominance within the Yugoslav federation.[53] His political project drew heavily on the controversial 1986 *Memorandum* of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts,[54] which advocated a re-centralized, "unitary" Yugoslavia as a means to safeguard Serbian national interests – positioning Kosovo as a core battleground in this ideological struggle.

51 H. POULTON – M. VICKERS, Kosovo Albanians: Ethnic Confrontation with the Slavic State, in: H. POULTON – S. TAJI-FROUKI (eds.), *Muslim Identity and the Balkan State*, London 1997, pp. 139-169 (here 148).

52 JUDAH, pp. 58–59.

53 B. ANZULOVIĆ, *Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide*, New York, London 1999, p. 96.

54 L. SILBER – A. LITTLE, *The Death of Yugoslavia*, New York 1996, p. 31.

Kosovo in the Late Socialist Era (1986–1991)

According to journalists Laura Silber and Allan Little, the *Memorandum* of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SANU) did not ignite Serbian nationalism but instead articulated long-standing grievances and sentiments that had remained latent, yet deeply embedded, within Serbian society under the constraints of communist ideology. The document gave intellectual coherence to views that were widely held but seldom publicly expressed and thus played a catalytic role in shaping post-Tito Serbian political discourse. As noted by Croatian scholar Branimir Anzulović, the *Memorandum* provided the ideological scaffolding for Slobodan Milošević's pan-Serbian agenda, gradually evolving into a programmatic framework around which nationalist mobilization coalesced. With the disintegration of the communist order, a growing number of Serbs came to view this moment as a historic opportunity to reconfigure the Yugoslav federation into a "Greater Serbia,"[55] supported by the Yugoslav People's Army, whose senior command remained overwhelmingly Serb-dominated.

Between 1986 and 1989, Milošević undertook a calculated effort to consolidate his authority within Serbia. A defining moment occurred in April 1987 during his visit to Kosovo, where he addressed a crowd of local Serbs in Kosovo Field *(in Albanian "Fushë Kosovë." Fushë Kosovë and in Serbian: Kosovo Polje; German: Amselfeld*). In a speech that quickly became emblematic of his emerging nationalist rhetoric, he famously declared: "No one should dare to beat you […] You must stay here. This is your land. These are your meadows and gardens, your memories."[56] This statement struck a powerful chord with Serbian audiences and signaled a shift in official discourse – transforming Kosovo from a provincial concern into a central symbol of Serbian historical identity and political entitlement.

Recognizing the collapse of the ideological legitimacy of Yugoslav communism, Milošević adeptly transitioned toward a nationalist-populist strategy to assert personal and institutional dominance.[57] From this point forward, Kosovo became the nucleus of his political project – a tool for consolidating power and a stage upon which his broader vision for a Serb-centric Yugoslav order was pursued. The revocation of Kosovo's

55 JUDAH, p. 114.

56 H. FUNKE – A. RHOTERT (eds.), *Unter unseren Augen. Ethnische Reinheit: Die Politik des Milošević-Regimes und die Rolle des Westens*, Berlin 1999, p. 16.

57 JUDAH, p. 65.

autonomy thus represented both a symbolic and strategic act, serving as the linchpin of Milošević's "anti-bureaucratic revolution" and a precursor to wider conflict.

The Revocation of the Kosovo Autonomy

Despite organized resistance by Kosovo Albanians – including widespread strikes and mass demonstrations – the Serbian parliament officially annulled Kosovo's autonomous status on 23 March 1989 and imposed an emergency regime of military-police control.[58] According to Amnesty International, the crackdown was severe: approximately 140 ethnic Albanians were killed, hundreds more were injured, and thousands of intellectuals, students, and activists were arrested and sentenced in proceedings that lacked basic legal protections.[59] During his first official visit to Kosovo in July 1989, U. S. Ambassador to Yugoslavia Warren Zimmermann described the situation as one of pervasive fear, likening the atmosphere to colonial subjugation. He observed that ethnic Albanians spoke in hushed tones, indicative of constant surveillance and psychological repression.[60]

Subsequent Serbian legislation in 1989 introduced further restrictions. Ethnic Albanians in Kosovo were prohibited from purchasing or selling property without special state approval. On 26 June 1990, these measures were institutionalized through a series of decrees framed as "temporary measures," adopted under the Law on the Activities of Organs of the Republic in Exceptional Circumstances. These provisions facilitated the systematic dismantling of Kosovo's political, educational, and cultural autonomy. As Carole Hodge argues in *The Balkans on Trial: Justice vs. Realpolitik*, the early 1990s witnessed a sharp deterioration in civil liberties, particularly freedom of expression and association. The Serbian authorities dismissed thousands of Albanian professors, teachers, and students from the University of Pristina following protests the implementation of "special measures". Independent media outlets in the Albanian language – including *Rilindja*, Radio Pristina, and Pristina Television – were forcibly shut down and subsumed under the Serbian state broadcaster. Approximately 1,300 Albanian media professionals were dismissed and replaced

58 D. GASHI – I. STEINER, *Albanien: archaisch, orientalisch, europäisch*, Wien 1994, p. 224.
59 CLARK, pp. 47–51.
60 W. ZIMMERMANN, *Origins of a Catasrophe: Yugoslavia and Its Destroyers*, New York 1999, p. 78.

by Serbian personnel, reflecting a broader strategy of institutional "Serbization."[61] Albanian professionals in sectors such as healthcare, education, and public administration were also systematically purged. These acts not only deprived Albanians of representation but also ruptured the legacy of civic integration within socialist Yugoslavia, rendering Kosovo's Albanian majority effectively stateless within their own homeland.

The suppression of Albanian-language media, the dissolution of the Kosovo Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the removal of Albanian professionals from public institutions constituted a far-reaching campaign to extinguish Albanian presence from Kosovo's official life. In response to this authoritarian turn, Albanian members of the Kosovo Assembly – who had earlier been coerced into voting for the 1989 constitutional amendments – reconvened independently and, on 2 July 1990, declared Kosovo a republic with equal standing to the six existing Yugoslav republics.[62] On 7 September 1990, the Assembly met clandestinely in Kaçanik/Kaćanik, where it adopted a constitution for the self-declared Republic of Kosovo. While this move did not yet constitute a formal declaration of independence, it marked a fundamental rupture with the Serbian-dominated federal order.

It was only on 21 September 1991, amid the unraveling of the Yugoslav federation, that Kosovo's parliament formally declared independence, a decision ratified by a referendum in early October 1991.[63] The referendum – deemed illegal by Serbian authorities – received overwhelming support among Kosovo Albanians but was recognized only by Albania. No other state accorded diplomatic recognition to Kosovo at that time, reinforcing the international community's reluctance to deviate from the principle of Yugoslavia's territorial integrity.[64]

In parallel with these political developments, the Serbian government moved to fully absorb Kosovo's governance structures. On 5 July 1990, the Serbian parliament dissolved the Kosovo Assembly and government, assuming direct administrative control over the province. A new curriculum emphasizing Serbian history, language, and culture was imposed, and Albanian students were effectively barred from secondary education

61 J. MARKO, *The Revocation of the Kosovo Autonomy 1989–1991 and Its Consequences For the Idea of European Integration*, 2023, pp. 35–43.
62 JUDAH, p. 69.
63 Ibid.
64 CLARK, pp. 46–151.

in the state system.[65] In response, Kosovo Albanians initiated a nonviolent civil resistance movement, constructing a parallel institutional framework to provide education, healthcare, and limited social services. This parallel state was largely financed through the "3 percent tax,"[66] a voluntary levy imposed by the Kosovo Albanian community and supported by the diaspora in Western Europe. This strategy of self-organization sought to preserve Albanian identity under occupation and to advance the case for independence through peaceful resistance.

During the initial phase of Yugoslavia's dissolution, the European Union, through the conferences held in The Hague (1991) and London (1992), sought to regulate the disintegration process. However, Kosovo – lacking the status of a constituent republic – remained marginal to the international agenda and was predominantly framed as a human rights concern, devoid of recognition of its right to self-determination.[67]

However, the intensification of Serbian repression, coupled with the rise of radical nationalist paramilitary groups, led to the continued displacement of Kosovo Albanians.[68] By 1993, an estimated 400,000 Albanians had fled the former Yugoslavia, with the majority seeking refuge in Western Europe.[69] This mass emigration signaled not only the scale of the crisis but also the failure of the Yugoslav state to accommodate Kosovo's Albanian population through any framework short of subjugation.

Dayton and the Marginalization of the Kosovo Question

A critical juncture in the trajectory of the Kosovo conflict occurred in late 1995 with the convening of the Dayton Peace Conference, led by the United States and aimed at ending the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.[70]

65 VICKERS, p. 247.

66 JUDAH, p. 73.

67 For more information, see: UKSHINI, pp.77–82.

68 The growing exodus of young Albanian men from Kosovo was highly satisfactory for Belgrade as it removed a potential opposition army from the region as well as obviating the need to train and arm Albanians in the Serbian Army.

69 Albanians had left Kosovo, most for the following countries: Germany (120,000), Switzerland (95,000), Sweden (35,000), Austria (23,000), Belgium (8,000), France (5,000), Denmark (5,000), Italy (4,000), Norway (3,500), Britain (3,000), the Netherlands (2,000), Finland (600), and Luxembourg (200); Croatia had received about 40,000, Slovenia 15,000 and the Republic of Albania 25,000. See: VIKERS, p. 272.

70 B. BISERKO, *Perceptions of Serbia's Elite in Relation to the Dayton Agreement*: http://www.spiritofbosnia.org/volume-6-no-4-2011-october/perceptions-of-serbia%E2%80%99s-elite-in-relation-to-the-dayton-agreement/ [visited 2012–04–19].

From a political and strategic perspective, two pivotal developments fundamentally altered the trajectory of Kosovo. The first was the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement in November 1995, which brought an end to the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In its aftermath, most international sanctions imposed on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – comprising Serbia and Montenegro – were lifted, and the European Union formally recognized this entity, established in 1992, as the legal successor to the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. For the Albanian population of Kosovo, this recognition represented a profound political and psychological blow.[71]

While the Dayton Agreement successfully halted the bloodshed in Bosnia, it conspicuously excluded the question of Kosovo from its agenda. This omission was deeply disillusioning for Kosovo Albanians, particularly those committed to the strategy of nonviolent resistance championed by the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) and its leader, Ibrahim Rugova. The exclusion signaled to many Albanians that their peaceful demands for autonomy – or eventual independence – were not considered a priority by the international community.[72]

This growing sense of marginalization was compounded in April 1996, when several European Union member states extended diplomatic recognition to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), composed of Serbia and Montenegro. For Kosovo Albanians, this act was perceived as premature and unjust, effectively legitimizing a regime that continued to deny fundamental rights to the Albanian majority in Kosovo. It further undermined the legitimacy of Rugova's nonviolent platform and emboldened alternative approaches, including calls for armed resistance.

The signing of the Dayton Agreement intensified political radicalization among segments of the Albanian population, particularly the youth. Many came to believe that passive resistance had reached its limits and that international diplomacy would only respond to visible crises involving large-scale violence. Unlike Bosnia or Croatia, Kosovo remained relatively calm in this period, which paradoxically worked against the urgency of its case in international forums. Global attention was focused on the graphic atrocities committed in Sarajevo, Srebrenica, and Vukovar – scenes that were far more likely to mobilize Western public opinion and policy. Although numerous diplomats, envoys, and observers

71 JUDAH, pp. 78.
72 UKSHINI, *Nga lufta në paqe*, pp. 75–76.

visited Kosovo and issued warnings about the unsustainable conditions facing Albanians, these assessments largely failed to resonate within international decision-making bodies.

By 1997, the most forceful articulation of the demand for self-determination emerged through the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), a nascent insurgent movement committed to achieving Kosovo's independence through armed struggle. As political scientist Henry Perritt and others have noted, the KLA's emergence marked a strategic rupture with Rugova's gradualist approach and introduced a new phase of escalation in the Kosovo crisis.[73] One Kosovar leader reportedly told U. S. Ambassador Christopher Hill: "It is where it began and where it will end"[74] – underscoring the symbolic and geopolitical centrality of Kosovo within the broader Yugoslav collapse.

The KLA rapidly expanded its influence, particularly in the rural regions of Drenica, launching low-intensity attacks against Serbian police and administrative targets. In response, Serbian forces escalated their counterinsurgency operations. A series of coordinated assaults began in early 1998, targeting the villages of Qirez and Likoshan. On 5 March 1998, Serbian special police launched a major operation in Prekaz, the hometown of senior KLA commander Adem Jashari. The assault resulted in the death of Jashari and nearly his entire extended family, including women and children – only one young girl survived.[75] Rather than crushing the insurgency, the massacre galvanized Albanian public opinion and accelerated recruitment to the KLA, transforming the conflict into a mass-based resistance movement.

In addition to formal security operations, Serbian paramilitary units – some composed of convicted criminals released on the condition of combat participation – engaged in widespread atrocities, including extrajudicial killings, looting, and the systematic destruction of civilian property. These acts prompted a large-scale displacement of Kosovo's Albanian population. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), by the conclusion of the NATO bombing campaign in 1999, approximately 848,100 Albanians had fled Kosovo: 444,600 to Albania, 244,500 to North Macedonia, 69,000 to Monte-

73 VIKERS, p. 292.

74 Ch. R. HILL, *Life on the Frontlines of American Diplomacy*, New York 2014, p. 122.

75 HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, *Under Orders, War Crimes in Kosovo*, 2001, 38, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/Under_Orders_En_Combined.pdf.

negro, and 91,057 to other countries.[76] When combined with internally displaced persons, the total number of displaced Albanians exceeded 1.45 million. These figures are corroborated by Tim Judah,[77] a leading authority on the Balkans.

A widely accepted interpretation among scholars and human rights organizations is that the forced expulsion of Albanians was not incidental but rather a strategic objective of Slobodan Milošević's wartime policy. The campaign bore the hallmarks of ethnic cleansing, echoing the earlier patterns of demographic engineering witnessed in Bosnia. Figures such as Vojislav Šešelj,[78] leader of the Serbian Radical Party and former Deputy Prime Minister, had long advocated for the mass removal of Albanians as a means of securing Serbia's control over Kosovo. One of the tactics employed during the mass exodus was the systematic confiscation of personal identification documents from fleeing Albanians at border crossings – an act designed to render return logistically and legally difficult, if not impossible.

In contrast to Belgrade's repressive strategy, the KLA evolved into one of the most effective guerrilla movements of the post-Cold War era. By integrating military operations with a clear political agenda, the organization succeeded in mobilizing support from both the Kosovar diaspora and segments of the international community. Its strategy of armed resistance, coupled with the Serbian regime's increasingly brutal tactics, helped internationalize the conflict and catalyzed NATO's intervention in March 1999. In this sense, the KLA was instrumental not only in challenging the Yugoslav state militarily but also in reshaping the geopolitical framework of the Kosovo question[79] – transforming it from a marginalized provincial issue into a matter of urgent international concern.

The Kosovo War, NATO Intervention, and the Removal of Yugoslav Control (1999)

The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) emerged as the principal Albanian actor in the final phase of the Kosovo conflict, culminating in 1999 with

76 N. MORRIS, UNHCR and Kosovo: a personal view from within UNHCR, in: *Forced Migration Review*, https://www.fmreview.org/morris-n/.

77 JUDAH, p. 88.

78 For a Seselj statement on forced expulsions published in The Greater Serbia Journal on October 14, 1995, see: www.alb-net.com/cleansing.htm, [visited March 2024].

79 H. H. PERRIT, *Kosovo Liberation Army: The Inside Story of an Insurgency*, University of Illinois Press 2008, p. 184.

its de facto victory – a result shaped largely by the breakdown of peace negotiations held in Rambouillet and Paris between February and March of that year. The failure of these talks, precipitated by Belgrade's refusal to accept the proposed political settlement, provided the pretext for NATO's unprecedented military intervention against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY).[80] In contrast to the drawn-out international responses in Bosnia and Croatia, Western powers demonstrated a greater willingness to intervene decisively in Kosovo, marking a new chapter in post-Cold War conflict resolution.

On 24 March 1999, NATO launched a sustained aerial bombing campaign aimed at halting the escalating violence against the Albanian population of Kosovo. The intervention was historically significant as it represented the first deployment of NATO military force without prior authorization from the United Nations Security Council.[81] Justified by Western governments under the doctrine of "humanitarian intervention," the campaign sought to prevent further atrocities and large-scale displacement. While officially aimed at military targets, NATO strikes also hit government infrastructure and state institutions, including the General Staff building in Belgrade, to degrade the operational and symbolic capacity of the Milošević regime.[82]

Despite NATO's stated efforts to minimize civilian casualties through advance warnings and precision targeting, the campaign nonetheless resulted in significant civilian losses. Both Serbs and Albanians were among the hundreds killed or injured, with the destruction of essential infrastructure compounding the humanitarian crisis.[83] Nevertheless,

80 International intervention in Kosovo did not occur for the first time in 1999. International intervention in Macedonia did not occur for the first time in 2001. Beginning in 1902, "the international community", then known as "the Great Powers", intervened diplomatically in the Kosovo Vilayet, then a district or province of Ottoman Turkey. Skopje was then the capital of the Kosovo Vilayet or district. See: C. SAVICH – Ch. DELISO, *International Intervention in Macedonia, 1903–1909: The Mürzsteg Reforms*, in: www.balkanalysis.com [2006–03–13]; G. HUBKA, *Die österreichisch-ungarische Offiziersmission in Makedonien 1903–1909*, Wien 1910.

81 China and Russia let it be known that they would exercise their veto powers in the council, blocking its potential sanctioning of the operation. See: A. GLASS, NATO begins bombing Serbia, in: *POLITICO LLC*, March 24, 2019.

82 JUDAH, p. 89.

83 THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNAL FOR THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA, CASE No. IT-99-37, https://www.icty.org/x/cases/slobodan_milosevic/ind/en/mil-ii990524e.htm [2024–01–05].

the campaign succeeded in exerting substantial political and military pressure on Belgrade.

Following the commencement of NATO's bombing, the Yugoslav Army and Serbian police intensified their campaign of violence in Kosovo. According to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), these forces engaged in systematic attacks against Albanian-inhabited villages, involving widespread abuses such as killings, looting, arson, and forced displacement. Human Rights Watch (HRW) and other observers documented the destruction of hundreds of villages in Kosovo[84] through artillery bombardments and coordinated arson, highlighting the calculated and organized nature of the campaign.[85]

The ICTY later characterized these actions as part of a "joint criminal enterprise,"[86] the objective of which was the forced expulsion of a substantial portion of Kosovo's Albanian population in order to maintain Serbian control over the province. Military operations typically followed a methodical pattern: the encirclement and shelling of villages, followed by ground incursions by police and military units, during which civilians were subjected to extrajudicial killings, physical assault, forced displacement, and sexual violence.[87] These operations formed the core of a campaign of ethnic cleansing designed to terrorize the population and dismantle Albanian political and social life in Kosovo.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Serbian security forces expelled approximately 525,787 Albanians from Kosovo during the conflict. When combined with those displaced before and during the NATO campaign, the total number of externally and internally displaced persons reached approximately 862,979. This mass displacement affected over 80 percent of Kosovo's total population and an estimated 90 percent of its Albanian population.[88]

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84 HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, *Under Orders: War Crimes in Kosovo*, Archived from the original on 24 December 2024.

85 Ibid.

86 International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), Max Planck Encyclopedias of International Law [MPIL], January 2007, https://opil.ouplaw.com/display/10.1093/law:epil/9780199231690/law-9780199231690-e44.

87 Presuda Haškog suda, in: *Peščanik*, February 28, 2009, https://web.archive.org/web/20100518184511/http://www.pescanik.net/content/view/2764/65.

88 UNDER ORDERS, New York, Washington, London, Brussels, 2011, HRW, pp.4, https://www.hrw.org/reports/Under_Orders_En_Combined.pdf.

Despite continued NATO airstrikes, Belgrade's forces persisted in perpetrating atrocities. In response to the mounting humanitarian crisis, international organizations coordinated a large-scale relief operation, led by the UNHCR and supported by various donor countries and non-governmental organizations. Notably, NATO itself – while not a humanitarian body – played a critical logistical role in these efforts, facilitating aid delivery and refugee support through its operational capacities.

NATO's response to the Kosovo crisis can be conceptualized as a three-pronged strategy:

1. Military Intervention: NATO's air campaign, while controversial in terms of legality, was instrumental in halting the systemic violence perpetrated by Serbian forces.
2. Humanitarian Assistance: Simultaneously, NATO and its member states supported unprecedented humanitarian efforts to alleviate the suffering of displaced populations, in cooperation with the UNHCR and NGOs.
3. Post-Conflict Stabilization: Following the withdrawal of Yugoslav forces, NATO established the Kosovo Force (KFOR), a multinational peacekeeping mission tasked with enabling the safe return of refugees and creating a secure environment for postwar reconstruction.[89]

On 24 May 1999 – two months after the beginning of the NATO intervention – Slobodan Milošević and four senior officials were indicted by the ICTY for crimes committed in Kosovo, including the massacres at Meja and Reçak, and the deportation of over 800,000 Albanians. The indictment charged the defendants with planning, instigating, and participating in a widespread and systematic campaign of persecution.[90] The Tribunal described deliberate attacks on civilian populations, including shelling, arson, looting, and the destruction of civil records, including identity documents – a calculated strategy aimed at erasing the legal existence of Kosovo Albanians and impeding their return.[91]

This development marked a pivotal moment in the conflict, signaling a transformation in NATO's role – from coercive diplomacy to full-scale military engagement.[92] The ICTY indictment increased diplomatic pressure on Belgrade and further delegitimized the Milošević regime on the

89 Ambassador S. BALANZINO, NATO's humanitarian support to the victims of the Kosovo crisis, in: *NATO reviews*, No. 2, Summer 1999, p. 10.
90 JUDAH, p. 90.
91 WELLER, p. 203.
92 Ibid., p. 199.

international stage. Realizing that Russian support would not materialize in any decisive military or diplomatic form, Milošević began to reconsider his position. On 3 June 1999, he was visited by Russian envoy Viktor Chernomyrdin and Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, representing Russia and the West, respectively. Three days later, on 9 June 1999, the FRY signed the Military-Technical Agreement at Kumanovo, formally agreeing to withdraw all military and security forces from Kosovo.[93]

The symbolism of Kumanovo was profound. It was in this town that Serbian forces had defeated the Ottoman army in 1912 and subsequently captured Skopje (alb. Shkupi), then the capital of the Ottoman Vilayet of Kosovo. Now, nearly a century later, Serbia accepted unconditional withdrawal from the same territory.[94] The conflict did not conclude with a comprehensive peace agreement like Dayton, but rather with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244, which authorized an international civilian and military presence in Kosovo. While Resolution 1244 marked the end of hostilities, it did not resolve the political status of Kosovo, leaving a legacy of contested sovereignty that would define regional diplomacy for decades to follow.

Kosovo under International Administration: UNMIK, the Contact Group, and the Ahtisaari Process

Following the signing of the Military-Technical Agreement in Kumanovo, the United Nations Security Council convened on 10 June 1999 and adopted Resolution 1244, with 14 votes in favor, one abstention (China), and none opposed. This resolution established a dual structure of international governance over Kosovo: a military presence under the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR)[95] and a civilian administration through the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).[96] That same day, the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe was launched

93 Military Technical Agreement between the International Security Force (KFOR) and the Governments of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia, signed in Kumanovo, FYROM, 9 June 1999 (denominated Kumanovo Agreement). It can be found in 38 ILM (1999) 1217. See: J. NORRIS, *Collision Course: NATO, Russian and Kosovo*, Westport 2005, p. 223.

94 NATO Handbook: *Office of Information and Pree NATO*, Brussels 2001, p. 130.

95 The Kosovo Force (KFOR) is a NATO-led international peacekeeping force in Kosovo. See: KFOR Key Facts and Figures, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2019_02/20190213_2019-02-KFOR-Placemat.pdf [visited 2021–04–05].

96 United Nations Mission in Kosovo, https://unmik.unmissions.org/about.

at a conference in Cologne, Germany.[97] Modeled in part on the post-World War II Marshall Plan, the initiative aimed to promote regional reconstruction, democratization, and long-term stabilization across the Western Balkans.

Under the framework of Resolution 1244, Kosovo was placed under international administration, thereby terminating nearly nine decades of Serbian state authority, which had begun with the 1912–1913 Balkan Wars. Despite this significant shift, the resolution left Kosovo's final political status unresolved. Internal divisions within the European Union, combined with Russian opposition in the Security Council, prevented the emergence of a unified international position on the future of the province.

To address the growing urgency of the status question, the international community reactivated the Contact Group – a multilateral diplomatic mechanism composed of France, Germany, Italy, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Functioning analogously to the nineteenth-century Concert of Europe, the Contact Group was tasked with managing the post-conflict political process in Kosovo and maintaining regional equilibrium. In a historical echo of the 1912–1913 London Conference that addressed the post-Ottoman settlement in the Balkans, the Contact Group's composition reflected a geopolitical continuity, with one critical modification: the United States had replaced Austria-Hungary as a principal external actor and, like its predecessor, assumed a role generally supportive of Albanian national aspirations, counterbalancing the Russian Federation's pro-Serbian position.[98]

At this moment Kofi Annan asked Martti Ahtisaari to oversee talks on the future of Kosovo.[99] In its meeting on 4 November 2005, the Contact Group preemptively excluded the possibility of territorial partition between Kosovo's Albanian majority and Serbia, affirming the territorial integrity of Kosovo's administrative boundaries.[100] This position was

97 J. FISCHER, *Die rot-grünen Jahre. Vom Kosovokrieg bis zum 11. September*, Köln 2007, p. 248; M. JANINE CALICE, Dre Stabilitätspakt für Südosteuropa, in: *Aus Politik ung Zeitgeschichte*, 13, 14, 2001; UKSHINI, pp. 238–248; UKSHINI, *Kosova dhe Perëndimi*, pp. 295–303.

98 S. UKSHINI, *Kosova në politikën e jashtme të BE-së*, Tiranë, Prishtinë 2008, p. 166.

99 JUDAH, p. 111.

100 *Guiding principles of the Contact Group for a settlement of the status of Kosovo*, https://www.esiweb.org/pdf/kosovo_Contact%20Group%20-%20Ten%20Guiding%20principles%20for%20Ahtisaari.pdf.

reinforced by the principle of *uti possidetis juris*,[101] which stipulated that the internal boundaries of former federal units would serve as the basis for future international borders. Widely applied in post-colonial and post-socialist contexts, this principle aimed to prevent ethnic fragmentation and ensure political stability in newly formed states.[102]

Subsequently, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari as the Special Envoy to lead status negotiations between Kosovo and Serbia. The resulting *Comprehensive Proposal for the Settlement of the Status of Kosovo*, submitted on 2 February 2007, formed the culmination of negotiations held in Vienna from February 2006 to March 2007.[103] Although the talks failed to produce mutual agreement, the Ahtisaari Proposal became the de facto international blueprint for Kosovo's final status. It provided for the supervised independence of Kosovo within its existing borders, alongside extensive provisions for minority rights, democratic governance, and international oversight.

A central feature of the Ahtisaari Plan was the institutional entrenchment of a model of ethnic decentralization, aimed primarily at ensuring the protection and political participation of the Serb minority.[104] This framework granted Kosovo Serbs a level of autonomy and cultural protection unparalleled among national minorities in Europe, including the creation of Serb-majority municipalities, reserved seats in the legislature, and guaranteed representation in public institutions. While intended as a mechanism to promote integration and reconciliation, this model also imposed structural limitations on Kosovo's central authority and has been criticized for impeding the development of a cohesive and functional state apparatus.

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101 Uti possidetis is a principle in international law that territory and other property remains with its possessor at the end of a conflict, unless otherwise provided for by treaty; if such a treaty doesn't include conditions regarding the possession of property and territory taken during the war, then the principle of uti possidetis will prevail. See: H. GHEBREWEBET, *Identifying Units of Statehood and Determining International Boundaries: A Revised Look at the Doctrine of Uti Possidetis and the Principle of Self-Determination*, Frankfurt am Main 2006.

102 See: ICG, Kosovo: The Challenge of Transition, in: *Europe Report*, N°170, February 17, 2006, pp. 10–14.

103 United Nations Security Council. *Letter dated 26 March 2007 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council: Comprehensive proposal for Kosovo status settlement,* S/2007/168, Add.1. 26 March 2007.

104 A. DOVUTOGLLU, *Thellësia strategjike. Pozita ndërkombëtare e Turqisë*, Shtëpia botuese 2010, p. 366.

Concerns have subsequently emerged regarding proposals for an "Ahtisaari Plus" arrangement, particularly in northern Kosovo, where Serbian parallel structures continue to operate with the tacit support of Belgrade. Critics argue that such an arrangement risk reproducing the fragmented governance model established under the Dayton Peace Agreement in Bosnia and Herzegovina, potentially undermining Kosovo's internal sovereignty and long-term stability.

Despite broad international endorsement of the Ahtisaari framework, Serbia categorically rejected the proposal, a stance firmly supported by the Russian Federation. Russia's opposition echoed its historical resistance to Albanian independence during the Balkan Wars and has contributed to the continued international contestation of Kosovo's statehood. As a result, the United Nations Security Council was unable to adopt a binding resolution endorsing Kosovo's independence.

Nevertheless, Kosovo unilaterally declared independence on 17 February 2008,[105] grounding its action in the principles and institutional architecture set forth by the Ahtisaari Plan. Although the declaration did not carry Security Council endorsement, it was swiftly recognized by most Western states. As of seventeen years after independence, Kosovo has been recognized by 119 United Nations member states, reflecting a considerable degree of international legitimacy.[106] However, its admission to the United Nations remains blocked by the persistent opposition of Russia and China, both permanent members of the Security Council.

The international administration of Kosovo thus marked a profound transformation in the governance and geopolitical positioning of the province. Yet the incomplete consensus over its status continues to reflect deeper geopolitical divisions within the international system, particularly between Western liberal democracies and states espousing a sovereigntist approach to international law and territorial integrity.

Kosovo's Declaration of Independence and ICJ Advisory Opinion

On 17 February 2008, the Assembly of Kosovo adopted its declaration of independence, marking the second such proclamation by Kosovo's ethnic Albanian political leadership – the first having been issued on

105 JUDAH, pp. 140–145.

106 On 4 September 2020, the State of Israel and the Republic of Kosovo agreed to establish formal diplomatic relations. Israel has become the 117th country worldwide to recognise Kosovo since the country declared independence in 2008.

7 September 1990.[107] In response, the Government of Serbia announced on 26 March 2008 its intention to seek an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) regarding the legality of Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence under international law. This initiative culminated in a diplomatic campaign at the United Nations General Assembly during its September 2008[108] session, resulting in the adoption of Resolution 63/3 on 8 October 2008. The resolution, which passed with 77 votes in favor, 6 against, and 74 abstentions,[109] formally requested the ICJ – acting in its capacity as the principal judicial organ of the United Nations – to assess whether Kosovo's declaration was in accordance with international law.

In the proceedings before the ICJ, Kosovo and its supporting states argued that the 2008 declaration of independence was a political act of self-determination that did not contravene international law. They maintained that general international law neither explicitly prohibits nor authorizes declarations of independence, and therefore, such acts cannot be rendered illegal solely by the absence of consent from the parent state. This position drew on precedents from the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), particularly the unilateral declarations of Slovenia and Croatia in 1991, which had also been enacted without federal approval in Belgrade. Notably, Serbia had initially denounced these secessions as illegal but later accepted their legitimacy in practice, thereby contributing to an evolving international norm concerning secession in cases of systemic repression and state failure.[110]

A central element of Kosovo's legal argument before the Court was rooted in constitutional parity. According to the final constitutional framework of the SFRY, Kosovo, though formally an autonomous province, held a status functionally equivalent to that of the six constituent

107 H. CLARK, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, London 2000, p. 73.

108 *Serbia to go to ICJ over Kosovo*. B92.net. 26 March 2008. Archived from the original on 7 June 2011 [visited 2010–04–28].

109 *Accordance with international law of the unilateral declaration of independence in respect of Kosovo (PDF).* International Court of Justice. July 22, 2010, p. 4. Archived from the original (PDF) on April 12, 2021; *Kosovo in the International Court of Justice*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kosovo, Prishtinë 2010, p. 13.

110 Written Statements – USA (PDF). Archived from the original (PDF) on 5 June 2011 [visited 2010–07–24], https://web.archive.org/web/20110605051743/http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/141/15704.pdf.

republics. Between 1963 and 1974, constitutional reforms granted Kosovo (and Vojvodina) far-reaching competencies, including autonomous legislative, judicial, and administrative structures, participation in federal institutions, veto powers in the Federal Parliament,[111] and joint responsibilities in treaty ratification and foreign policy formation. Thus, Kosovo's status within the federal structure provided a legal foundation for its claim to self-determination.

However, this constitutional architecture was unilaterally dismantled during the 1980s by the administration of Slobodan Milošević, which implemented extralegal constitutional amendments to revoke Kosovo's autonomy, thereby contravening the principles of the Yugoslav constitutional order. The erosion of Kosovo's institutional autonomy and the broader pattern of repression underpinned Kosovo's argument that Serbia had forfeited its legal and moral claims over the territory.

Kosovo appointed Sir Michael Wood, a leading authority on international law, to head its legal team during the ICJ proceedings. The case marked an unprecedented moment in the Court's history, as all five permanent members of the UN Security Council – China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States – participated either through written submissions or oral statements.[112] The breadth of state participation underscored the legal and geopolitical salience of the issue. In its submission, Kosovo's legal team argued that the declaration of independence constituted a final and irreversible act, grounded in the province's unique historical and constitutional circumstances and framed as a necessity for preserving peace and stability in the Western Balkans.

Kosovo's position emphasized that its people had long demonstrated their will for self-determination, as evidenced at the 1999 Rambouillet Conference and throughout the period of international administration under UNMIK. Resolution 1244 itself, adopted in the wake of the NATO intervention, implicitly acknowledged the political framework set by

111 P. WILLIAMS – J. OBER, Is it true that there is no right of self-determination for Kosova?, in: A. DI LELLIO (ed.), *The case for Kosova: Passage to independence*, New York 2006, pp. 109–120.

112 Written statements: On 21 April 2009, the ICJ announced that 35 member states of the United Nations had filed written statements within the time-limit fixed by the court (17 April 2009) on the question of the legality of Kosovo's UDI. Kosovo also filed a written contribution.

the Rambouillet Accords, which had envisaged a political process to determine Kosovo's future status.[113]

Serbia's offers of "substantial autonomy" were viewed by Kosovo Albanians as insincere. Indeed, during final status negotiations, Serbia adopted a new constitution in 2006 that reaffirmed Kosovo as an integral part of its sovereign territory – an act widely interpreted as a repudiation of meaningful compromise. For many in Kosovo, this reaffirmed that Serbia regarded Kosovo not as a political community with rights, but as a territorial possession.[114]

On 22 July 2010, the ICJ issued its advisory opinion. By an overwhelming majority, the Court concluded that Kosovo's declaration of independence did not violate international law, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999), or the Constitutional Framework established by UNMIK. This marked a major diplomatic and legal victory for Kosovo and a significant setback for Serbia, effectively foreclosing attempts to reframe the issue through legal channels. The ruling reinforced Kosovo's status as a legitimate international actor and laid the groundwork for its engagement with Serbia as an equal interlocutor.

The Court clarified that Resolution 1244 had created a temporary legal regime for Kosovo, intended to stabilize the territory under international oversight. Except where otherwise stipulated, this framework superseded Serbia's domestic legal order. Moreover, the ICJ emphasized that the individuals who declared independence were not acting as representatives of Kosovo's Provisional Institutions of Self-Government under the UNMIK Constitutional Framework. Rather, they acted in a personal capacity, as political representatives of the people of Kosovo – a distinction that further insulated the declaration from claims of legal impropriety.

For Kosovo, the ICJ's opinion constituted both a legal and moral affirmation of its right to statehood following decades of systemic discrimination, repression, and violent conflict. The judgment reinforced the legitimacy and legality of its independence and strengthened Kosovo's standing within the international system. It also lent critical support to the principle of territorial integrity and the inviolability of Kosovo's existing borders, essential components of its state consolidation.

113 ICJ ADVISORY OPINION ON KOSOVO'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, Chapter 9, Diplomatic Relations, Succession, and Continuity of States, p. 4.

114 UN court hears Kosovo independence case, in: *BBC News*, December 1, 2009 [visited 2021–12–01].

Although non-binding, the ICJ's advisory opinion was widely interpreted as a catalyst for further international recognition and a steppingstone toward Kosovo's accession to major international organizations. As of 2024, 119 UN member states have recognized Kosovo's independence, reflecting both the success of Kosovo's diplomatic strategy and the enduring geopolitical divisions that continue to surround its status.[115] In addition it should be noted that regarding the authors of the declaration of independence the court concluded that they did not act Provisional Institutions of Self-Government within the Constitutional Framework, but rather as persons who acted together in their capacity as representatives of the people of Kosovo outside the framework of the interim administration.[116]

Reactions to the opinion were sharply polarized. Russia denounced the decision and, in a contradictory move, subsequently recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia – citing Kosovo as a legal precedent, despite its continued non-recognition of Kosovo itself. European Union member states that had already recognized Kosovo welcomed the ruling and urged further recognitions,[117] while the five non-recognizing EU members – Spain, Slovakia, Romania, Greece, and Cyprus – maintained their opposition, arguing that the ruling offered a narrow and contextual interpretation rather than a generalizable legal precedent.[118]

Serbia, together with Russia and the aforementioned EU states, rejected the ICJ's conclusion despite having initiated the proceedings. Following the decision, Russia under President Vladimir Putin sought to instrumentalize the opinion to justify its own regional interventions, including the 2008 recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia,[119] and

115 Accordance with International Law of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in Respect of Kosovo, Advisory Opinion, International Court of Justice, 22 July 2010 (hereinafter "Advisory Opinion"), par. 100. See. S. UKSHINI, Die Position der EU zur Unabhängigkeit des Kosovo im Kontext des Gutachtens des Internationalen Gerichtshofs, JEIH Journal of European Integration History, in: *JEIH*, 29, 2, 2023, pp. 327–348.

116 Advisory Opinion, par. 109.

117 P. BEAUMONT, Kosovo's independence is legal, UN court rules, in: *The Guardian*, July 22, 2010, [visited 2021–03–24].

118 H. KRUEGER, Implications of Kosovo, Abkhazia and South Ossetia for International Law – The Conduct of the Community of States in Current Secession Conflicts, in: *CRIA*, 3, 2, 2009, pp. 121–142.

119 When Russia decided to recognize South Ossetia and Abkhazia in August 2008.

the 2014 annexation of Crimea[120] and its aggressive politics against Georgia[121] and Ukraine. While contesting the claim that Kosovo was a *sui generis* case,[122] Russia's actions revealed a pattern of selective engagement with international legal norms – championing legal principles when advantageous while disregarding them when inconvenient.

Within the European Union, opposition to Kosovo's recognition continues to be shaped by internal concerns. Spain, for instance, fears that recognizing Kosovo could embolden secessionist movements in Catalonia and the Basque Country.[123] Similarly, Slovakia's hesitancy is linked to anxieties surrounding the Hungarian minority[124] in its southern regions, occasionally framed in terms of bilateral normalization with Serbia as a precondition for recognition.

On 9 September 2010, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 64/298,[125] which took note of the ICJ's Advisory Opinion and welcomed the European Union's willingness to facilitate dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia. While symbolically important, this resolution did not advance Kosovo's aspirations for UN membership, as China and Russia remain firmly opposed. China's position is shaped by its own concerns over separatism in regions such as Tibet and Xinjiang, while Russia's longstanding alliance with Serbia, dating back to the Eastern Crisis of 1877–1878, continues to inform its geopolitical posture in the Balkans.

In sum, the ICJ Advisory Opinion marked a watershed moment in the legal and diplomatic evolution of Kosovo's statehood. While it did not resolve all contested aspects of Kosovo's international status, it significantly bolstered Kosovo's legal position, enhanced its legitimacy in international fora, and reshaped the strategic calculations of both its allies and adversaries.

120 Putin signs laws on reunification of Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol with Russia, in: *ITAR TASS*, March 21, 2014.

121 Separatist leaders give no indication of imminent recognition from Moscow, in: *The Messenger*, February 20, 2008.

122 M. J. TOTTEN, *Russia's Kosovo Precedent*, September 5, 2008.

123 Kosovo-Calling, f. 13, file:///C:/Users/PC/Downloads/Kosovo-Calling-ALB%20(1).pdf.

124 Ibid., p. 61.

125 Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, 64/298, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/ROL%20A%20RES64%20298.pdf.

Conclusions

This study demonstrates that the Kosovo question represents a continuous thread in the political history of the Balkans, extending from the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913 through the dissolution of multinational Yugoslavia in the 1990s. The emergence of Kosovo as an independent state is part of the broader reshaping of the post-Ottoman and post-socialist order in Southeastern Europe. The Balkans, as a historically volatile and geostrategically significant region, remains one of Europe's most militarized areas – a condition driven not only by geopolitical rivalries but also by persistent fears of renewed conflict, which continue to compel states to allocate resources to security sectors, even amidst economic hardship.

In the post-Cold War era, the regional and international configuration of power has undergone significant transformations. Western European states, once divided, have coalesced into the European Union, which – though still marked by internal divisions – acts with greater coherence than in earlier periods. The traditional geopolitical counterweight to the Slav-Orthodox axis, once embodied by Austria-Hungary, has been replaced by the United States, which has assumed a leading role in crisis management and security policy in the Balkans since the 1990s. Nonetheless, the EU's foreign and security policy remains constrained by competing national interests, rendering its influence inconsistent and fragmented. Kosovo's integration into European structures, along with the broader Western Balkans, remains an essential condition for completing the EU's normative and territorial project. The region thus serves as a critical litmus test for the EU's capacity to act as a cohesive geopolitical actor.

The disintegration of Yugoslavia created a precarious equilibrium across the Western Balkans. While Kosovo's independence has redressed certain historical injustices, particularly those dating back to the early twentieth century, many unresolved questions remain. The emergence of Kosovo as a sovereign entity has partially recalibrated the regional balance between Albanian and Serbian national interests. However, many of the foundational tensions of the Balkan Wars – including unresolved territorial claims, contested historical narratives, and fragile interethnic relations – continue to shape the region's political landscape. External diplomatic interventions, often lacking neutrality and coherence, have at times exacerbated rather than resolved these challenges. The recurrence of conflict following Yugoslavia's collapse underscores the structural continuity of instability in the region, and the pursuit of durable peace remains contingent on the

full Europeanization of the Western Balkans – an objective accelerated by, though not completed through, NATO's intervention in Kosovo.

Kosovo's path to statehood is distinct in both form and substance. Unlike other former Yugoslav republics or minority groups, Kosovo Albanians experienced sustained, institutionalized discrimination and repression across multiple political regimes – from the interwar Kingdom of Yugoslavia to socialist Yugoslavia, and especially during the authoritarian rule of Slobodan Milošević. The revocation of Kosovo's autonomy in 1989, followed by a decade of apartheid-like governance, culminated in mass atrocities and forced displacement in 1998–1999. These conditions prompted NATO's military intervention, which was preceded by the failure of diplomatic negotiations at Rambouillet. Kosovo's 2008 declaration of independence did not occur in isolation but was the product of a decade-long international administration mandated by UN Security Council Resolution 1244 and guided by the UN Special Envoy's status negotiations.

The International Court of Justice's advisory opinion of 22 July 2010 confirmed that Kosovo's declaration of independence did not violate international law. While non-binding, the ruling conferred a significant degree of legal legitimacy upon Kosovo's statehood and provided crucial momentum for its diplomatic recognition. As of today, over 115 UN member states have recognized Kosovo, affirming the argument advanced by Martti Ahtisaari that independence constitutes the only viable foundation for Kosovo's political stability and economic viability.[126]

In its Advisory Opinion delivered on 22 July 2010, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued its long-awaited advisory opinion on the legality of Kosovo's declaration of independence of February 17, 2008. The ICJ concluded that "the adoption of [the] declaration did not violate any applicable rule of international law".[127] Although non-binding, the precedent-setting ICJ opinion provided key momentum to Kosovo's foreign policy, resulting in 119 countries recognizing its independence over time. In this light, Kosovo's statehood marks not only the realization of longstanding Albanian aspirations for self-determination but also the resolution of a century-old geopolitical injustice rooted in the original territorial reconfigurations of the Balkan Wars.

126 M. NICHOLS, U. N. report recommends Kosovo independence, in: *Reuters,* March 2007.

127 ICJ – Accordance with International Law of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in Respect of Kosovo (PDF), [visited 2024–01–03].