

The Interest of the Balkans Monarchies for the Annexation of the Territories of European Turkey - Resulted in the Establishment of the Balkan Alliance



History

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Abstract

The Young Turks through the ottomanization process aimed at centralizing politics. This political change brought dissatisfaction with both Christian and Muslim people. Meanwhile, the Italian - Turkish War (October 1811 - October 1912) and the Albanian uprisings shook the foundations of the Ottoman Empire. The Balkan monarchies and Tsarist Russia tried to use the created situation. Russia had shown support for Slavic-Orthodox monarchies. In these important times, Russia had the key role to play in initiating the dialogue on the Alliance's creation between Balkan monarchies. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, Albanians had been raised against the Ottoman Empire. In the 1911s the Albanian uprisings had brought great damage to Turkey. Precisely at the time when Albanians fought against the centuries-old enemy, Serbian politics against the Albanians were cunning and hypocritical. As Albanians fought against Turkish forces, Serbia made secret agreements with Bulgaria about creating a joint alliance aimed at annexing Albanian and Bulgarian lands. This alliance would later be joined by the Greeks and Montenegro. Russia intended to extend its authority to the Balkans. Against this stretch was Austria-Hungary and England. England was opposed to Russia's exit to the Mediterranean Sea, while Austria-Hungary was opposed, as Serbia and Montenegro stretching to Sandzak and Bulgaria in Macedonia would close its way to penetrate Thessaloniki. The interest of the Balkans monarchies for annexing the territories of European Turkey and the interest of Tsarist Russia for the extension of its authority there, resulted in the creation of the Balkans Alliance.

The doctrine of ottomanization in 1911 shocked the Ottoman Empire. The Young-Turks not only failed to attract the Christians, but turned the Muslims against themselves as well.⁴⁴ Such a policy caused dissatisfaction among people, not only to Christians but also to Muslims. Dissatisfaction turned into revolt, followed by the uprising of Albania, Yemen and Lebanon. "The Young-Turks regime with its reckless policy caused the weakening of the Ottoman Empire. The Balkan monarchies tried to use this situation, as well as the two antagonistic blocs, the Russian one and the block of the dualist kingdom. The latter two looked forward to the most convenient time to take advantage of the European Turkey territories. Even the Balkan monarchy diplomacies had annexation policy aspirations to Albanian and Macedonian territories."⁴⁵ Under these circumstances, when a difficult situation was created in the Ottoman Empire, "... a special role played the continuous uprisings in Albania."⁴⁶

The approximation of Balkan monarchies policies was favored by the established circumstances such as the Italian-Turkish War (October 1911 to October 15, 1912), which shook the Ottoman Empire and alarmed the diplomacy of the Great Powers as well as the European countries.

The optimal conditions for rapprochement between Serbia and Bulgaria were created shortly after the outbreak of the 1911 Albanian uprising and the Italian-Turkish war, in the same

⁴⁴ZekeriaCana, *Politika e Serbisë kundrejt çështjes shqiptare – 1903 – 1913*, Prishtinë, 2006, fq. 89

⁴⁵ПрвиБалканскират 1912-1913, трећакњига, Београд, 1960, стр.18.

⁴⁶Skënder Luarasi, *IsmailQemali*, Rilindja, Prishtinë, 1973, fq. 75.

year that broke out with Italy's initiative. In pushing the efforts for the rapprochement of Serbia and Bulgaria there was an effect of the collapse of understanding between Austria-Hungary and Russia, following the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, when Serbia urged Russia to aim for a new strategy to extend its hegemony into Balkans. Russia realized that to achieve such a goal would have to orient politics towards Serbia and Bulgaria.

Russia had always been a supporter of Bulgaria and Serbia and in order to be as close as possible to them, diplomatic meetings were exchanged. It is known that with the arrival of the Karadjordjevic (1904), Serbian politics changed towards Russia. Belgrade knew that Russia would be a supporter of Slavic interests, as it had been shown before for the creation of the Serbian state. Serbia needed Russia's support in the future to support the implementation of the annexation project for a Greater Serbia. Therefore, the turbulent country of Turkey would certainly be used by the Balkan countries, but not separately, because if they were disconnected from each other, it was easy for Turkey to overthrow them one by one. Therefore, Serbian diplomacy to execute the creation of TsarDusan's Serbia, besides the Russian support, it would necessarily be endeavored to find common language with the Balkan states, and in particular with Bulgaria due to Macedonian lands.

At the beginning of the first decade of the twentieth century, Albanians were in the war against "the sick man of Bosphorus" and surrounded by Slavic-Orthodox states, which had already made projects for annexation of Albanian lands. "Continuous decrees denied Albanians the right to autonomy and language; large military forces were deployed to their lands".⁴⁷ Under these circumstances, Albanians were in a very difficult situation. The condition of the Albanians was greatly burdened by tribal fragmentation as well.

The political situation had turned to Turkey's disadvantage. This was also made clear to the Great Powers and to the Slavic states that had longstanding dreams of extending their borders. The Great Powers among them were in opposite positions. Each of them aimed to extend the hegemony to the Balkans to annex the lands of European Turkey. But at that moment there were still no approximate stances. The Italian-Turkish war as well as the Albanian uprisings of 1911, and the expectation of the outbreak of the 1912 Albanian uprising, put Turkey in front of difficulties, which had no alternative but to use force.

It had already become clear that the status quo in the Balkan would not last any longer. For the diplomacy of that time it was understandable that the situation would get destabilizing towards the status quo. Even Albanian patriots in the course of events realized that Turkey would not have a long life in the Balkan. The complex state seriously alarmed Albanian patriots. Among them, Ismail Qemali tried to persuade European diplomats to support them. His meeting with the Austro-Hungarian ambassador in Paris, Szecsen⁴⁸, was of an informative nature regarding Turkey's plight,

⁴⁷Ibid., fq. 227.

⁴⁸Më gjerësisht: *StavroSkendi, Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar 1078- 1912*, Foenix, fq. 402.

but at the same time it was also a direct demand for the support of the Albanian people. Ismail Qemali had another meeting with the Hungarian deputy Bela de Raskovsky, who had come on the request of the foreign minister, Erental."⁴⁹Through the meetings, he made it clear to the European states that "we are primarily Albanians regardless of religion".⁵⁰

At the beginning of the second decade, the political scene was quite honored. It was at this time that the idea of supporting Albanians' demands for autonomy of Albania appeared. This idea originated from the dualistic government. Initially, this issue was seen with good sight by Bulgaria, because in this way the autonomy of Macedonia, which was in its favor and enabled the creation of a Greater Bulgaria, would be won. For this reason, "the Bulgarian government viewed Albanian uprisings as a useful tool for Turkey's weakening. So since 1909 it began to be allied to the insurgents. In addition, the uprisings were welcomed and as a pressure on Serbia. It calculated that with the creation of Albania's autonomy, it would stimulate the creation of Macedonia's autonomy. It would thus ease the realization of St. Stephen's claims."⁵¹

The created circumstances would lead to an Alliance between the Slav-Orthodox states, which were prone to the creation of medieval empires. This inclination would nurture Turkey's internal and external situation, which had been brought to the forefront of the crackdown. "The situation was such when the Ottoman Empire was at war with Italy in Africa, while the uprisings had broken out in Albania. This even more the bourgeois states of the Balkans even more, to enclose the agreements and prepare for war."⁵²

It is to be noted that the Young Turks government, for various reasons, was very damaging and could bring other developments. The attempt for centralization, which was proclaimed by the Young Turks Committee and the attempt to Islamize the entire empire, disturbed other peoples who were not Turkish, and more strongly than Istanbul had intended. Evidence of that concern was also the last two Albanian uprisings. They told people in Macedonia that Turkey found it difficult to defend itself from a determined enemy, even if it is much larger, because the uprisings in northern Albania did not end with the defeat of the insurgents, as there were cases in previous uprisings. The gate was forced to enter into an agreement with the insurgents and tried to make some important concessions they could not apply.

At the same time, the idea of Albania's autonomy spread throughout the Balkan, giving new hopes to old wishes, but fear on the other hand, as Albania's autonomy could be dangerous for Serbia, Greece and Montenegro. This fear of this concern prompted the Serbian regime to take measures to impede the execution of such an idea, which had to overcome annexation cravings.

⁴⁹Arben Puto, *Shqipëria Politike, 1912 – 1939*, Toena, 2009, fq. 33

⁵⁰A. Puto, *Shqipëria Politike, 1912-1939...*, fq. 33.

⁵¹Diplomatskiarhiv. IzvestajizSofijepov. Br. 204 od 17 aprila 1910; arhiva NR Srbije, Hartije dr. M. Milovanovica, fasc. XXVI, str.- 57-60, fac. XI, str. 17-20, 21, citim *PrviBalkanskiRat 19-1913*, Beograd 1959, str.79.

⁵²MihailoApostolski, *Velikobugarskepretenzijeod San Stefana do danas*, izd. "VukKaradžić", Beograd, 1978, . Naslov, Igre i ratovibalkanskihburzoacije, str. 64.

"The fear of its own claims (of the Balkan states) gave opportune moments for the Balkans to be joined ..."⁵³

The claims of the Balkan states for the annexation of Albanian lands date back to the beginning of the 19th century, even before the "Načertanije." They were institutionalized and had a lasting influence on the cohesion of Serbian nationalism. On the other hand, the Serbian government was trying to channel the uprisings of Albanians to the benefit of their own interests. By diplomatic means, in the spring of 1909, it contacted the rebels, and in 1910 decided to help, mainly with moral help, by urging the insurgents to fight against the Turkish occupation.

The Serbian government has been pursuing a deceptive policy against Albanians: "Albanians were being pushed for stronger resistance, not to defeat Turkey, but to lose more from the Turks. In Belgrade it was calculated: the more Albanians weakened and were in a difficult situation, the easier they would withdraw from cooperation and later, when the conditions to exit on Shengjin Gulf would be created, the Albanians would be put under Serbian domination. For this reason, during the years 1909-1910, the Serbian government took care not to cause difficulties for Turkey to overcome the Albanian uprisings..."⁵⁴

Montenegro's position on the Albanian issue was not seen with good sight by the Serbian government. Montenegro helped morally and materially the Albanian insurgents who had been sheltered there in the fall of 1910. Belgrade watched Cetin on suspicion. In fact, Montenegro through the Albanian insurgents tried to extend its hegemony to the Sanjak of Shkodra and to a part of Kosovo. Cetina saw it necessary to order Belgrade for a closer relationship between them: "As soon as possible, you should actively appear, because the national awareness of Albanians has begun, if events are allowed to continue to develop, they will question Serbia's wish to exit in the Adriatic Sea through Albania and Montenegro's wish for Shkodra".⁵⁵

Serbia had shown earlier ambitions for the annexation of Kosovo, Northern Albania and Macedonia's partition. Even Bulgaria wanted an autonomous Macedonian province. Such circumstances have affected the Serbian government to accelerate the negotiation process, primarily with Bulgaria and later with Greece and with Montenegro. If we look at the course of the process toward alliances that were happening at that time, we notice that, "... when newslavism, practically a third season of pan-Slavicism, it gained momentum in the Russian elite, including the czar Nicholas II, and new generations of politicians and Slavic intellectuals in the Balkan."⁵⁶

The Albanian uprisings, the Young Turks revolution, and the Italian-Turkish war gave signs to Balkan bourgeois states to expedite the arrangements to be unique to the issue of the expulsion of the Ottoman Empire from Balkan lands.

⁵³ *Ilustrovana Istorija Balkanskog Rata - 1912- 1913*, Knjigaprva, Beograd, 1913, str. 9.

⁵⁴ Arhiv NR Srbije, Hartije dr. M. Milovanovica, fasc. XI, str. 13-21, fasc. XXVI, str. 57-60, fasc. XVI, str 21-47.

⁵⁵ Нзвештај са Цетињапов. др. 3,4,5,11 од 2,3,4 и 13 јан. 1911; забелешке српског посланика на Цетињу о разговор усне кимодчланова владе Црне Горе и лискраљем Николом (бездроја и датума, вероватно писане почетком јануара 1911).

⁵⁶ Egidio Evetich, *Luftërat ballkanike*, Shtëpia botuese "Dituria", 2008, fq. 36.

This would be achieved by the interstate agreement for the decommissioning of European Turkey territories after Turkish expulsion. It was such a situation to erase the Balkan states to and to renew their medieval countries.

Naturally, until the first attempts to find a common approach between Serbia and Bulgaria, there were significant divergences between the Balkan states, but it was necessary to think more seriously about an inter-state unity.

"On the horizon of southern Europe, new line of states opposite of the Ottoman Empire was seen, who aimed at engulfing the territories of Balkan Turkey, but until shortly before negotiations began to agree to act collectively, each of them aimed, that in the future there would be divisions in those territories. If each of them had acted on their own, there would have been serious consequences."⁵⁷

The Balkan League was preceded by the diplomatic war between the Great Powers for domination in the Balkans, as well as between the Balkan states themselves, who aimed at satisfying their claims and interests, which revolve around the liberation of Slavic and Greek lands that were still under Turkish yoke. The initiation of that covenant was preceded by controversy over the separation of lands of the Balkan Turkey.

By the end of the agreements, the inter-state relations between the four Balkan states were not so good, because of the annexation ambitions there were antagonisms in the aspect of rivalry.

The created circumstances dictated that their European annexation projects could only be achieved through serious agreements between them. Therefore, an effort was needed to find common ground on the issue of aspirations, namely the annexation of Turkey's territories.

One of them should take the initiative in avoiding rivalry and creating a friendly climate, with the aim of fulfilling specific interests for the interested parties.

The Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Serbia, Milovan Milovanovic, has the credits for such an initiative.⁵⁸ He developed a diplomatic war against the fulfilling of Albania's independence, namely its territories under the administration of the Ottoman Empire.

Also in this regard, Russian diplomats Sergey Dimitrijevic Sazanov, Nikolai Valeriyevich Caricov, Nikolay Henrikovic Hartvig, as well as Bulgarian diplomat Ivan Geshov and

⁵⁷Z. Cana, *Politika e Serbisë kundrejt çështjes shqiptare -1903 – 1913...*, p. 90.

⁵⁸Milovan Milovanović (1863- 1912) doktoroi në Pariz. Ishte diplomat e politikan i shquar, kryeministër dhe ministër i jashtëm i Mbretërisë serbe: inisiatori dhe kreatori i Aleancës ballkanike.

a number of other diplomats, as well as the Russian Tsar and kings of the four Balkan countries played a significant role.

Serbs followed the line of Serbian politics according to Ilia Garashanin's project, in which was foreseen the enlargement of Serbia's borders with Albanian lands, and even the exit in the Adriatic Sea. Serbia's exit to the sea was considered by it as one of the problems that had to be resolved. The right time was approaching. The more Turkey was weakening, the closer the Balkan countries were approaching. The neighbors of Albanian lands were approaching, aiming at creating a new Balkan map. The Dawn of the twentieth century found European diplomacy divided into two antagonistic blocks.

In such circumstances, the Tsarist Russia was interested in extending its hegemony in the Balkans. It was trying to accomplish such a goal through Balkan Slavic States. With the intervention of Russian diplomacy, the first preparations for the Serbian-Bulgarian agreement began. Serbo-Bulgarian talks always evolved with the knowledge of the Russian ambassador Nikolai Hartvig in Belgrade and Alexander Nekludov in Sofia. It is obvious that this was happening with the approval of the Tsar Nicholas II. In October 1911, Cheshkov and Milovanovic outlined the precursory conditions for a political and military alliance. Initially, negotiations for a joint alliance began between Serbia and Bulgaria.

They focused on agreeing on the heritage of the lands of Balkan Turkey. For this reason, too many tedious discussions took place, as it was about expanding the state borders of the negotiating parties, which worked for their own state interests.

The created circumstances dictated an agreement between the Slav-Orthodox states. Albanians would have to face thunderstorms, which would bring unexpected bloodshed, and the scissors of strength would amputate their limbs; the territories around them would be devoured. The agreement would "foresee, among other things, the division of Albanian lands in the east and northeast."⁵⁹

Thus, the lands in the north and west of the Sharri Mountains, where was the vilayet of Kosovo and Novi Pazar's Sanjak, would be annexed by Serbia, while Bulgaria would be allowed to annex the eastern areas of Rodop Mountain and the Struma River. According to the treaty it was foreseen that Serbia would secure the exit to the Adriatic Sea, through the detriment of the Albanian lands.

So the Italian-Turkish war and the 1911 Albanian uprising prompted Balkan monarchies to think about the future of their own countries because this year was a year of great hopes for the sinking of the Turkish Empire. In addition to the commitment of Serbia and Bulgaria to establish the alliance, Greece had long since emerged the idea of an alliance with Sofia. Regarding Greece's

⁵⁹A. Puto, *Pavarësia e Shqiptare dhe diplomacia e Fuqive të Mëdha, 1912- 1914...*, fq. 75.

idea of approaching Bulgaria "representatives of Russian diplomacy in Sofia advised the Bulgarian government that relations with Greece have to be cautious because the Athens government, relying on Bulgaria could spur the war with Turkey because of the Crete issue".⁶⁰Russia's representative Nekludov announced Petrograd about the Greek proposal. Petrograd recommended that the Bulgarian-Greek alliance could be made within the framework of preserving the status quo. Geshov declined to maintain the status quo. For this matter he was categorical. He demanded that the issue of the Greek-Bulgarian agreement is of interest to King Ferdinand himself. Serbia was in constant contact and began to have a closer positions. This affected them not to fear each other.

While Albanians were engaged in weapons to defend their lands, the neighboring countries were initially working hard with covert diplomatic channels to strengthen and secure their positions and to benefit in the future from the Balkan territories that were still under the administration of the Ottoman Empire. The Politics of the Great Powers and of the Balkan states were taking new directions, which were conditioned by the situation created by the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina on October 8, 1908 by the Habsburg Empire, as well as by the irritation of the Czarist Russia on the issue of annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austro-Hungary. Likewise, in the direction of events, the failure of the Young Turks to promise for the equality of Ottoman citizens, regardless of religious affiliation, also played a role. "The Young Turks Revolution lied to those little hopes that were fueled in some districts for a peaceful emancipation process within the framework of the empire"⁶¹

The Great Powers were divided in two because of the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary. Russia saw Austro-Hungary as an impermissible enemy. "But England and Austria-Hungary fought against the spread of Russian authority in the Balkans. First, he could not agree that Russia should have free access to the Mediterranean Sea, while the second was opposed, because if Serbia and Montenegro would extend to Sanjak and Bulgaria in Macedonia, its streets would be closed to penetrate in Thessaloniki".⁶²This issue also influenced the approach of Balkan Slavic-Orthodox monarchies.

An important role in channeling the flows in favor of Serbia and the Slav-Orthodox states, was played by the Serbian minister and diplomat Dr. Milan Milovanovic. When the situation in the Balkans was exacerbated by the Albanian insurgents, supported by the Bulgarian and Montenegrin governments, the Serbian government feared that Albanians could gain autonomy. Such a victory contradicted Serbia's expansionist goals. Therefore, they continued to try to impede the aspirations of the Albanian insurgents. At the beginning of September 1911, a visit made by King Petrit I to Petrograd was also used for this purpose. During this time, Serbian government leader MilovanMilovanovic held talks with the Russian emperor and representatives of the Russian government. During the talks, he spoke about the current situation in the Balkans with a

⁶⁰*PrviBalkanskiRat*, Beograd, 1959, prvaknjiga, str.120.

⁶¹Prof. Arben Puto, *Çështja shqiptare në aktet ndërkombëtare të periudhës së imperializmit*, Vëllimi I, Sh.B. "8 Nëntori", fq.68

⁶²*Prvibalkanskirat – 1912 – 1913 – Operaciasrpskevojske*, Prvaknjiga, Beograd 1959, str. 10.

special emphasis on insisting on the repression of the Albanian uprisings. He also accused King Nicholas of "knowingly or unknowingly serving the interests of Austria-Hungary to the detriment of his own country and to the detriment of serbism."⁶³

Milovanovic convinced Russia that it was necessary and a must for the Slavic-orthodox countries to approach the political stance in order to prevent the spread of Austro-Hungarian hegemony in the Balkan. Serbia feared the Albanian element, which had just begun to raise national awareness. Russia assured Belgrade that it would deal with Sofia and Cetin to cut off the Albanian uprisings and approach their policy positions. At the same time, it would work for the benefit of cooperation between Balkan monarchies. A few days after the visit of Petri I, by the end of September 1911, Italian military forces entered into a war against Turkey on the issue of Tripolis. This disturbed and irritated the policies of the Slavic and Greek states, because they feared Austro-Hungary would take any expansionist action in the Balkans that could undermine their expansionist goals. Clearly it was seen that the status quo had come to an ending.

The Bulgarian government, according to the Russian council, agreed to enter into negotiations with Serbia: "on the basis of the brotherly limitations and common interests of both countries ..."⁶⁴

For this, Rizovi went to Belgrade for the deal. Russian diplomat Nekludovi was aware that Bulgaria accepted co-operation with Serbia. Russia, through a telegram, announced to Belgrade and Sofia that they approve their agreement "in order to preserve the status quo." At the same time, this sounded like a reminder that no action was allowed on its own by the Russian side.

The interest of the Serbian and Bulgarian monarchies for the annexation of the Balkan territories, as well as the interest of Tsarist Russia for the expansion of hegemony in the Balkans, made it possible for an alliance between Slavic-Orthodox monarchies.

⁶³*PrviBalkanskiRat 1912 – 1913...*, str. 84.

⁶⁴*Ibid.* str. 86