



ORIGINAL PAPER

**Balancing Romania-Russia Relations: A Grounding of the
Balkan Crisis Through Proper Application of
Political Conditionalities**

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Abstract

This Article analyzes the evolution of political and diplomatic relations between Romania and Russia in the years 1885-1913. During the Balkan crisis of 1885-1886 there were marked Russian-Romanian divergences because the Romanian diplomacy supported the election of Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg at the Bulgarian throne, the candidate backed by Austria-Hungary. In the late nineteenth century, Romanian-Russian relations, closely supervised by the diplomacy of the Central Powers, experienced a sensible improvement. It was due to the intention expressed by the two countries to maintain the status quo in the Balkans. However, there were some obstacles that separated Romania from Russia. Romania's attitude towards the Balkan crisis had a particular importance to Russia. Attracting Romania in the Russian sphere of influence would not only have created a bridge with the Slavic states in the Balkans, but also would have considerably diminished possibilities of Austria-Hungary to counter its policy in Southeastern Europe.

Keywords: Romania, Russia, Balkan Crisis, First Balkan War, Second Balkan War, international relations

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Balkan Crisis: a political conditionality?

From the last decades of the 19th century until 1916, Russia and Romania found themselves in two systems of opposed alliances, since both had divergent interests in the Balkan area. Russia's efforts to expand its influence in the Balkans met with the Austro-Hungarian resistance which aimed at the same objective. Since Russia's claims in the Balkans were sustained in most cases by the Triple Entente allies, France and Great Britain, and the Austro-Hungarian claims were sustained by Germany, the Balkan Peninsula was about to face the strong political pressures from both sides. After the proclamation of independence the main objective of the Romanian foreign policy was the recovery of all the Romanian territories.

In the 18th century and during the first half of the 19th century Romania was in a special situation. Its territory was situated between three powerful empires (Jurasco, 1913: 9-10). The Romanian Principalities, which were part of the Turkish possessions, awoke a conquering desire to both Austria and Russia. This gave a particular note to their political history. In fact, the geographical situation on one hand submitted them to great difficulties and on the other was favourable to them. By adhering to one of the powers against another or against the other two, the Principalities could obtain important advantages (Boldur, 2000: 35).

The Ottoman Empire stopped being a redoubtable opponent to Romania after the latter gained its independence. But Romania was facing two great empires: Russia and Austria-Hungary. The problem was: whom should it ally with? Practically, Romania couldn't have sincere friendly relations with neither of them, because both had got Romanian provinces and were trying to strengthen their domination over them. Economic interests were leading it towards Austria and its ally, Germany. On the other hand, Russia's aggressiveness, its projects for territorial conquests, its desire to forestall the gorges represented a real threat. Pan-Slavism, as a guiding idea of the Russian foreign policy, pushed Romania farther from Russia and made it look for support somewhere else. As a matter of fact, right before the proclamation of independence in 1877, Gheorghe Brătianu revealed Russia's lack of good faith, the latter having declared that it had no interests towards the Romanian Principalities. He also denounced the danger of the Pan-Slavic idea for the entire Europe (Brătianu, 1877: 53).

These suspicions made Romania sign a secret treaty with the Triple Alliance. Therefore, the anti-Russian attitude was getting worse or was fading away as the Russian peril became more or less threatening. We must mention that certain Russian literary Pan-Slavic currents were liable to cause violent reactions in Romania. The political situation in Russia between 1880- 1890 led to the appearance of a philosophical and literary doctrine, which sustained the theories of the social conservatism and the exaltation of the national idea, which gave Russia a worldwide mission. Danilevski, Strahov and Leontiev were all presenting, in their own manner, the well-known thesis regarding the imminent fall of the Western world to which they opposed the certainty of a future ascent of the Slavic spirituality, meant to overrule the entire Europe. These ideas echoed in Romania. Dimitrie A. Sturdza underlined the idea of the peril that Pan-Slavism represented for Europe (Sturdza, 1890: 25). He referred to Danilevski's project that aimed at the union of all Slavic people. He also drew a hypothetical map of Russia after an eventual takeover of the entire Balkan Peninsula.

Referring to the Romanian-Russian relations, Take Ionescu said that Romania's existence was incompatible with the ideal pursued by the Russian empire: "The Tsarist

Empire does everything possible to subjugate us". Among the three directions that Russia drew towards Persia, Far East and the Mediterranean, the last was the most important. There, on the shores of Bosphorus and Dardanelles, was the key to Europe. "All the efforts made by the empire, all its aspirations, all the Russian impetus are heading towards that point". The Russian conquests in this region would have threatened Romania's existence itself. "We cannot talk about agreements, compromises and concessions. If we still exist, Russia will experience a failure in its plans which have animated the heart of the Russians, for two centuries. If the neighbouring empire succeeds in accomplishing the dream it has pursued with so much confidence and tenacity, the Romanian state and people will become just a memory. This is the truth", concludes the author (Ionescu, 1891: 18-19).

In this way, in parallel with the idea of the Slavic special intrusion in Europe, stated by certain circles of the Russian society, in Romania an increasing peril began to shape. The near future proved that the suspicions regarding Russia's intentions to have an influence in the Balkans were not without base, since Russia tried to impose its authority in Bulgaria (Pogodin, 1910: 199-224), to control it and its military forces. The episode related to baron Kaulbars' mission in Bulgaria outlined the failure suffered by Russia (Jigarev, 1896: 221). The situation in the Balkans got worst in September 1885, when the mutiny from Eastern Rumelia outburst, leading to the proclamation of this province's union with Bulgaria, under the reign of Alexander von Battenberg. This union contradicted the Treaty of Berlin in 1878 which specified that it could not be done without the approval of the Great Powers (Jelavich, 2000a: 328-329).

On the other hand, the union of the two Bulgarian states was seriously affecting the force balance in the Balkans and that was why Serbia, supported by Austria- Hungary, declared war to Bulgaria in the same year, in November. The Bulgarian- Serbian war ended with the defeat of the Serbian army. Russia, who in 1878 had supported the creation of the Great Bulgaria, provided that it remained under its influence, was now against the union of 1885. The Bulgarian attitude of defying Russia changed Great Britain's reaction, the latter situating in a favourable position towards the events. After negotiations, which had been provoked by the British diplomacy at the beginning of 1886, the sultan accepted to name Alexander von Battenberg the governor of Eastern Rumelia, which remained formally under the Sublime Porte's suzerainty. In fact, in this way the union of the province with Bulgaria was recognized (Jelavich, 2000a: 329).

During these events the Romanian government brought up a moderate, neutral policy and was concerned with locating the conflict. As a token of appreciation of the Romanian state, for its just attitude and its role in maintaining the status quo in the Balkan Peninsula, the treaties for establishing peace, that was expected to end the Serbian-Bulgarian conflict started in 1885, began in Bucharest on the 23rd of January 1886 (The Service of the National Central Historical Archives, Bucharest, 1886: 2). Regarding the decisions that were adopted, soon reactions of the Great Powers appeared. Thus, Russia's prime minister, count Urusov, warned Mijatovic about his concern regarding the war preparations signaled in Serbia. Urusov emphasized the idea that The Three Emperors Alliance did not allow endangering the peace from Serbia's side. Consequently, the Russian diplomat said that Vienna, as well as Petersburg, considered that Serbia was working against its own interests if it ignored the opportunity of an honorable peace (Catana, 2012: 100). Ever since 6th/ 18th of February 1886, in the capital of the Russian Empire a strong feeling of discontent towards Serbia appeared, the latter being accused that through its demands it led to the quandary of the conference from Bucharest. The conclusion of Russia's chief of cabinet, Giers (1820-1895), in front of Serbia's prime

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minister was that Belgrade did not want to make peace and it claimed Bregovo without accepting the possibility of changing the frontier, as Bulgaria had wanted. The peace treaty was signed in Bucharest on 19th February/ 3rd March 1886 (Ciachir, 1978: 147-149), without referring to the border issues that were to be regulated afterwards, by bilateral agreements between Serbia and Bulgaria. It also stipulated that the documents by which each state ratified the treaty were to be changed in Bucharest within 15 days (The Service of the National Central Historical Archives Bucharest, 1886: 21).

However, the Balkan crisis was not definitely solved by signing the peace Treaty of Bucharest. After only a few months the situation, far from being winded down, became more complicated. The Russian diplomacy was not at all pleased with the fact that Alexander von Battenberg had succeeded in unifying Bulgaria without the Russian approval, therefore they acted clearly against the Bulgarian prince. So, as a result of a conspiracy, prince Alexander von Battenberg was forced to abdicate (Jelavich, 2000a: 329-330) in the autumn of 1886, with Germany and Austria- Hungary's approval and in his place Ferdinand von Saxa-Coburg Gotha (1861-1948) was brought in 1887, this bringing the country closer to Vienna not to Russia (Catana, 2012: 106).

The support offered by the Romanian diplomacy in favour of choosing Ferdinand von Saxa-Coburg Gotha for the Bulgarian throne, a candidate which was supported by Austria- Hungary, has increased the Romanian-Russian disagreements (Boicu and Platon, 1980: 324), these also being heightened by the fact that in the autumn of 1885 the Romanian government sent troops alongside the Prut, officially declaring that they were taking measures against the crossing of pest ill cows. After Russia's protests the troops were withdrawn (Căzan and Rădulescu-Zoner, 1979: 135). Since Russia's influence on the south part of the Danube had been seriously shaken, at Bucharest the fear of a possible Russian intervention still existed. On the other hand, at the beginning of 1887 the breaking out of a European war seemed imminent, because of the crisis among the French-German relations. After the danger had been removed, the German- Russian Reassuring Treaty was signed in June 1887.

These circumstances have allowed Romania to maintain its external policy towards the Central Powers. In 1887 its diplomacy obtained from King Carol I and the decisional factors from Bucharest the extension of the alliance for another three years, despite of the Romanian- Austrian- Hungarian disagreements generated by the Romanians situation in Transylvania and heightened by the customs war that broke out in 1886. At Romania's request, Italy would also adhere to the Romanian-Austrian-Hungarian treaty in May 1888 (Căzan and Rădulescu-Zoner, 1979: 162-168).

Externally, the stability accomplished through the Bismarck system was abolished when Emperor Wilhelm II accepted the resignation of the chancellor in 1890 and denounced The Reassuring Treaty (Layton, 2003: 53-54). The German-Russian disruption was important for the matters in the Balkan area, if we consider that Germany's support was used, eventually, to sustain the Hungarian interests, this leading to the reappearance of the Russian-Hungarian antagonism in the area. After the Bulgarian crisis, the Balkan area benefitted from a period of relative peace. The European powers, in order to avoid a new conflict in the east, cooperated to maintain a calm atmosphere in the Balkans.

In the last decade of the 19th century, Russia and Austria- Hungary's interests were similar. Whereas the first focused on the Far East, the second led a discrete foreign policy due to the intern problems they were facing. Although the reasons were different,

the interests of the two powers were very similar, both wanting to maintain peace in the region (Jelavich, 2000a: 332).

The interests of the moment led to the closure of a Russian-Austrian agreement, signed in April 1897, at Sankt Petersburg, by which the cooperation of the two powers was established in order to maintain the status quo in the Balkans. For a decade this agreement has worked: the two governments collaborated in order to prevent any major crisis that could lead to the reopening of the Eastern Issue (Jelavich, 2000a: 333).

Towards the end of the 19th century, the diplomatic situation in the south-eastern Europe was generally relaxed. Even the Romanian- Russian relations, attentively overlooked by the diplomacy of the Central Powers, enjoyed a slight improvement. A proof in this direction was the visit that king Carol I and the inheritor of the throne, Ferdinand, made in July 1898 at Sankt Petersburg, as a response to the invitation made by Nicholas II. On this occasion the Russian diplomacy reassured about its good intentions and its desire to maintain the status quo in the Balkans (Boicu and Platon, 1980: 350-351). Actually, the foreign policy led by emperor Alexander III managed to secure peace and balance in Europe for quite a long period of time, between 1881- 1894. Under his reign and under that of Nicholas II, Russia restrained itself from any hostile act against Romania (Boldur, 2000: 32-33).

Nevertheless, such actions did not diminish the obstacles that separated Romania from Russia. They were in agreement with the Romanian diplomatic policy of maintaining good neighbouring relations with all the surrounding states, regardless of the territorial, national, cultural or other type of issues they might or might not have had. The development of the situation in the Balkan area, carefully supervised by the Romanian government, determined the Romanian foreign policy to remain under the guidance of the alliance with the Central Powers. The beginning of the 20th century has brought about new foreign problems to Romania. Ever since 1895, the southern neighbours had shifted their policy to get Russia's support. Hereby, the Austro- Hungarian influence in Serbia was replaced with the Russian one and the Bulgarian diplomacy's closeness to Sankt Petersburg became visible when the Romanian- Bulgarian tensions caused by the actions of the Bulgarian comitadjis in Macedonia broke out, knowing that the Romanian diplomacy supported the Aromanians' cause.

In the context of the Romanian- Bulgarian crisis, since July 1900, when the Aromanians' leader Stefan Mihăileanu, chief-editor of the Balkan Peninsula Journal, was assassinated by the Bulgarian nationalist Stefan Dimitriov, military negotiations began. The assassination of the Aromanian leader in Bucharest increased the Romanian government's discontent. The action led to military preparations on both sides and to the deterioration of the diplomatic relations as well. The Bulgarians have raised fortifications on the Danube and concentrated troops especially at the Dobrogea border. In reply, the Romanians have done earthworks on the Cernavoda bridge (Platon, 2003: 270). Russia's intervention on Bulgaria's behalf, by strengthening the army in Sofia with munitions and guns, made the Romanian political leaders realize they could not count on the Central Powers' help (Stanciu and Oncescu, 2004: 98-103). D. A. Sturdza reproached this to the Italian minister in Bucharest, Beccaria d'Incisa, stating that during the Romanian-Bulgarian crisis, Germany, Italy and Austria-Hungary did nothing to help Romania (Oncescu, 2011: 105-106). Romania's position towards the Bulgarian actions displeased Russia who had won the trust of the government from Sofia. The attitude of the Russian government put Romania in a difficult situation and proved that, in case of a conflict, Bulgaria had Russia's support. Based on the 52 Article from the Treaty of Berlin, the

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Russian authorities protested against the earthworks done at Cernavoda and in August 1901 a few Russian torpedo boats reached up to Galati.

All these events, as well as the attitude adopted by the two governments, proved how fragile and sinuous the Romanian- Russian relations were. The latest events from the Balkans at the end of the first decade of the 20th century had consequences on the relations among the surrounding states as well as on Romania's foreign policy. They announced the shift of power between the Balkan states, if we are to consider the Macedonian issue in case of a conflict. The Austro-Hungarian policy in the Balkans has led to the change of the territorial status quo. Taking advantage of the situation created in the Ottoman Empire, as a result of the "Young Turk" revolution in 1908, Austria-Hungary proceeded to the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Almost at the same time Bulgaria's independence was declared (Jelavich, 2000b: 93). The latter, united with Eastern Rumelia, had already been strengthened by the independence proclamation. The Cabinet of Vienna's attitude, which supported Bulgaria instead of Serbia, was a major concern to Bucharest. These events announced the breaking out of a military conflict, either between Bulgaria and Turkey, or between Serbia and Austria-Hungary, not to mention Russia's dissatisfaction. At the same time, the Romanian authorities believed that Austria's gradual evolution would lead to its dissolution. This state represented such a strong ethnic mosaic that at the first serious shock it had to fall (Ghica, 1913: 12). But could Russia be considered a solid state? The experience of the 1905 revolution seemed to provide an affirmative answer to this question. Russia managed to maintain itself together with all the nationalities it dominated.

Regardless of the efforts made to win the trust of the Balkan people, in order to exploit it in its favour, Russia had not always found the sympathies it was counting on in the Balkans. It had lost Serbia's sympathy because it hadn't supported the latter enough in 1908, when Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina, but especially due to its policy towards Bulgaria. Russia sustained Bulgaria, hoping to turn it into an instrument submitted to the Russian power (Mihăilescu, 1944: 320). Thus, the secret military pact which was signed between the two countries in 1909 can be considered a success of the Russian diplomacy.

Russian Balkan policy

Under these circumstances, Romania's position was of great importance to the Russian Balkan policy. Convincing it to shift towards Russia not only would have created a connection with the Slavic states in the Balkans, but would also have diminished considerably Austria-Hungary's possibilities to counterattack its policy in the south-eastern Europe. The situation seemed to become favourable to Russia, especially after the Bosnian crisis, between 1909-1910, when the thought of organizing a confederacy of the Balkan states appeared in the minds of the south-eastern European states, out of their need to unite, in order to resist the expansion of the Austro-Hungarian influence.

It seems that during that time the Russian diplomacy did not take into consideration the fact that Romania, although not a Balkan state, had its own interests at the south side of the Danube and did not observe the contradictions that existed from this point of view between Romania and Austria-Hungary. Aiming especially at attracting Bulgaria, Russia could not exploit the disagreements between Romania and Austria-Hungary regarding the Balkan issues. Therefore, the fact that in 1910 Sazanov considered Romania as a "Danube state, not at all Balkan", having "no territorial interest in the Balkans" (The Archives of the Romanian Foreign Ministry, 1910: 253), was of great

significance. The modification of the status established by the Treaty of Berlin represented a warning alert for the Romanian diplomacy, making it reconsider its position. This was also favoured by the replacement of D. A. Sturdza from the government's lead with Ion I. C. Brătianu in 1909 (Platon, 2003: 276).

The decisional factors from Bucharest warned The Cabinets of Berlin and Vienna that a modification of the balance in the Balkan area would attract certain territorial compensations. Romania's relations with the Balkan states have oscillated according to their own interests at the south side of the Danube: the issue of the Macedonian-Romanians and the request to establish a strategic border at the south part of the Danube (Cliveti, 1998: 254), the Romanian-Bulgarian relations after 1878 causing the Romanian government enough tensions. Under these circumstances, although they continued to be in favour of keeping the status quo, the Romanian authorities searched for a solution in case it changed, by making an amendment to the Dobrogea border, which hadn't been solved in its favour in 1878. The amendment had to include Silistra (Boicu and Platon, 1980: 362).

Having as neighbours two empires, the Tsarist and the Austro-Hungarian one, made Romania extremely cautious with the southern border. Bulgaria, which had considerably enlarged its territory, could create a difficult situation, considering its relation with the two great powers surrounding Romania. Actually, during these years, Bulgaria shifted off from Russia only to get closer to Austria-Hungary. At any rate, Romania would have been caught between a great power and a young, dynamic and ambitious state. Romania's claim of the Silistra-Varna line (sometimes Rusciuk – Varna), was aiming at a strategic reinforcement, in case the distance between the Russian and Bulgarian border would have enlarged. The request has been presented as a possible compensation for the Aromanians' absorption into other states (Platon, 2003: 278-279). During the debates between 1909 and 1910 this point of view was not shared by the German-Austro-Hungarian diplomacy (Căzan and Rădulescu-Zoner, 1979: 295-296).

Until the Balkan wars Romania has remained consistent with the alliance that tied it to the Central Powers, but, after the conflicts between 1912-1913, important changes were about to be made in this regard. The first Balkan war has united, for the first time, the surrounding states from the area, namely Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, Montenegro, into an alliance against the Ottoman Empire (Jelavich, 2000b: 94). The process of releasing Christian people from Ottoman domination, previously marked by important achievements, was not finished. The most complicated issue remained that of Macedonia, which was still part of the Ottoman Empire, its population being the object of many retaliations.

The abolishment of the Ottoman domination represented an essential objective of the Balkan states' foreign policy and it announced an imminent conflict between them and the High Porte. Its outbreak was rushed by the circumstances appeared after 1908. Constrained to accept Bosnia and Herzegovina's annexation, the Serbian government temporarily shifted its attention towards the territories inhabited by its conationals in the Ottoman Empire. In its turn, Bulgaria was trying to complete the success gained in 1908, when, united with East Rumelia, proclaimed itself Independent Kingdom, by annexing some Macedonian territories. Finally, Greece was leading a more active foreign policy, after the government's takeover by Venizelos, who had remarked himself as a leader of the national movement in Crete. The three governments' intentions were facilitated by the outbreak of the Italo-Turkish war, which gave the Bulgarians and the Serbians courage to close an alliance against the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, the Bulgarians were

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trying to persuade the Romanians not to interfere and declared themselves in favor of a natural border in Dobrogea in change of allowing them to act against the Turks, their main objective being Macedonia. Take Ionescu, Titu Maiorescu and I. C. Brătianu were informed about this proposal (Iordache, 1998: 173), but a Romanian-Bulgarian agreement was no longer possible because in the Bulgarian press certain tempestuous Articles appeared, claiming that Dobrogea was a Bulgarian territory. Although not a Balkan state, Romania realized that it couldn't remain indifferent to the regional political situation, but it didn't intend to interfere either, trying to avoid the extension of the war and of the conflict area. Due to the close Serbian-Bulgarian alliance, a revival of the Romanian-Russian relations appeared, the Russians being aware of Romania's importance in the South-Eastern Europe. As a consequence of this war, the Ottoman Empire had to give up Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. The conflict had considerably weakened the empire and made it possible to be defeated by the reunited troops of the smaller Balkan states, especially since negotiations between them have started, being favoured by the support received from the Russian diplomacy (Ciachir, 1996: 149).

Forced in 1909 to admit Bosnia and Herzegovina's annexation without any compensation, Russia tried to get it back in the South-Eastern Europe, taking advantage from the circumstances created by the Italo-Turkish war. In the autumn of 1911, the Russian diplomacy had even thought about creating a Balkan federacy, part of which would have been Romania and the Ottoman Empire, asking the latter to revise the status of the Straits, in order to allow the passage of the Russian war vessels.

But, considering the fact that the Great Powers would not have allowed such an adjustment, the project was abandoned and replaced with the one involving an alliance of the Balkan Christian states against the Ottoman Empire. In order to achieve it, the Russian ministers have dynamically acted in Sofia and Belgrade. In fact, it was between these two capitals that the most important negotiations leading to the First Balkan War have taken place (Ciachir, 1996: 150). The main issue discussed was that of Macedonia. The impossibility of establishing an ethnic border made the agreement temporary, each of the two states was to receive a part of Macedonia, the status of the median area remaining to be established later, under Russia's arbitration (Platon, 2003: 281).

In order to be sure that the government in Bucharest had a friendly attitude, the Serbian prime-minister formulated an ampler plan, which took in consideration the possibility of uniting Transylvania and Romania. Considering the Romanian-Austro-Hungarian relations, the Bulgarian-Russian diplomacy reached an agreement that was against the Ottoman Empire and the northern neighbors. Bulgaria promised to intervene with a 200.000 people army, in case Austria-Hungary attacked Serbia and Serbia with 150.000 people in case Romania attacked Bulgaria. On these bases The Alliance Treaty was closed on 13th March 1912, completed afterwards by a military convention. In parallel, discussions between Bulgaria and Greece have taken place, leading to another alliance treaty.

Taking into consideration that on 26th of September/ 9th of October Montenegro was at war with the Ottoman Empire, the other Balkan states began the hostilities on 17th/30th of October. Regarding the war, king Carol I and the minister of foreign affairs Titu Maiorescu announced a neutral position, but in case certain territorial changes would appear in the Balkan area, the Romanian diplomacy warned that Romania would sustain the claims referring to the Dobrogea border (Maiorescu, 1995: 281-282). The Romanian coalition government, led by Titu Maiorescu and Take Ionescu, and the king decided to

negotiate directly with Bulgaria for a settlement regarding the Dobrogea border and if the treaties failed, they would ask Austria-Hungary and Russia for support.

In October 1912, when the anti-Ottoman coalition threatened Constantinople, the Romanian government dynamically interceded Ferdinand of Bulgaria and his government to start the negotiations regarding the Dobrogea border (Oprea, 1998: 53). The Romanian authorities thought that at a future conference, held by the Great Powers in order to decide upon the Balkan matter, Romania, due to its neutrality, would be invited to participate as a full rights partner (Hitchins, 1996: 169). When Romania's attitude towards the events from the south part of the Danube was decided at Bucharest, no one could have seen Turkey's rapid defeat by the Balkan coalition. Between the end of October and the beginning of November 1912, as the Balkan events followed their lead against the Ottoman Empire, the Romanian diplomacy turned to Russia for help. Titu Maiorescu, with the help of the Russian ambassador at Bucharest, asked the government in Petersburg to intervene, in order to make the Bulgarians more receptive to the Romanian claims (Hitchins, 1996: 169).

Russia's foreign affairs minister accepted to mediate the legal dispute between Romania and Bulgaria and appreciated that "the Great Powers had to value at the highest degree the European character of the Romanian policy" (Oprea, 1998: 54). Although Sazanov's answer to the Romanian request was favorable, he didn't make any actual commitments. Russia's government disposed that all its diplomatic missions would exercise their influence on the Bulgarian political circles. Petersburg's influence in Romania's favor proved more successful in Paris, where the French authorities agreed to support the claims of the Romanian government, in exchange that the latter would keep its neutrality towards the Balkan events (Platon, 2003: 282).

Following the same line, the Great duke Nicolas Mihailovici visited Romania between 26th November / 9th December-29th November/ 12th December 1912 (The Service of the National Central Historical Archives Bucharest, 1912: 3-17). In his memoirs, Schebeko described the main moments of the visit. The Great Duke came to Bucharest accompanied by a numerous retinue. He was welcomed at the station by King Carol I and by the highest civilian and military officials. From the station, the king took the Great Duke to the palace where he was received by Queen Elisabeth. During his three days stay in Romania, a series of banquets and receptions had been organized in his honor. On 23rd November, during a great festivity at the Royal Palace, the king was handed the marshal cane. This ceremony was followed by a *Te Deum* at the Cathedral, in the presence of the Russian and Bulgarian military delegates in order to celebrate the 35th anniversary since Plevna's conquest. After the ceremony a wonderful troops' parade followed. During the reception at the Russian legation, the Great duke had the opportunity to meet the most important politicians of the kingdom, with which he had long conversations. Schebeko considered that this visit represented "a new prove of Russia's friendly disposition and its willingness to get closer to Romania" (Schebeko, 1936: 142).

As a prove of the important role that Romania played for Russia within its Balkan policy, it is worth noticing that the Great duke Nicolas Mihailovici proposed king Carol I that the Romanian state entered the Balkan Confederacy, proposal that the sovereign said he would accept only if he was at its lead (Diaconescu, 1937: 14-15). As a matter of fact this proposal was not carried out because it was not followed by external actions of the Romanian state. Moreover, the Balkan states had formed the Confederacy without Romania, actually against it, if it were to participate as an ally of the Central Powers, in case of an armed conflict. In addition, the fact that king Carol I accepted it under certain

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conditions, without giving an actual answer, created difficulties regarding its acceptance from the Balkan states, which were accurately observed by Titu Maiorescu (Maiorescu, 1995: 52). Therefore, the prime-minister Titu Maiorescu declared that “*we must firstly see if it is viable*” (Maiorescu, 1995: 52). Referring to the Balkan Confederation, Tache Ionescu said: “It is true that this Confederation represents the ideal towards which the Romanian state had to aspire to; however, it is not less true that this ideal is far from its achievement” (Ionescu, 1891: 35). Under these circumstances, Russia’s attempt to bring Romania within the Balkan Confederacy remained unsolved.

The Great Duke’s visit to Romania marked an important moment in the Romanian- Russian relations during the Balkan crisis. However, it was negatively commented upon at Bucharest, in the newspapers (Conservatorul, 1911: 1) drawing attention to Bessarabia and the fact that a century has passed since it was lost (Zbucnea, 1999: 80). Anyway, this visit represented an opportunity to exchange ideas and it was another important step in improving the relations with Russia, although the future positions in case of a general conflict hadn’t been established (Iordache, 1998: 196-197).

It is common knowledge that during the first Balkan war, the battlefield events were against the Ottoman Empire. Within six months the allied troops had reached Constantinople. The Ottoman Empire’s imminent fall led to the intervention of the Great Powers, who demanded that the opponent parts sign a truce in December 1912 and on 30th May 1913 the terms for the peace preliminaries in London (Jelavich, 2000b: 95). The negotiations between the Romanian and the Bulgarian representatives, held in London from December 1912 until January 1913, in parallel with those between Balkan allies and Turkey, failed. The Romanian’s request to establish the border in Dobrogea on the Silistra – Balchik line, respectively Tutrakan – Balchik, was unacceptable to the Sofia government. The answer given to Take Ionescu by the Bulgarian representative, in which he stated that he didn’t have instructions from his government to accept changing the border, proved that the Bulgarians were trying to delay the negotiations until general peace was settled in the Balkans. Take Ionescu was recalled at London, the Romanian government being willing to take military actions in order to obtain the requested changes (Hitchins, 1996: 170).

Since an imminent conflict between the two parts seemed to outbreak, the Romanian-Bulgarian dispute came into the direct attention of the Great Powers. After the war had outburst, Austria-Hungary didn’t seem eager to offer enough support to Romania regarding its requests and this attitude had negative consequences on the negotiations for renewing the alliance. Therefore, king Carol I postponed the ratification until February 1913. Nevertheless, the Central Powers had lost ground in Romania, an approach of the latter to the Triple Entente being more likely to happen (Boicu and Platon, 1980: 368-369).

Even if Romania had remained neutral during the first Balkan war, it watched with great interest this conflict that could modify the status quo which the Romanian politicians were so fiercely defending. The Romanian state representatives refused to enter in any alliance with the belligerents, although there had been proposals from the Ottoman Empire as well as from Bulgaria. With the latter one the negotiations had been difficult, due to the territorial requests of both sides: Romania was asking for the modification of the Dobrogea border because it considered that in Berlin an injustice was done, whereas Bulgaria wanted to get the whole Dobrogea region. This international context brought about a very rapid closeness between France and Russia, both states supporting Romania’s territorial claims, even its participation at a peace conference, but a policy that was clearly

supporting Bulgaria, independent of the Austro-Hungarian one, was also noticeable. The London treaties did not manage to solve the problem of the Dobrogea border by bilateral treaties, therefore a European conference was to be organized in order to solve this matter. So, on 18th of March, 1913, the ambassadors of the Great Powers met at Sankt Petersburg in a conference in order to mediate the Romanian-Bulgarian dispute (Oprea, 1998: 56). The result of the debates was written in the Protocol, signed on 26th April/ 9th May 1913 by the six participant powers, by which they agreed that Silistra had to be given to Romania (Ionașcu, Bărbulescu, Gheorghe, 1975: 402-403). The second Balkan war, that outburst in July 1913, with Bulgaria's attack against the former allies (Jelavich, 2000b: 95-96), brought a change of attitude among the Romanian leading circles, who, considering the danger in the area, decided to call up the troops and send them over the Danube. This moment has actually represented Romania's detachment from the alliance with the Central Powers (Hitchins, 1996: 172).

So that the Great Powers would not interfere once again, the winning Balkan states proposed that Bucharest should host the Peace Conference that was to end the second Balkan war, in this way emphasizing Romania's role in the unfolding and the ending of the conflict. By The Peace Treaty, signed on 10th August 1913 in Bucharest, Romania, Serbia, Greece and Montenegro managed to impose, mostly, their wishes. Bulgaria gave the Romanian state Dobrogea, acknowledging as border between the two countries the Tutrakan-Ekrene line (Hitchins, 1996: 173). Only the representatives of the belligerent countries took part at the treaties. This was the first time when the states from the South-Eastern Europe were making decisions without the interference of the Great Powers, the peace from Bucharest being a great success for Romania. The progress of the events from the end of the 20th century led to the change of the situation referred to in the Treaty of Berlin in 1878. After the two Balkan wars from 1912-1913, the Ottoman dominion in Europe has ended.

The Balkan crisis from 1912-1913 has deepened Romania's detachment from the Triple Alliance and has strengthened the contradictions of the Romanian-Austro-Hungarian alliance. The second Balkan war has brought about a new balance of powers, different from that in 1912, that is, instead of a single group under Russia's dominion, the group formed of Bulgaria and Turkey was beginning to gravitate more round the Central Powers. But its actions have diminished because of Romania's more and more clear shift towards Triple Entente. After the Treaty of Bucharest in 1913 certain closeness between Russia and Romania was visible. The presence of the Russian foreign affairs minister Sazanov in Romania, connected with the visit of the Tsar Nicolas II in Constanta, in June 1914, was the result of the two states' efforts to establish a friendly climate (Ciachir, 1996: 155). Tsar Nicholas II made this visit in order to reach an agreement with the king of Romania regarding a common action in case of closing the gorges to Turkey. From both Russia and Romania there were identical terms. However, both notes did not have a hostility character towards Turkey (Dascovici, 1915: 268-269).

On 1st/14th September 1913, Isvolski wrote to his successor at the Russian leadership's policy "I have considered as a political masterpiece your achievement to separate Romania from Austria. This has always been my dream, but I could not fulfill it or maybe I was not able to fulfill it". On one hand, the Romanian diplomacy wanted to detach from the Central Powers' dominion, and on the other to make Russia, who had a traditional sympathy towards Bulgaria, more trenchant in its attempt to maintain the Balkan balance established by the Peace of Bucharest in 1913. Under those circumstances,

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the only power capable to support the Romanian government in its action to maintain the status quo in the South-Eastern Europe was Russia.

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