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his work slightly outside the conventional academic framework, as he acknowledged in one of his interviews (available at: <https://regard-est.com/thinking-of-the-balkans-as-a-whole-interview-with-bernard-lory-historian-of-margins-and-mediation>). For students and scholars, the book underscores the importance of engaging directly with historical sources and re-examining long-standing assumptions. Moving away from common stereotypes, the book presents Roma as active participants in the economic, social, and cultural life of the Balkans over six centuries, offering a foundation for what may eventually become a comprehensive history of Roma in the Balkans.

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MIHAILO VOJVODIĆ, *BALKANSKI RASPLET: OTPOR SRBIJE STRANIM INTERESIMA NA BALKANU (OD ANEKSIONE KRIZE DO VELIKOG RATA)*

[The Balkan Unraveling: Serbia's Resistance to Foreign Interests in the Balkans (from the Annexation Crisis to the Great War)].

Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies SASA, IP Clio, 2024, 238 p.

Reviewed by Đorđe M. Đurić\*

In his book *Balkanski Rasplet* [The Balkan Unraveling], Mihailo Vojvodić, a member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, examines Serbia's foreign policy during the turbulent period from the Annexation Crisis to the beginning of World War I. While working on publishing documents on Serbia's foreign policy from 1903 to 1914 within a multi-volume collection, the author drew on materials from domestic archives related to this period, which form the basis of this monograph. The book includes a preface,

introduction, nine chapters divided into subsections, and a conclusion.

In the introduction, the author briefly outlines the changes in Serbian foreign policy that occurred after the Congress of Berlin. In pursuing its national aspirations, Serbia no longer relied on Russia, as it had done before the Congress of Berlin, but on Austria-Hungary, a foreign policy shift confirmed by the signing of the Secret Convention in 1881.

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This new orientation meant that Serbia would relinquish its claims to Bosnia and Herzegovina, which had been occupied by Austria-Hungary, and redirect its territorial ambitions toward Old Serbia and Macedonia. After the May Coup, there was another shift in Serbian foreign policy. Serbia once again sought support for its national aspirations from Russia, leading to a deterioration in relations with Austria-Hungary and increasing pressure from the neighboring monarchy.

The first chapter, titled *The Annexation Crisis*, discusses the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary, arguing that the Young Turk Revolution directly triggered Austro-Hungary's declaration of annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister, Aehrenthal, cited two reasons to justify the annexation: Greater Serbian propaganda and the proclamation of constitutionalism in Turkey. Since the annexation violated Article 25 of the Treaty of Berlin, this act caused concern among other powers and the countries whose interests were directly affected. Serbia, whose vital national interests the annexation encroached on, opposed such a solution. However, after their defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, the Russians were unable to fully support Serbia. Saint Petersburg advised Serbia to exercise restraint, promising diplomatic support for territorial concessions. For its part, Austria-Hungary sought to come to a direct agreement with Turkey, thereby presenting the other powers with a fait accompli. Turkey accepted the annexation, and Austria-Hungary withdrew its troops from the Sanjak of Novi Pazar. Under German pressure, Russia ultimately agreed unconditionally to the annexation, promptly followed by Serbia, with its government

forced to declare that its interests had not been violated by the annexation.

Chapters II–VI (*The Foreign Policy of the Government of Stojan Novaković: Stabilizing Serbia's Position in the Balkans, The Policy of the New Government of Nikola Pašić: Strengthening Serbia's International Position, Serbia's Response to Developments in the Balkans and Newly Formed Movements, Pašić's Policy of Strengthening Serbia in the Balkans, Serbia's National Aspirations Directed at Bringing Balkan States Closer*) cover the period from the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Balkan Wars. During this period, Milovan Milovanović served as Serbia's Minister of Foreign Affairs and, from July 1911, also as Prime Minister, playing a major role in shaping the country's foreign policy. His foreign policy program involved improving relations with Austria-Hungary, strengthening ties with Russia, establishing closer relations with Bulgaria and Montenegro, and monitoring the situation in Turkey, with which Serbia, for tactical reasons, needed to maintain good relations. The focus of Serbian diplomacy was on Turkey. Serbia sought to maintain friendly relations with Turkey to protect the rights of Serbs living there and implement large-scale infrastructure projects, such as the construction of the Adriatic railway. Moreover, Turkey's internal instability after the Young Turk Revolution constantly threatened to disrupt the status quo in the Balkans. Therefore, the Cretan Question, the Albanian revolts of 1910–1912, and the Italo-Turkish War preoccupied Serbian diplomacy.

The chapter *The Establishment of Alliances Among Balkan States and the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913* discusses the Balkan Wars. The author considers the Serbian–Bulgarian agreement the backbone of the

Balkan alliance, even though it did not resolve the disagreements about the future division of Macedonia but postponed their settlement to the period after the war, with the Russian Tsar as the ultimate arbiter. Negotiations with Greece were even more difficult. The main obstacle to forming an alliance was the Greek government's desire for the alliance to concern only Turkey, avoiding the obligation of joint action in case Austria-Hungary attacked Serbia, a condition Serbia insisted on. Thus, Serbia and Greece entered the war without a mutual alliance agreement. However, both had agreements with Bulgaria and Montenegro. The immediate cause of the war for the Balkan states was Turkey, where the local Christian population was subjected to constant violence. As another immediate trigger of the First Balkan War, the author highlights the initiative of Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister Berchtold in August 1912 to decentralize Turkey. The Balkan allies succeeded in defeating Turkey in the war but did not fully satisfy their respective aspirations. The decision of the London Conference to create an independent Albanian state, which would border Montenegro to the north and Greece to the south, deprived Serbia of access to the sea, prompting it to request a revision of the agreement with Bulgaria. Unwilling to make concessions, Bulgaria opted for war instead of pursuing diplomatic negotiations. However, after Serbia's victory in the Second Balkan War, the Serbian-Bulgarian dispute was resolved in Serbia's favor.

The final two chapters, *After the Balkan Wars* and *Before the Great War*, minutely discuss the relations between Austria-Hungary and Serbia from the end of the Balkan Wars to the outbreak of

World War I. Serbia sought to integrate the new territories and reduce the possibility of Austro-Hungarian interference in its internal affairs, as seen from its intention to conclude a concordat with the Vatican to lessen Austro-Hungarian sway over its Catholic subjects. At the same time, Serbia attempted to improve relations with Austria-Hungary, trying not to take actions that would meet with its disapproval. Despite this, Austria-Hungary's pressure on Serbia did not diminish, and the possibility of conflict between the two countries loomed constantly. In the autumn of 1913, war was avoided when the Serbian army withdrew from Albania after an ultimatum from Austria-Hungary, but the following year, Austria-Hungary used the Sarajevo assassination as a pretext for war against Serbia.

Finally, in the *Conclusion*, alongside the great powers' overlapping interests, the author identifies Austria-Hungary's expansionist policy in the Balkans as another major cause of World War I. Serbia was the main opponent of this policy, as Austria-Hungary aimed to surround and isolate it territorially. Austria-Hungary accomplished its objective by annexing Bosnia and Herzegovina and later creating Albania, cutting off Serbia from access to the sea. The author sees these actions as the causes of World War I, with the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand serving merely as a pretext.

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