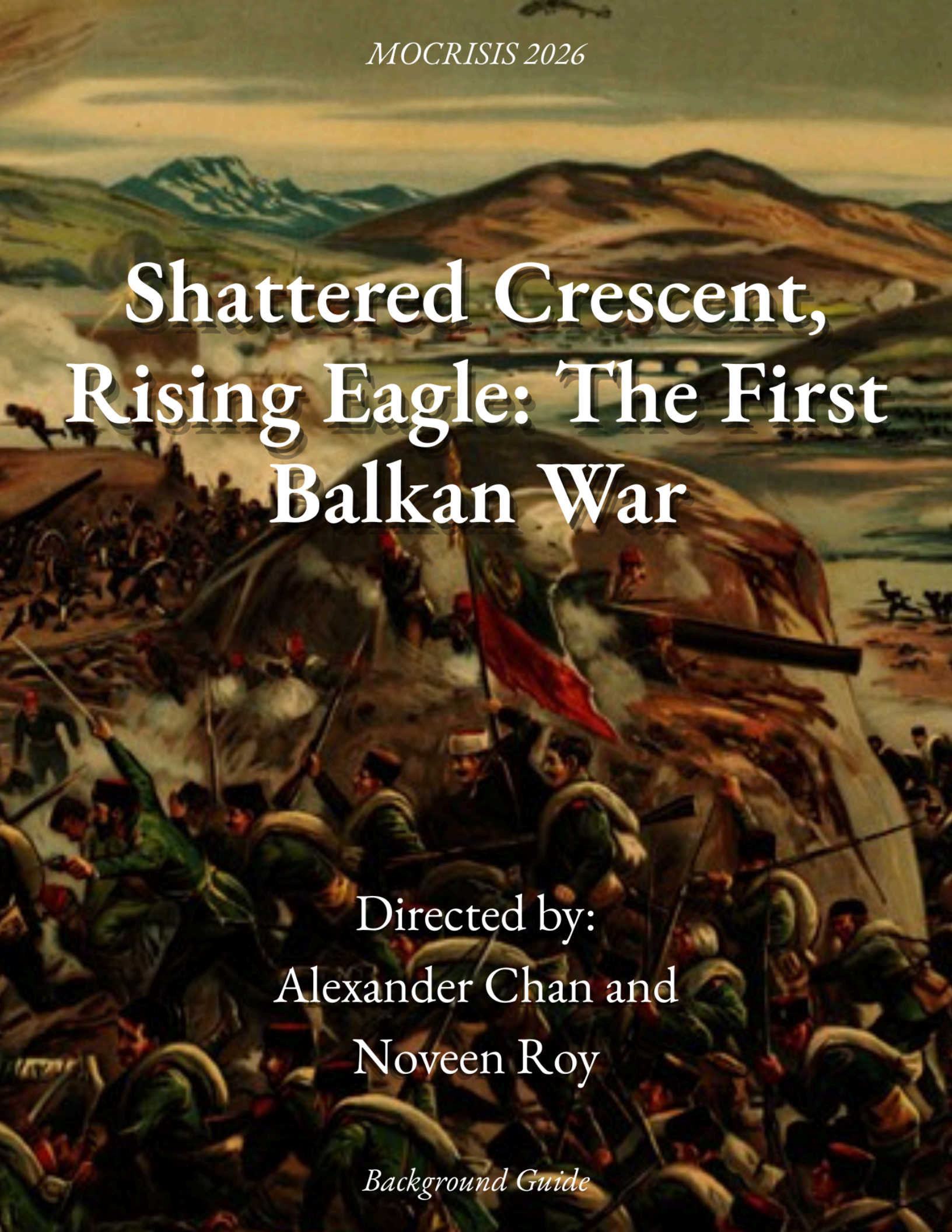




MOCRISIS 2026

Shattered Crescent, Rising Eagle: The First Balkan War

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Background Guide

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Equity Letter

MOCRISIS 2026 has a zero-tolerance policy for equity violations within or outside of the committee. We acknowledge that this committee may touch on controversial issues; however, we implore delegates to maintain a high degree of respect and decorum. As a reminder, instances of racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, ableism, or any other form of discrimination will not be tolerated and may lead to disqualification from awards or removal from MOCRISIS 2026, depending on the severity.

Additionally, in order to avoid trivialising the effects and impacts of the treatment of ethnic minorities during the conflict, the discussion of these historical events should remain at a minimum. Moreover, topics such as war or colonization that could be present in this committee should be treated with utmost respect and sensitivity. To ensure that all delegates understand what may be inequitable, we highly recommend that delegates carefully and thoroughly read the entire background guide.

We strongly encourage delegates to refrain from controversial topics, past and present. For clarity, please email or speak to any staff member of this committee. We ask all delegates to approach sensitive issues with the utmost respect and understanding toward others. Moreover, a basic level of respect and order is expected when interacting with other delegates, pages, staff, faculty facilitators, and all MOCRISIS personnel who make this conference possible.

Director's Letter

Hello delegates!

Welcome to MOCRISIS 2026! I'm Alex, a Grade 12 IB student here at Monarch Park, and I've been participating in our school's Model UN club for my entire high school career. Knowing how much effort usually goes into background guides, I would like to just quickly thank you for taking the time to read this letter. You're all so amazing for participating in events like Model UN and growing your knowledge and understanding about the dynamics of historical and current events in our ever-changing world.

This specific committee focuses on the proximal causes preceding World War 1, and more specifically the First Balkan War. To me, this conflict is really special as Balkan history is what got me into politics and Model UN in the first place, and it can also aid in explaining the complex dynamics of the Balkan region today. Overall, I hope you all gain a better comprehension of the underlying reasons behind modern-day Balkan geopolitics, but also that you meet new people and have fun! These amazing outcomes are what I strive to achieve for all of you in this committee, so if you have any questions, including payment and the itinerary, contact mpcmodelun@gmail.com, and for committee questions, contact 343467916@tdsb.ca. With that out of the way, I hope you all have fun and the best of luck with your preparations.

- Alexander "aleggs" Chan, Director and Background Guide Author of *Shattered Crescent*,
Rising Eagle, *The First Balkan War*

Glossary

The Great Powers of Europe

A term for the most dominant and powerful European nations that are often consulted for major decisions and affairs. The nations included are Great Britain, France, Austria-Hungary, Russia, and Germany. Italy is also included occasionally.

Pan-slavism/Yugoslavism

In this context, pan-slavism or Yugoslavism is an ideology that promotes the unification of all South Slavic nations and is popular among some Serbian circles. These nations include Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Macedonia, and Bulgaria.

Slavs

Slavs are a group of people who speak a Slavic language. This includes most people from the following nations: Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Russia, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, North Macedonia, and Bulgaria. The Russian Empire has supported Slavic independence and has various ties to Slavic nations.

Triple Alliance

A defensive military alliance and diplomatic bloc of the three great powers of Italy, Austria-Hungary, and Germany.

Triple Entente

A diplomatic bloc between the other three great powers, Russia, France, and Great Britain.

Timeline

1830s

The Ottoman Empire slowly loses its control over the Balkan region through a series of conflicts, mainly with Russia, resulting in autonomy for Serbia and independence for Greece.

1877-1878

The Russo-Turkish War of 1878 resulted in Bulgarian autonomy through the Treaty of San Stefano. This treaty heavily favoured the Balkan powers and Russia, with, most notably, Bulgaria being massively expanded into the Macedonia and Thrace regions. However, the Treaty of San Stefano was shut down by the Congress of Berlin, creating the source for Bulgaria's territorial ambitions and limiting Balkan expansion in the region, which placed emphasis on the great powers' ability to arbitrate conflicts in the Balkans.

1885

Bulgaria unifies with some of its lost territory from the Congress of Berlin, causing unrest from Greece and Serbia. Serbia starts the Serbo-Bulgarian War, but loses after a decisive Bulgarian victory at Slivnitsa.

1897

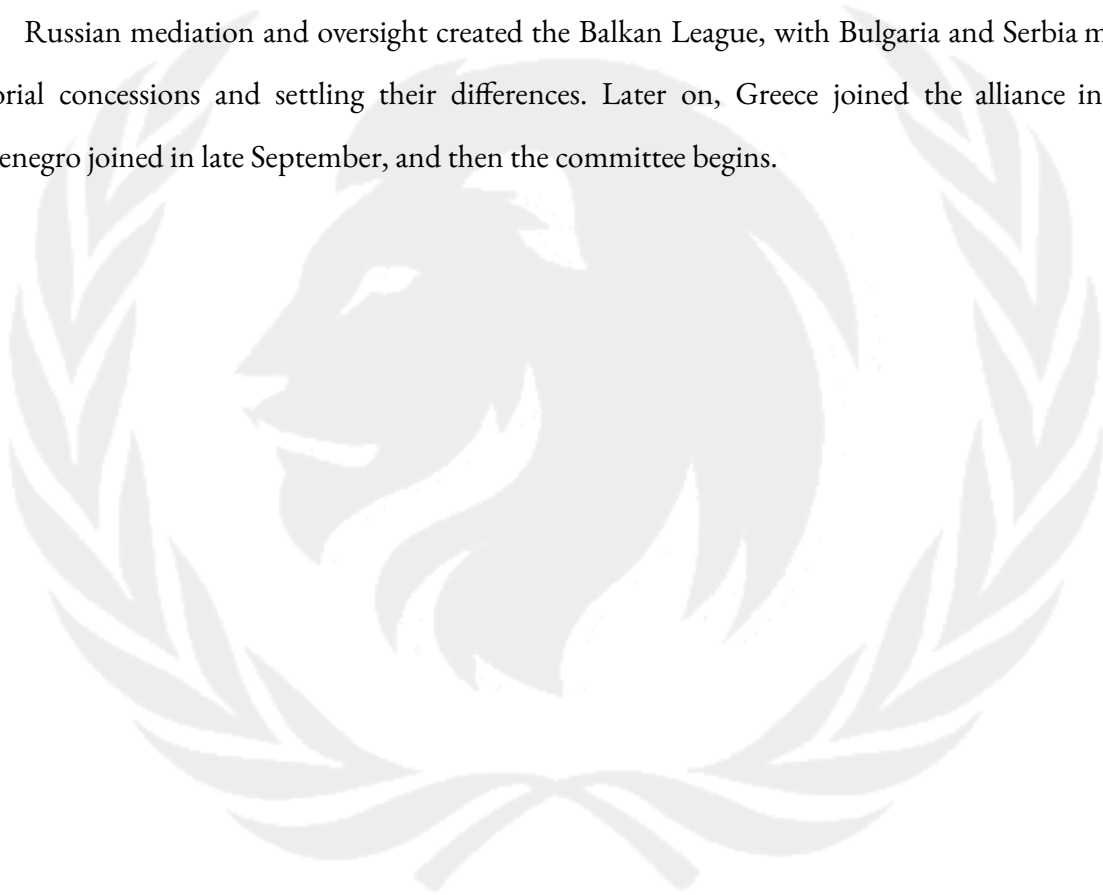
Greece loses the Greco-Turkish War of 1897, putting emphasis on the need for Balkan unity against the Ottoman Empire.

1908

Bosnia and Herzegovina is annexed by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, to the discontent of Serbia. This also pushed Serbian focus towards ambitions in Kosovo and Macedonia.

1912

Russian mediation and oversight created the Balkan League, with Bulgaria and Serbia making territorial concessions and settling their differences. Later on, Greece joined the alliance in May, Montenegro joined in late September, and then the committee begins.



Historical Background

The Collapse of Ottoman Rule in the Balkans

Throughout history, the Balkan regions have constantly been conquered and colonized by outside empires. Whether it be the Romans, the Byzantines, or the Hungarians, foreign conquest is no stranger to the peninsula. By the 16th century, the Ottoman Empire had conquered almost all of the Balkan region and had continued its rule until the 19th century, with some minor decline. By 1832, a series of Greek revolts combined with British, French, and Russian intervention had resulted in Greek autonomy and then full independence in Peloponnese, Central Greece, and Attica.¹ Similarly, Serbian uprisings, constant disorder in Serbian regions, and Russian interventions in 1815 led to various concessions by the Ottoman Empire that granted most of central Serbia and Belgrade autonomy in the 1830s.² Lastly, these aforementioned Russian interventions had also led to the loss of parts of Romania and Moldavia to Russia, further weakening the Ottoman Empire.³

The Congress of Berlin

In 1877, Bulgaria and Bosnia had begun to rebel against Ottoman rule, prompting Russia to intervene and seize the opportunity to gain further influence in the Balkans. This culminated in the Russo-Turkish Wars of 1877-1878, in which the Russian army had made advances in the Caucasus regions and made its way all the way to Thrace from Romania, striking deep into Ottoman holdings in

¹Shaw, Stanford Jay. "Ottoman Empire - the Empire from 1807 to 1920." In *Encyclopædia Britannica*, June 29, 2026. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ottoman-Empire/The-empire-from-1807-to-1920>.

²Allcock, John B. "Serbia - the Disintegration of Ottoman Rule." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, June 14, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Serbia/The-disintegration-of-Ottoman-rule>.

³Gordon, Nancy M. "Treaty of Adrianople | EBSCO." EBSCO Information Services, Inc. | www.ebsco.com, 2023. <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/history/treaty-adrianople>.

the Balkans, leading to the Ottoman Empire signing the Treaty of San Stefano and surrendering.⁴ This treaty would have strongly benefited Russia and its Balkan allies, as it granted full independence to Serbia and Romania, gave autonomy to Bosnia, and recognized the independence of Montenegro. However, the most significant clause was the establishment of a Bulgarian principality under Russian control that had control over Bulgaria's modern borders, parts of Thrace, and all of Macedonia.

Obviously, this placed Russia in an extremely strong position, leading to opposition from Austria-Hungary, which was afraid of Slav nationalism, and Britain, which wished to keep Russia away from Constantinople and the Mediterranean.⁵ In order to maintain the balance of power in Europe, the Great Powers met up in the Congress of Berlin to amend the treaty. The ratifications resulted in the new Bulgarian principality being severely reduced. Most regions were practically returned to the Ottoman Empire, including Thrace, Macedonia, and Eastern Rumelia, which was a province with a Bulgarian-dominant population. Bulgaria only kept the north of its country, and was also being returned under Ottoman control, albeit as an independent province. In addition, Bosnia was stripped of its independence, and instead was allowed to be occupied by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. These amendments had left the Balkan nations quite dissatisfied. Bulgaria had lost more than half of its territory, Serbia was opposed to Austrian control over Bosnia, and Greece had not received territorial compensation.⁶ Overall, these consequences of the Congress of Berlin were a major factor in the territorial ambitions of the Balkan nations before the 1st Balkan War.

⁴Ray, Michael, and The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. "Russo-Turkish Wars | Russo-Turkish History | Britannica." In *Encyclopædia Britannica*, June 22, 2026. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Russo-Turkish-wars>.

⁵ Ray, Michael, and The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. "Treaty of San Stefano | Russia-Turkey [1878]." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, June 6, 2026. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Treaty-of-San-Stefano>.

⁶ Keleher, Edward P, and Richard D King. "Congress of Berlin | Research Starters | EBSCO Research." EBSCO, 2023. <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/history/congress-berlin>.

Bulgarian Unification

However, the policies of the Congress of Berlin would shortly be broken. In September of 1885, following preparations and planning by the Bulgarian government and various revolutionary organizations, rebels and Bulgarian forces took control of cities and towns across the Ottoman province of Eastern Rumelia, uniting Bulgaria.⁷ Fearing a stronger Bulgaria that could compete with regional interests in Macedonia, both Serbia and Greece strongly opposed unification. Greece wanted compensation for Bulgaria's stronger position in the region by receiving territorial concessions in Epirus, but had been blockaded and forced to back down by the great powers.⁸ On the other hand, with encouragement from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Serbia's pro-Austrian government decided to escalate the conflict and began a surprise invasion of Bulgaria. Unfortunately for them, shortly after the invasion, a decisive victory at Slivnitsa led to a general collapse in the Serbian frontline and incursions into Serbian territory from the Bulgarian army. Austria eventually stepped in to end the war, and while no territorial changes were made, Serbian and Bulgarian relations soured, despite the invasion being unpopular in Serbia.⁹

The Greco-Turkish War of 1897

A couple of years later, Greece would enter a brief war with the Ottoman Empire over the control of Crete, and while the Ottoman army was unready and disorderly, often engaging in sporadic frontal assault tactics, their overwhelming force was still too much to bear and resulted in an overwhelming Ottoman victory. While the Great Powers intervened to save Greece, the conflict still

⁷ Novinite. "The Unification of Bulgaria: A Triumph of National Spirit - Novinite.com - Sofia News Agency." Novinite.com, September 6, 2024. <https://www.novinite.com/articles/228184>.

⁸ Christopoulos, Georgios, and Ioannis Bastias. *Istoria Tou Ellēnikou Ethnous: Neōteros Hellēnismos (1833-1881; 1881-1913; 1913-1941)*. Ekdotikē Athēnōn, 1980.

⁹ The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. "Serbo-Bulgarian War | Balkan History." Encyclopædia Britannica, July 18, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Serbo-Bulgarian-War>.

proved that the Ottoman Empire was a formidable opponent, and if the Balkan nations wished to take their land back from it, they would have to work together.¹⁰

The Road to War

Despite clashes between Greek, Bulgarian, and Serbian revolutionary organizations in Macedonia,¹¹ Russian mediation and influence were able to convince Serbia and Bulgaria to set aside their differences to collaborate and mainly counter Austro-Hungarian presence in the Balkans through the creation of the Balkan League in March of 1912. However, with focus also unintentionally shifting towards the Ottomans, the alliance came with the agreement that Bulgaria would gain major concessions in modern-day North Macedonia, while Serbia would gain control over most of Kosovo. The league would later expand membership to Montenegro and Greece.¹²

¹⁰ Narendra, Rama. "The 1897 Greco-Turkish War: A Minor War with Major Consequences." *History is Now Magazine*, December 9, 2020. <https://www.historyisnowmagazine.com/blog/2020/12/6/the-1897-greco-turkish-war-a-minor-war-with-major-consequences>.

¹¹ Ray, Michael, and The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Balkan Wars | European History." In *Encyclopædia Britannica*, January 15, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Balkan-Wars>.

¹² Crampton, Richard J. *A Short History of Modern Bulgaria*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Current State of Affairs

The dawn of the fall of 1912 brings new opportunities for the Balkan League. For roughly a year, Ottoman forces have been bogged down in Libya, fighting Italy in the Italo-Turkish War.¹³ In addition, a large-scale Albanian revolt which began in January of 1912 has been raging on, which not only makes the Ottoman Empire weaker, but also threatens Serbian ambitions in the region, creating further pressure for an upcoming conflict.¹⁴ Lastly, a year ago, a crisis in Morocco between Germany and France over challenging French colonial influence in the region had also reinforced the Balkan League's position. The diplomatic crisis saw Britain and Russia backing France out of fear of Germany's growing power, while the traditional allies of Germany, Italy and Austria-Hungary, backed Germany. In this way, the Triple Entente of Russia, France, and Britain found themselves opposing and in balance with Italy, Austria, and Germany's Triple Alliance. This kept the great powers occupied with opposing one another, and relatively unable to collaborate on mediating any sort of potential conflict in the Balkans.¹⁵ With conflict on the horizon for the Balkan League, they must address two key issues: the competing claims and interests of its members, and the management of the great powers.

¹³ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Italo-Turkish War | 1911–1912." Encyclopedia Britannica, September 22, 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Italo-Turkish-War>.

¹⁴ Glenny, Misha. *The Balkans: Nationalism, War & the Great Powers, 1804-1999*. 1999. Reprint, Viking Adult, 2001.

¹⁵ Walker, William T. "Agadir Crisis | EBSCO." EBSCO Information Services, Inc. | www.ebsco.com, 2021. <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/history/agadir-crisis>.



Map of the Balkans before the outbreak of the First Balkan War, 1912

Topic A: Brothers at Arms, Enemies at Heart

With the aforementioned past conflicts over Macedonia between Greece, Bulgaria, and Serbia, the interests of each member of the Balkan League must be discussed. The competing claims over Ottoman territory and ideas on how to approach foreign powers and potential war with the Ottoman Empire differ between each member of the league and must be communicated in order to ensure victory for all parties involved.

The Kingdom of Serbia

Despite opposition from Serbia, which had wished to unite with Bosnia and Herzegovina and other Slavic nations as well, Austria-Hungary had fully annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908. Not willing to risk conflict with Austria-Hungary, Serbia pushed its attention towards the south of the country, aiming to push its claims towards Macedonia.¹⁶ These claims were part of a greater ambition to establish a Greater Serbia¹⁷ that included territories of traditional importance to Serbia, going back to territory held by older Serbian kingdoms. Not only did this include the integration of the aforementioned territories of North Macedonia and Bosnia, but also a potential union with Montenegro, and the annexation of northern Albania and Kosovo as well.¹⁸

¹⁶ Keleher, Edward P, and Nancy M Gordon. "Austria Annexes Bosnia and Herzegovina | EBSCO." EBSCO Information Services, Inc. | www.ebsco.com, 2021. <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/history/austria-annexes-bosnia-and-herzegovina>.

¹⁷ International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars. *Report of the International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars*. Washington, D.C.: The Endowment, 1914.

¹⁸ Batakovic, Dusan T. "Ilija Garasanin's 'Nacertanije': A Reassessment." *Internet Library of Serb Culture*, 1994.

These territorial claims over northern Albania also came with general opposition to the establishment of an independent Albania. This was due to two main reasons. Firstly, the Albanian revolt of 1912 had resulted in the Ottoman Empire accepting the rebels' demands, which included the establishment of an autonomous Albanian province that occupied parts of Northern Greece, North Macedonia, parts of modern-day Serbia, and all of Kosovo.¹⁹ Evidently, these territorial ambitions conflicted with Serbia's claims, leading to Serbia preferring a weaker Albania that would not interfere with its interests. The second reason was economic. Due to firm Austrian control over Bosnia and the presence of Montenegro, Serbia was economically limited by its landlocked status, being dependent on its coastal neighbors. However, Albanian territories in the Ottoman Empire provided opportunities for Serbia to gain coastline on the Adriatic Sea and economic independence, a key factor in Serbia's future.²⁰ Lastly, it is also important to mention that Serbia had agreed to allow Bulgarian expansion into most of modern-day North Macedonia, all the way up to the Kriva Palanka-Ohrid line, while Serbia was allowed to claim modern-day Kosovo, and the area north of modern-day North Macedonia.²¹ In general, Serbia's government holds ambitions of Pan-Slavism, and aims to unite Serbs in the southern regions of the Balkans.²² Serbia also commands an army of 230,000 men, which is the second largest in the Balkan league, and would be a valuable asset in any future confrontations with the Ottoman Empire.²³

The Tsardom of Bulgaria

With the Congress of Berlin shutting down Bulgaria's national reunification, and the country outlined by the Treaty of San Stefano being split into three, many Bulgarian nationalists became even

¹⁹ Stanford Jay Shaw, and Ezel Kural Shaw. *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey ... 2, Reform, Revolution and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808-1975*. Cambridge ; London ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

²⁰ Cvijic, Jovan. *GREATER SERBIA from Ideology to Aggression - Selected Statements*. Croatian Information Centre, 1998.

²¹ Hall, Richard C. *The Balkan Wars 1912-1913*. Routledge, 2002.

²² Ivo Banac. *Nacionalno Pitanje U Jugoslaviji*, 1988.

²³ Hall, Richard C. *The Balkan Wars 1912-1913*. Routledge, 2002.

more desperate to reclaim their lost territory. And while these aspirations culminated in the unification with Eastern Rumelia, the government had failed to take back the widely sought territory of Macedonia, which was seen as having grave national, historical, and some economic importance. Luckily, Bulgaria had secured most of the territory through an agreement with Serbia under the arbitration of Russia during the formation of the Balkan League. However, no agreement was reached with Greece, and whether Russia enforces the agreement or Serbia holds up their end of the bargain remains in question.²⁴ These claims over modern-day North Macedonia also extended to the other regions of Central Macedonia, including the vital city of Thessaloniki, and Thrace. While these regions had some historic value, they also provided economic and strategic value. Thessaloniki provided importance through its being a strategic port and a vital economic hub, while Thrace, especially in the north, contained large Bulgarian populations and gave access to the Aegean Sea, making it an important economic outlet. In addition, control of Eastern Thrace could greatly improve Bulgaria's position, as it could pose a threat to the vital Ottoman city of Constantinople.²⁵

To back these ambitious goals, Bulgaria hosts an impressively militarized society, fielding roughly 370,000 men, which is almost half of the Balkan League's forces. These forces had also proved to be effective and highly disciplined in the Serbo-Bulgarian War, which earned the young tsardom the nickname of the "Prussia of the Balkans". In general, out of all four nations in the league, Bulgaria has the strongest military, with it being more well-equipped and well-trained.²⁶ Overall, Bulgaria is an essential asset to the alliance, with a powerful military and a large front with the Ottoman Empire that is within striking distance of the Ottoman capital of Constantinople, but must also be wary of potential diplomatic isolation from the rest of the league.

²⁴Hall, Richard C. "Bulgaria." *International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, February 2, 2016. <https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/bulgaria/>.

²⁵Hall, Richard C. *The Balkan Wars 1912-1913*. Routledge, 2002.

²⁶ Hall, Richard C. *The Balkan Wars 1912-1913*. Routledge, 2002.

The Kingdom of Greece

Enosis is defined as the concept of uniting Greek-populated regions to the mainland, more widely known for Greece's campaign for Cyprus.²⁷ Greece, unlike Bulgaria and Serbia, does not strive for complete land domination, but combined emphasis on territorial and naval expansions. They strive for a power closer to home: The Aegean Sea.²⁸ The land army Greece holds has never been seen as a great threat to any nation, and its defeat in the 1897 Greco-Turkish War only exposed that weakness, prompting military reforms. It was a large goal of the Greeks to attain a naval power that could both rule the Aegean Sea and re-establish their military dominance in the Balkans. When it comes to what each nation wants, the Greeks seek the ports, islands, and important cities such as Thessaloniki and Ioannina.²⁹ Although other Balkan League members do not put the Aegean Sea on their immediate sights, it is important to note that the Serbian focus on the Adriatic Sea threatened Greece's aimed naval domination; thus, the Greeks' aim to secure the Aegean Sea also creates a balance of naval power between Balkan states.³⁰

The 1897 attempt to annex Crete, the largest and southernmost island of the Aegean Sea, led the Greeks to sign a peace treaty with the Ottomans.³¹ Preceding the first Greco-Turkish War, Crete was ruled by numerous empires, and historically fell under the sway of Mycenaean Greece, which was the basis of both Greece's attachment to the land and Crete's own strides to union with the mainland.³² Aside from Crete, the most immediate areas Greece wants to control are Epirus, Western Thrace, and Central Macedonia.³³ Greece sought Epirus (specifically the capital, Ioannina) to secure

²⁷ Hunt, "Cyprus - Government and Society | Britannica."

²⁸ Erickson, Edward J. 2003. *Defeat in Detail: The Ottoman Army in the Balkans*. Praeger.

²⁹ Hall, Richard C. *The Balkan Wars 1912-1913*. Routledge, 2002.

³⁰ Zisis Fotakis, Greek Naval Strategy and Policy 1910-1919.

³¹ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, "Greco-Turkish Wars | Balkan History," in Encyclopædia Britannica, December 5, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Greco-Turkish-wars>.

³² Sally A. Struthers, "Crete in the Ancient World | EBSCO," EBSCO Information Services, Inc. | www.ebsco.com, 2022, <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/history/crete-ancient-world>.

³³ Hall, Richard C. *The Balkan Wars 1912-1913*. Routledge, 2002.

the northwestern front of the war. Another region of great significance that Greece desires—one comparable to Crete—is Cyprus, a small island east of the main conflict. Cyprus holds deep Greek history, but since its British takeover in 1878, the Greeks have not set Cyprus in their sights amidst the brewing Balkan conflict.³⁴

The real gold for the Greeks came from a key city in Macedonia: Thessaloniki. With everything to gain, the capture of Thessaloniki would grant Greece control of the Aegean Sea with naval strengths and economic benefits. This is Greece's most ambitious and immediate goal as it conflicts with the fellow Balkan state and the military powerhouse of Bulgaria.

The Kingdom of Montenegro

Despite close and amicable relations with Serbia, and unification potentially being on the horizon, the Kingdom of Montenegro remains wary of being subordinate to Serbia and the other Balkan powers in the league. Wishing to improve its position, Montenegro aims to annex the fertile lands of the Novi Pazar Sandžak and Metohija, along with the strategic commercial and port city of Scutari, which is known as Shkodër in the modern day, and its surrounding regions. Both these regions have a historical legacy of medieval Montenegrin control, but would also massively benefit the Montenegrin economy and the country's current impoverished state. Unfortunately, disputes between Serbia over the Novi Pazar Sandžak and Metohija, along with competing interests with Albanian rebels over Scutari, push Montenegro into an uncomfortable and tricky situation that requires careful and well-thought-out action.³⁵ However, with close relations and economic support from Russia,³⁶ and an

³⁴ Zisis Fotakis, Greek Naval Strategy and Policy 1910-1919.

³⁵ Szczepański, Wojciech. "The Realization of Political and Territorial Objectives of Montenegro on the Eve of and During the First Balkan War: From Short-Term Successes to Tragic Consequences." *Commission for Balkan Studies* 9, no. 1 (May 25, 2026): 125–41. <https://hrcak.srce.hr/index.php/en/clanak/501353>.

³⁶ Poláčková, Zuzana, and Pieter Duin. "The Dwarf and the Giant: Montenegrin-Russian Relations and Montenegro's 'Cult of Russia,' C. 1700-2015." *Studia Politica Slovaca*, no. 1 (2016): 31–55. http://sav.sk/journals/uploads/05151150SPS_1_2016_Z%20Polackova_P%20van%20Duin.pdf.

army of roughly 35,000 men, perhaps the small kingdom can work its way out of its precarious circumstances.³⁷

With the competing interests of the league's members in mind, the discussion of post-war plans and territorial division became a controversial topic. If the league were to decide upon a unanimous pre-set plan for the division of territorial claims, coordination and cooperation would probably be more likely, and future conflicts over claims could be avoided. However, on the other hand, a streamlined plan could also leave certain nations with less than what they desire. This fear of alienation may cause nations to drift away from collaboration, resulting in separate private agreements that may end up harming the league in the long run. It is also extremely imperative to note the crucial role Russia had played in the formation of the league, and the role it may play in arbitrating territorial disputes.³⁸

Guiding Questions

1. How can the competing claims over regions like Macedonia and Thrace be resolved?
2. How can the league maintain unity and cohesion in a potential conflict with the Ottoman Empire?
3. What would a potential post-war plan look like? How would territory be divided up?

³⁷ Temizer, Abidin. "Montenegro in the First Balkan War." *Annals of the Academy of Romanian Scientists* 5, no. 1 (2013). <https://aos.ro/wp-content/anale/IVol5Nr1Art.6.pdf>.

³⁸ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. *Balkan League | 1912–1913. Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2016. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Balkan-League-1912-1913>.



Rough map of overlapping claims of the Balkan League

Topic B - Europe's Looming Shadow

Historically speaking, the Balkans have always been a hotbed for international and foreign intervention. And while in the past, this has come in the form of various Empires overruling the region, nowadays, with the decline of the Ottomans, a recent trend has emerged of the Great Powers of Europe attempting to balance the chaotic situation in the Balkans by bailing out the Ottoman Empire, such as in the Crimean War.³⁹ However, while intervention in a potential conflict with the Ottoman Empire may seem evident, and has previously transpired, mainly with the Congress of Berlin, the current standoff between the Triple Alliance of Italy, Germany, and Austria-Hungary, and the Triple Entente of Russia, France, and the United Kingdom, may result in little to no intervention from one side out of fear of pushing the Balkans to the other. With this in mind, delegates must keep in mind the looming shadows of the Great Powers, the Ottoman Empire, and other external parties that may involve themselves in a potential conflict.

The Triple Alliance

The Austro-Hungarian Empire

Out of the three, the Austro-Hungarian Empire may potentially pose the biggest threat to the Balkan League's ambitions. Historically having already intervened with Serbian ambitions in Bosnia in 1908 and later threatening invasion⁴⁰, Austria-Hungary generally hosts animosity and hostile relations with Serbia. On top of this, a trade war with Serbia and Serbian claims over various Austrian territories

³⁹ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. (2020, May 21). Crimean War | Map, Summary, Combatants, Causes, & Facts. *Encyclopædia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Crimean-War>

⁴⁰ The Bosnian Crisis of 1908 - 1909. (2026). In historylearning.com. <https://historylearning.com/world-war-one/causes-of-world-war-one/bosnian-crisis/>

such as Bosnia and Croatia have worsened relations greatly.⁴¹ These hostile relations are also amplified by Austria's support for a larger Albanian state to reduce Serbian influence in the region, restrict its access to the Adriatic Sea, and increase its own influence in the region.⁴² In general, Austria-Hungary will always be keeping the Balkan nations in check, especially Serbia, and is not afraid to intervene militarily if push comes to shove, as can be seen in the Serbo-Bulgarian war and the annexation of Bosnia in 1908.

The Kingdom of Italy

Many may say “the enemy of my enemy is my friend”; however, with the Kingdom of Italy, things may go a bit differently. While Italy is currently in a conflict with the Ottoman Empire over Libya,⁴³ this does not mean it will be sympathetic to the Balkan League's aspirations. Being barely considered a great power of Europe due to its lack of military prowess and economic strength, Italy aims to vastly improve its standing, which can be seen in its expansion into North Africa and its other territorial ambitions. These ambitions seek to restore lands that are deemed historically or culturally Italian, and notably this includes the territory of Dalmatia and other coastal provinces along the Adriatic,⁴⁴ clashing with Serbian goals in Croatian and Bosnian regions. In addition, as part of expanding Italian hegemony, the Italian army had landed and begun occupying the Dodecanese islands, which Greece currently claims to be rightfully theirs.⁴⁵ Overall, while Italy is currently fighting

⁴¹ Hall, R. C. (2003). Serbia. In R. F. Hamilton & H. H. Herwig (Eds.), *The Origins of World War I* (pp. 92–111). Cambridge University Press.

⁴² Kasmi, M. (2018, June 21). *Scutari Crisis*. 1914-1918-Online (WW1) Encyclopedia. https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/scutari-crisis/?image_=1103238

⁴³ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2025. “Italo-Turkish War | 1911–1912.” Encyclopedia Britannica, September 22. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Italo-Turkish-War>.

⁴⁴ Stibbe, Matthew. 2018. “Italian Irredentism.” 1914-1918-Online (WW1) Encyclopedia, October 19. https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/italian-irredentism/?image_=1105544.

⁴⁵ The Hellenic Parliament Foundation. 2021. “The Italian Occupation: 1912-1943 | Ἰδρυμα Τῆς Βουλῆς.” In *Hellenic Parliament Foundation*. <https://foundation.parliament.gr/en/italian-occupation-1912-1943>.

a stalemate with the Ottoman Empire, it does not wish to procure help from the League to maintain its territorial claims, and may even go as far as to restrict the League's territorial expansion.⁴⁶

The German Empire

Contrasting its two allies and its previous aggressive foreign policy, the German Empire does not have a concrete position in the conflict. Germany has invested in the Ottoman military through an ongoing military mission that started roughly 75 years ago,⁴⁷ which saw gradual improvements that resulted in victory in the Greco-Turkish War of 1897.⁴⁸ And while this may seem to indicate clear support for the Ottoman Empire, Germany is still wary of the Ottoman Empire's unreliability and incompetence. On the other hand, Germany strongly supports the Austro-Hungarian Empire,⁴⁹ generally goes in tandem with its foreign policy, joining it in limiting the expansion and influence of the Balkan powers.⁵⁰ Germany looks to keep its core allies close to prevent isolation and the strengthening of the Entente, but is still relatively cautious about taking drastic action due to a lack of preparation for a large conflict with the Entente.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Keleher, Edward P, and Carl Rollyson. 2021. "Balkan Wars." In *EBSCO*. <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/diplomacy-and-international-relations/balkan-wars>.

⁴⁷ Stein, Oliver. 2015. "Prussian-German Officers Traveling in the Middle East, 1835-1914." Free University of Berlin. https://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/en/e/mwme/essays/german-ottoman/_Stein_Traveling_Officers/index.html.

⁴⁸ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. 1998. "Colmar, Baron Von Der Goltz | German General, WWI Strategist, Imperial Adviser." In *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Colmar-baron-von-der-Goltz>.

⁴⁹ Campbell, Heather. 2009. "Austro-German Alliance." In *Encyclopedia Britannica*. March 6. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Austro-German-Alliance>.

⁵⁰ Bormann, Patrick. 2015. "German Foreign Policy and the Balkan Wars, 1912–1914." In *The Wars before the Great War*, edited by Dominik Geppert, William Mulligan, and Andreas Rose. Cambridge University Press.

⁵¹ Herwig, Holger H. 1997. *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary, 1914-1918*. Arnold.

The Triple Entente

The Russian Empire

The Russian Empire may be the most important Great Power to the Balkan nations. It had a key role in establishing the Balkan League and settling Bulgarian and Serbian disagreements over Macedonian territory,⁵² and has helped almost all of its members gain independence from the Ottoman Empire.⁵³ Despite this, the Russian Empire may not end up supporting the Balkan League as much as it once had. Firstly, the alliance was created under the supervision of Russia for the purpose of countering the Triple Alliance, and thus Austrian influence in the region, with Ottoman affairs in the Balkans being less important to Russia.⁵⁴ This is primarily due to Russia's long-term goal to control the straits over Constantinople to give it strategic and economic autonomy to access the Mediterranean Sea. And while the creation of a large Bulgarian state in San Stefano served the purpose of giving Russian control over the Bosphorus Straits, new Bulgarian leadership drifted away from pro-Russian ideology and sought to possibly capture Constantinople for itself. Evidently, this led to Russia opposing any sort of Balkan nation controlling or being near Constantinople, and instead supporting the status quo in maintaining Turkish control over the straits.⁵⁵ It is also important to note that Russia had been given the role of an arbitrator in the case of territorial disputes or conflicts in the Balkan League.⁵⁶ Overall, while Russia does support Slavic unity and the Balkan League in general, its loyalties may be clouded by its own ambitions in countering Austria and the Triple Alliance, and securing the

⁵² Crampton, Richard J. *A Short History of Modern Bulgaria*. Cambridge Cambridgeshire ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987

⁵³ Ray, Michael, and The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2026a. "Russo-Turkish Wars | Russo-Turkish History | Britannica." In *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. June 22. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Russo-Turkish-wars>.

⁵⁴ Crampton, Richard J. *A Short History of Modern Bulgaria*. Cambridge Cambridgeshire ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987

⁵⁵ Bobroff, Ronald. 2000. "Behind the Balkan Wars: Russian Policy toward Bulgaria and the Turkish Straits, 1912-13." *The Russian Review* 59 (January). 76-95. http://www.promacedonia.org/statii/bobroff_2000.htm.

⁵⁶ Crampton, Richard J. *A Short History of Modern Bulgaria*. Cambridge Cambridgeshire ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987

Bosphorus Straits. In addition, its power and influence over moderating the league must be considered as well.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland

While Great Britain has traditionally been aligned against Russia and its goals to control Constantinople and the Bosphorus Straits, rapprochement between the two nations and the rise of Germany generally led to a lessening of fear over the possibility of Russian presence in the Mediterranean.⁵⁷ In addition, eager to weaken the pro-German Ottoman Empire and to reinforce its alliance with Russia, Great Britain will try to take actions that favour Russia and oppose the Ottomans. However, despite all these factors, Great Britain still benefits from the status quo, and will try to present an uncertain and neutral stance to maintain balance in Europe and prevent escalation.⁵⁸

The Third French Republic

Similarly to Great Britain, France is generally wary of escalating a potential conflict in the Balkans out of fear of upsetting either side. Gaining the trust of the Balkan states would be feasible due to France's minimal involvement in the region, and would evidently be beneficial,⁵⁹ while the reinforcement of the Ottoman Empire would protect the large amount of French financial investment into the nation.⁶⁰ However, despite this want for neutrality and passiveness, just like Britain, France is also eager to strengthen its relationship with Russia and the Entente's stability overall, and may generally lean towards Russian ambitions.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Bobroff, Ronald. 2000. "Behind the Balkan Wars: Russian Policy toward Bulgaria and the Turkish Straits, 1912-13." *The Russian Review* 59 (January). 76-95. http://www.promacedonia.org/statii/bobroff_2000.htm.

⁵⁸ Aganson, I. O. 2025. "Great Britain and the Balkan Origins of the First World War." *Herald of the Russian Academy of Sciences* 95 (December): 392-402. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1134/S1019331625601896>.

⁵⁹ Aganson, I. O. 2025. "Great Britain and the Balkan Origins of the First World War." *Herald of the Russian Academy of Sciences* 95 (December): 392-402. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1134/S1019331625601896>.

⁶⁰ Bobroff, Ronald. 2000. "Behind the Balkan Wars: Russian Policy toward Bulgaria and the Turkish Straits, 1912-13." *The Russian Review* 59 (January). 76-95. http://www.promacedonia.org/statii/bobroff_2000.htm.

⁶¹ Aganson, I. O. 2025. "Great Britain and the Balkan Origins of the First World War." *Herald of the Russian Academy of Sciences* 95 (December): 392-402. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1134/S1019331625601896>.

All in all, both France and Britain generally benefit from a neutral and uncertain stance, as maintaining the status quo would satisfy them and would also reduce the risk of further escalation. At the same time, the two countries would also like to reinforce their recently acquired alliances with Russia as well.

The Ottoman Empire

While the Ottoman Empire has been dubbed the “Sick Man of Europe” for its ongoing economic, political, and military downfall,⁶² it may still not be the pushover that some may believe it is. Despite the current estimated strength of its army being roughly half the size of the Balkan League’s combined forces, the Ottoman Empire could easily increase these numbers and mobilize a larger army.⁶³ In addition, the Ottoman army had surpassed its infamous reputation by delivering a decisive defeat to Greece in the Greco-Turkish War of 1897, and has received further reforms and training since then from the German military mission.⁶⁴ Lastly, the Ottoman Empire benefits from the heavily fortified Çatalca lines protecting the capital,⁶⁵ as well as a larger navy than any of the other Balkan nations that included two pre-dreadnoughts, two modern cruisers, and numerous older models of cruisers, destroyers, and mostly torpedo boats.⁶⁶ Overall, the Ottoman Empire may pose a bigger threat than estimated, and the Balkan League must navigate a potential conflict with the Ottoman Empire carefully and creatively to avoid the wrath of the Ottoman army or the judgment of the great powers.

⁶² Thomas, Edward. 2022. “How the Ottoman Empire Became the Sick Man of Europe.” *Roads to the Great War*, September 1. <https://roadstotheGreatWar-ww1.blogspot.com/2022/09/how-ottoman-empire-became-sick-man-of.html>.

⁶³ Erickson, Edward J. 2003. *Defeat in Detail: The Ottoman Army in the Balkans*. Praeger.

⁶⁴ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. 1998. “Colmar, Baron Von Der Goltz | German General, WWI Strategist, Imperial Adviser.” In Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Colmar-baron-von-der-Goltz>.

⁶⁵ Balkan Military History. 2026. “Catalca Lines.” Edited by Dave Watson. Balkan Military History. <https://www.balkanhistory.org/catalca-lines.html>.

⁶⁶ MSW. 2024. “Balkan Wars, 1912-1913, Naval Campaigns - WarHistory.Org.” War History, December 13. <https://warhistory.org/article/balkan-wars-1912-1913-naval-campaigns>.

Guiding Questions

1. Is war with the Ottoman Empire a good idea? If not, how should the Ottoman Empire be confronted?
2. How can Russia's role as a mediator in the Balkan League be used to settle disputes? How can it harm the League's goals?
3. How can intervention from the great powers be prevented? Can the great powers be used to benefit the Balkan League?



Committee Mechanics

In addition to regular elements of crisis, delegates will be given a variety of other tools and mechanics to utilize to ensure their nation's best interests. It is important to note that most delegates will not have any individual control over any sort of armed forces, and instead, major coordinated military operations should be conducted through public directives. These public directives will also require at least one vote from one delegate from each nation in the Balkan League to pass, on top of requiring a simple majority.

National Focuses

National focuses are the primary goal of a nation's government and can be used to pursue larger actions or goals that are beyond a private directive or a joint private directive. National focuses take the form of custom versions of joint private directives, and can conduct military operations, create economic reforms, form large alliances or deals with other nations, and all sorts of influential committee-changing actions, all without the approval or knowledge of the other nations in the Balkan League. However, on the downside, they can only be conducted for each nation once per interval, and require two-thirds of the nation's delegates to be "sponsors" to be sent to crisis. As for Montenegro, all delegates must all be "sponsors", and they may utilize a national focus twice per interval (An interval will be roughly one third of each committee session). A national focus may also include support from other nations' delegates for further effectiveness or specific inter-nation actions.

If a nation's delegates do not have any specific actions in mind, they can choose to pass by writing a national focus that contains the order to pass. The pass order results in the nation's government conserving resources and political power, and making small general improvements that will make the next national focus somewhat stronger. Delegates must also be wary that the strength of a national focus will be split across different actions taken in a national focus. So, for example, a

national focus that attempts to conduct a military offensive and improve relations with the great powers will be less effective in the offensive than a national focus that only focuses on the military offensive. However, delegates do not have to worry about added details or sub-clauses weakening their actions, such as specifying which cities will be attacked or what type of equipment will be used.

To summarize, a national focus requires:

- A title in the format of “[Nation] National Focus: [name goes here]”
 - For example: Bulgarian National Focus: Adrianople Offensive
- A list of sponsors for the national focus that must contain two-thirds of the nation’s delegates, except in the case of Montenegro.
- Specific, concise, and detailed orders and actions that will be conducted.
- The national focus must be sent to crisis within an interval, which will be a third of the committee session and is roughly every 40 minutes.

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