

***ПЕРША СВІТОВА ВІЙНА У ЦЕНТРАЛЬНО-СХІДНІЙ ЄВРОПІ:  
МІЖНАРОДНІ ВІДНОСИНИ ТА КОМЕМОРАТИВНІ ПРАКТИКИ***

*DOI*

УДК 94(47+436)''1914/1918'':327.2

**The War Aims of the Belligerent Parties of the First World War in  
Central and Eastern Europe for the Disintegration of Russia and  
Austria-Hungary**

*Dmytro Bondarenko*

Doctoral Student, the Department of Contemporary History, the University of  
Szeged, Egyetem u. 2, Szeged, H-6722, Hungary [dbond70@gmail.com](mailto:dbond70@gmail.com) ORCID:  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1608-1282>

At the beginning of the 20th century, the region of Central and Eastern Europe was the arena of the rivalry of the German and the Austro-Hungarian Empires, on the one hand, and the Russian Empire, on the other. Before the First World War, the balance of power in the region was shaky: Austria-Hungary was an important *sui generis* bulwark against Russian expansion into the Balkans, and on the contrary, Russia was such a kind of counter-balance to Germany and Austro-Hungary. During the war, both the Allies and the Central Powers assumed to redraw the map of Central and Eastern Europe by creating between Russia and Germany the so-called "Middle Tier" (Halford Mackinder's term) of newly independent states. For instance, Germany tried to push Russia back from Europe by the establishment of the buffer states such as Finland, Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine in order to minimize Russian influence in the Baltic and Black Seas regions and prevent its aspirations to the Balkans and Asia Minor, i.e., to return Russia to the pre-Petrine borders of the Grand Duchy of Moscow. This plan was practically implemented in 1918 as a result of the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty. Russia, guided by the idea of Pan-Slavism, aspired to

disintegrate Austria-Hungary and create the Czechoslovak and Yugoslav states in order to ensure its dominance in Central and Eastern Europe. Austrian-Hungarian goals were revised throughout the war. For instance, if at the beginning of the war, Austria aimed to incorporate Serbia, Montenegro, and the Russian part of Poland, but at the end of the war, the Dual Monarchy practically agreed to make certain territorial concessions in favour of Serbia, Italy, and Romania, and recognize the independence of Poland. However, as history has shown, the satisfaction of all the territorial claims of the neighbouring states such as Serbia, Romania, Italy, and the self-determination of the Czechs and the Poles automatically led to the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. As a result of the First World War and the dissolution of the Russian and the Austro-Hungarian Empires, the vacuum of power in Central and Eastern Europe was filled by the newly independent states of Central and Eastern Europe, oriented to Great Britain and France. Thus, “Middle Tier” (Halford Mackinder’s idea) was realized.

*Key words:* Geopolitics, Central and Eastern Europe, the First World War, Pan-Slavism, Mitteleuropa, the dissolution of the Russian and the Austro-Hungarian Empires, Nikolai Danilevsky, Paul von Rohrbach, Sir Halford Mackinder.

*“Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland;  
who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island;  
who rules the World-Island commands the World.”*

Sir Halford Mackinder (1919)

*“Mitteleuropa ist Kriegsfrucht.”*

Friedrich Naumann (1915)

According to Sir Halford Mackinder’s theory of geopolitics, the global competition takes place between maritime and land superpowers in the “World Iceland” (Eurasia and Africa). At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century - beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Great Britain was the only sea power in the World, Russia was the land one,

but Germany tried to combine the qualities of both powers. Central and Eastern Europe had become the main battlefield since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: the Polish Uprising of 1863, the Austro-Prussian War and the Third Italian War of Independence of 1866, the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878, the Berlin Congress of 1878, the independence of Bulgaria of 1908, the Bosnian Crisis of 1908–1909, the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913. Sir Halford Mackinder remarked at the beginning of the XX century: “Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; Who rules World-Island commands the World (Mackinder 1919, 186).”

The main geopolitical actors in Central Europe (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia) did not have a satisfactory outlet to the sea and their rivalry was concentrated in the Balkans. As for Russia, the defeat of Germany and the establishment of independent Poland, consisting of Russian, Austrian, and German parts of Polish lands would have ensured the Russian western borders (Sazonov 1990, 371-376, 382, 385), and the dissolution of Austria-Hungary would have created the new allies for Russia, such as Czechoslovakia and Serbia-Croatia (Sazonov 1990, 338-339). At the same time, Germany and Austria-Hungary intended to eliminate Russian influence in the Balkans and in Central Europe as a whole (Sazonov 1990, 273).

Both Alliances (the Triple Entente and the Triple Alliance of Central Powers) before the First World War were artificial. For instance, there was a vital discord inside the Triple Alliance of the Central Powers between Italy and Austria-Hungary, and there were also such irreconcilable contradictions within the Entente between Russia and Great Britain not only the geopolitical but also the ideological character that even after the war began. Alexei Vandam wrote: “The principal opponent of Anglo-Saxons on the road to the World domination is the Russian people” (Vandam 2002, 88).

In Russian foreign policy two mainstreams had always fought: the *Germanophile* and the *Slavophile*. According to Eugene Tarle, “the first based on a self-preservation instinct, the second not following the dictates of that instinct, and

therefore much more active. For brevity, we agree to call the first movement Conservative, the second one Nationalist or Imperialist” (Tarle 1961, 503).

The Conservatives sought to preserve the monarchy, but it would be only possible if the war against Germany and Austria-Hungary had been avoided. Nationalists were eager to complete the gathering of “all Russians land” which meant that a fight with Austria-Hungary for Galicia was inevitable. And the Imperialists as the Slavophiles believed that Austria-Hungary might be disintegrated in order to establish the newly Slav states on its territory.

The combination of Russian Imperialism and Pan-Slavism as the main conception of Russian foreign policy towards Central Europe was formulated by Nikolai Danilevsky in his book “Russia and Europe” first published in 1871. Danilevsky’s thought appeared amid the international background of the Russo-Prussian Alvensleben Convention of 1863, the defeats of the Austrian Empire in the wars against Italy and Prussia in 1866, and the famous historic phrase of the Russian Chancellor Prince Alexander Gorchakov: “La Russie ne boude pas; elle se recueille (“Russia is not sulking, she is composing herself”). These events allowed him come to the conclusion that Austria-Hungary was a “fail” and “accidental” multinational state that should be disintegrated and portioned among Russia, Germany, Italy, Romania, and Serbia (Danilevsky 2008, 424, 433–434).

Otherwise, it could survive only by means of the annexation of Bosnia and Hercegovina and Romania (Danilevsky 2008, 437). It was a foreseeing observation and conclusion, as subsequent events demonstrated the correctness of this approach: Austria-Hungary incorporated Bosnia and Hercegovina in 1908; then during the First World War, Austria-Hungary projected the integration of Romania too (Czernin 1919, 50, 80).

According to Nikolai Danilevsky, the dissolution of Austria-Hungary was supposed to be in two phases. The first phase aimed to satisfy the irredentism of neighbours in order to accomplish their national unification. Those lands where some national group prevailed should be incorporated in the existing nation-states, for instance, Germans to Germany, Italians to Italy, Russians to Russia, Serbs to Serbia,

Romanians to Romania (Danilevsky 2008, 433–434). Hungary, in his view, was also an accidental state and might be dismembered by the separation of Slavs and Romanians (Danilevsky 2008, 427, 431). In the second phase, after the dissolution of Austria-Hungary, the newly nation-states that emerged in its territory should establish the pro-Russian alliance including the following:

- the Kingdom of Poland, including Russia, Austrian, and German parts of Polish land;

- the Kingdom of Czechs, Moravians, and Slovaks, including Northern-Western part of Hungary mostly with Slav population;

- the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, including Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Albania, Banat, Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia, Istria, Trieste, Krajina, parts of Carinthia and Styria, but excluding Macedonia in favour of the Kingdom of Bulgaria;

- the Kingdom of Romania, including parts of Transylvania, Bukovina, and Bessarabia, excluding South Bessarabia and Dobruja in favour of Russia;

- the Magyar Kingdom or the Kingdom of Hungary and Transylvania (Danilevsky 2008, 474–476).

As history has shown, such an alliance was created as the Warsaw Pact by the USSR in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Achilles heel of this conception - and Nikolai Danilevsky admitted it - was that Poland and Hungary would oppose Russian influence (Danilevsky 2008, 392, 483–484, 496) that produced instability within the alliance. Besides that, the Russian Empire also had some Achilles heels inside its European part: Finland, Lithuania, Baltic provinces where the non-Russian population dominated (Danilevsky 2008, 497–498). So, if the alliance broke down due to Polish-Hungarian opposition, the Russian Empire would also lose Finland, Lithuania, and the Baltic region as a next step. History proved the correctness of this assertion.

Dominic Lieven has pointed out that the Russian foreign policy during this period was influenced by Slavophile sentiment (Lieven 2015, 263) because the Russian press “put the government under great pressure to adopt dangerous policies”

(Lieven 2015, 215). So, Russia's leaders "could not and did not ignore public opinion" (Lieven 2015, 178). For instance, Sergei Sazonov, the Russian Foreign Minister, believed that the foreign policy should be "reflecting national sentiment", i.e., under the pressure of the Slavophiles (Lieven 2015, 127, 179–180, 233–234, 270).

In 1916, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs created a map of the future newly independent states that had to emerge in the territory of Austria-Hungary which largely mirrors the concept of Nikolai Danilevsky, except for Transylvania, where the certain territorial compensations were supposed in favour of Romania by the Sazonov-Diamandy Agreement, i.e., the secret Russo-Romanian convention of 1914. Sergei Sazonov, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, planned to create the independent Czechoslovakian, Hungarian, and Serbo-Croatian kingdoms as new allies of Russia after the dissolution of Austria-Hungary (Sazonov 1990, 338–339). Although, Sergei Sazonov did not take into account that it would be hardly possible to have the Kingdom of Hungary as an ally, especially after the Sazonov-Diamandy Agreement of 1 October 1914, according to which Transylvania, Banat, and Bukovina had to be transferred to Romania and the proposed new western border of Romania would have to run along the Tisza River and according to the map of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Transcarpatia including Košice (Kassa) should be incorporated into the Russian Empire, and Czechoslovakia would be to border Serbia-Croatia by establishing the so-called Slavic corridor between Hungary and Austria (AVPRI, f. OPO, op. 474, d. 439 (map)).

Russia entered the war without the real national foreign policy programme because, firstly, the Pan-Slav idea did not correspond to the Russian national interests; secondly, there was no real contradiction and confrontation between Russia and Germany. So, according to the real Russian national and dynastic interests, Russia should either remain neutral or enter the war on the other side (Pavlov 2017, 223–225).

During the war, the Russian Empire suffered some territorial losses, for instance, Poland, Lithuania, Courland. After the abdication of Nicholas II, the Empire began to

lose its territories in Europe gradually. The first Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Provisional Government Pavel Milyukov was forced to admit that Russia lost Finland and Ukraine (Milyukov 1990, 336). Furthermore, the so-called Milyukov note to the Allies affirming to them that the Provisional Government would continue the war with the same war aims that the former Russian Imperial one provoked an unprecedented manifestation and impatience of Russian public opinion and the first ministerial crisis of the Provisional Government leading to Milyukov's resignation (Warth 2006, 57–75; Airapetov 2016, 202–203). It happened because the Petrograd Soviet (Council) insisted on peace without “annexations or indemnities.” On 7(20) April 1917, “Izvestia” published the Manifesto of the Bern International Socialist Commission stated that the war provoked the Russian Revolution which became the “European Revolution,” but the “Revolution threatened by fratricidal war without the end”. Furthermore, the Russian Revolution might be suppressed by the reaction forces of the old regime. Consequently, in order to prevent such possibility for reaction, the Russian Revolution must be supported by the International Socialist Revolution, primarily in Germany and Austria-Hungary (Avdeev 1923, 19).

Indeed, Milyukov note of 18 April (1 May) 1917 did not contain any imperialistic clam, on the contrary, it was declared “the aspiration of the entire nation to carry the world war to a decisive victory,” emphasized “the liberating character of the war, the establishment of the amicable existence of nations, of self-determination for oppressed peoples” in accordance with “14 points” of US President Woodrow Wilson, and to establish “basis for lasting peace, and that the leading democracies, inspired by identical desires, will find the means to obtain guarantees and sanctions to prevent sanguinary conflicts in the future” (Klyuchnikov, Sabanin 1926, 74–75).

After the revolution had started, Russia gradually lost its territories in Europe and, as a result, the war aims were also changed. For example, in March-April 1917 the Minister of Foreign Affairs Pavel Milyukov formulated the Russian aims in Central Europe as the liberation of the Slavic peoples of Austria-Hungary, the restoration of the rights of Serbia, and the incorporation of Eastern Galicia into Russia (Vasyukov 1966, 87-88; Chertishchev 2006, 22, 74, 262). Then, the next

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Provisional Government Mikhail Tereshchenko stated in his report to the Provisional Council of the Russian Republic (the so-called Pre-Parliament) that the main task of the state policy was not to acquire new territories after the victory in the war but to retain the remaining limits: to maintain at least Estonia (Ignatiev 2000, 202).

Thus, the Russian Empire which planned new territorial acquisitions and dismemberment of Austria-Hungary was forced to withdraw from Eastern Europe to the borders of the period of Peter the Great.

The German geopolitical concept 'Mitteleuropa' was invented by Joseph Partsch in 1904 and then developed by Friedrich Naumann in 1915. The *Mitteleuropa* plan was to integrate Central and Eastern Europe under Germany's hegemony by means of making puppet states for a buffer between Germany and Russia (Bideleux, Jeffries 1998, 12). On 9 September 1914, the German Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg signed the so-called "Provisional Notes on the Direction of Our Policy on the Conclusion of Peace", in which he remarked that "Russia must be thrust as far as possible from Germany's eastern frontier and her domination over the non-Russian vassal peoples broken" (Feldman 1972, 125–126; Watson 2014, 258). Friedrich Naumann believed that it would stabilize the whole Central-European region (Tupolev 1998b, 116). The ruling political elites of Germany accepted the *Mitteleuropa* plan during World War I. Central and Eastern Europe would be the only German sphere of influence against strategic rivals like Great Britain, France, etc. (Watson 2014, 259; Atkinson, Dodds 2000, 43–44; Goemans 2000, 116).

Before the outbreak of the war and even during the war, two points of view regarding Russia competed in German political circles. The first, represented by the so-called Pan-German League and Paul von Rohrbach, defended the idea of the dismemberment of Russia as a way of Germany's domination in Central and Eastern Europe. The second, headed by professor Otto Gersch, developed Bismarck's political course to support good-neighbourly relations with Russia and proceeded from the premise that Russia should remain an indivisible state in close alliance with Germany. Such an alliance was supposed to provide Germany with the necessary



resources for her confrontation with the Anglo-Saxon world.

The German military command was inclined to follow Otto Gersch's views but the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was mainly guided by Paul von Rohrbach's recommendations to create buffer states: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Courland, and Transcaucasia. In this case, a special role was assigned to the creation of the "Kingdom of Kiev" or Ukraine, separating Central Europe from Russia, the border of which was supposed to run along the line: Vitebsk - Kursk - Saratov - Astrakhan. Thus, Russia was deprived of access to the Black Sea and the Caucasus. As Paul von Rohrbach wrote: "Whoever owns Kiev can subjugate Russia" and "The Russian Menace of 170 million people should, in any case, be reduced and its ability to attack Central Europe be limited. Living in the West and South of modern Russia Non-Russian peoples will only be content with secession from the Empire" (Zastavenko 1959, 5).

In September 1914, Heinrich Class, the president of the Pan-German League, also proposed to establish the newly independent states of East Europe: Ukraine, Poland, including Galicia, and several Baltic states (Meyer 1955, 132).

Besides that before the war, the project for the restoration of the Polish State in its borders of 1772. For example, at a meeting of the German Kaiser Wilhelm II and the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Schloss Konopischt (Konopiště Castle) on 17 June 1914, Wilhelm proposed to restore Poland, which includes Lithuania and Ukraine, i.e., in its 1772 borders under the rule of Franz Ferdinand (Milyukov 1917, 371).

Regardless of the main vectors of geopolitics, control over the Black Sea region was a prerequisite for dominance in the region of Central and Eastern Europe as a whole. Germany and Austria-Hungary, in their strategic plans, intended to oust Russia from Eastern Europe, eliminate its influence in the Balkans and the Caucasus and return it to the borders of the Moscow principality. In January 1917, Paul von Rohrbach wrote that after the war, Russia should be divided into three parts: the Western Region: the newly independent states such as Finland, Lithuania, Poland; Muscovy; Ukraine.

According to Paul von Rohrbach, with the separation of the Western region “*the Russian Menace will be reduced, but not eliminated,*” but the separation of Ukraine “*will ensure a stable state and balance in Eastern Europe*” (AVPRI, f. OPO, op. 474, d. 36, l. 40).

Johannes Haller also believed that the secession of “Finland, Lithuania, Poland, Russia Minor, Bessarabia... it (Russia – D. B.) would cease to be a great European power, it would again become as it was before Peter the Great when Leibniz could equate it with Persia and Abyssinia” (Tupolev 1998a, 53).

The German Secretary of State Gottlieb von Jagow wrote to the German ambassador in Vienna on 11 August 1914: “Revolutionising not only Poland but also Ukraine seems to us very important, because: firstly, it is a means of struggle against Russia; secondly, it is a way to ease the pressure of the Russian colossus on Europe and remove Russia as far as possible to the East; thirdly, it is an opportunity for Romania to receive Bessarabia later, which is feasible only if an intermediate state emerges between Romania and Russia” (Grekov 1998, 423).

The German official propositions for peace of 19 August 1917 included the recognition of not only the newly independent Poland but also the sovereignty of Ukraine, Finland, Lithuania, and the Baltic provinces.

In Germany, as mentioned above, the struggle between two geopolitical tendencies continued: for the first, independent Ukraine was a matter of paramount importance, for the second, on the contrary, the preservation of an indivisible Russia (perhaps except for Finland, Poland, Lithuania, and the Baltic provinces), as a powerful ally in the confrontation with the Anglo-Saxon world. Under the circumstances of the Bolsheviks coming to power and the disintegration of the Russian Empire, Paul von Rohrbach's concept began to gain the upper hand in German foreign policy. He noted with satisfaction that his plans for the partition of Russia had begun to come true. For example, in his article “Peace with Ukraine and the disintegration of Russia,” published in “Deutsche Politik” in February 1918, Paul von Rohrbach stated the following:

“What is currently happening in Russia is nothing more than the disintegration

of the Russian state along the same lines and directions along which it was created in the period from the 17th to the 19th centuries... Russia is not a single state; there are three different, completely opposite to each other Russia's:

- Muscovy or Great Russia;
- Old Russia (Russia Minor) or Ukraine;
- Non-Russian Western Region, stretching from the Vistula to the Finnish coast of the Arctic Ocean” (RGASPI, f. 71, op. 35, d. 473, l. 17–18).

The course on the disintegration of Russia in German politics prevailed during the Brest-Litovsk negotiations. Count Georg von Wedel reported from Vienna to Berlin on 10 February 1918:

“With regard to Russia, there are two possibilities. Either Imperial Russia will roll back or disintegrate. In the first case, it will be our enemy... Imperialist Russia can become a friend of Germany if we do not reave the sea coast from it but it will never become a friend of ‘Mitteleuropa’. Therefore, we must put everything on the second card, on the disintegration of Russia, which would help us to throw it off the shores of the Baltic. As if Ukraine, the Baltic provinces, Finland and others really fall away from Russia forever (which does not seem very real to me, especially with regard to Ukraine)” (Utkin 2001, 462; Fischer 1961, 496).

However, after the signing of the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty, the competition between two tendencies in German foreign policy towards Russia suddenly intensified. On the one hand, the German leadership, including the Kaiser, was inclined to preserve the status quo of the dismemberment of Russia into independent regions (under the condition of the irrevocability of Russian territorial losses such as Finland, Poland, Lithuania, the Baltic provinces and the Caucasus): Muscovy; Ukraine; The South-Eastern Union of the Cossack Hosts, Mountaineers of the Caucasus, and Free Peoples of the Steppes; Siberia (Utkin 2001, 468).

On the other hand, Russia restored in its unity, allied with Germany, would be the most important factor in victory on the Western Front and in the creation after the war of the Transcontinental alliance Germany-Russia-Japan, directed against England, France and the USA (RGASPI, f. 71, op. 35, d. 431, l. 468-469; Hoffmann

1925, 198, 202-203). In this sense, the German political circles found the possibility of revising the Brest-Litovsk Peace and territorial compensation of Russia (with the exception of Poland, Finland, Lithuania, and the Baltic provinces) in the case of the restoration of the monarchy in Russia (RGASPI, f. 71, op. 35, d. 431, l. 468-469; d. 476. l. 145, 149-150, 155, 195). Such a plan for the revision of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty and the restoration of Russia was discussed in the highest military and political circles in Berlin in August 1918 (Utkin 2001, 505, 520). Major General Max von Hoffmann remarked in his memoirs that even the plan of a military operation with the aim of occupying Moscow and establishing the regency of Grand Duke Pavel was created (Hoffmann 1925, VIII, 195–196).

Thus, the German geopolitical plans for the reconstruction of Central and Eastern Europe changed during the war. If in the beginning, it was envisaged to restore Poland in its borders of 1772, then in the process of war, it was reconsidered in order to create the counterbalance to Poland by establishing the newly independent states such as Lithuania, and Ukraine that should limit the Polish expansion to the East. In any case, Germany aimed to separate Russia from Europe through the so-called chain of buffer states such as Finland, Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine, and to return Russia to the pre-Petrine borders of the Grand Duchy of Moscow. In 1915, Paul von Rohrbach wrote that according to the interests of European security, the Russian Empire must be broken up into several territories to reduce the “Russian Menace” to attack Central Europe. In this case, Germany should sponsor the independence of Finland, Poland, and Ukraine in order to minimize Russian influence in the Baltic and the Black Sea regions and prevent its aspirations in the Balkans and Asia Minor.

This plan was realized in 1918, during the Brest-Litovsk system of international relations when the former Russian Empire was completely disintegrated. Firstly, Russia was detached from Central Europe by a chain of buffer states: the Kingdom of Finland, the Baltic Grand Duchy, the Kingdom of Lithuania, the Kingdom of Poland, and the Ukrainian State. Secondly, Transcaucasian nations, Siberia, Ural, the Cossacks Hosts, and the Caucasian nations declared independence. The Almighty

Don Host, the Kuban People's Republic, the Terek Cossack Host, and the Astrakhan Cossack Host established the South-Eastern Union of Cossack Hosts, Caucasian Highlanders, and Free Peoples of the Steppe, that separated Soviet Russia from the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea.

Before the First World War, the foreign policy of Austria-Hungary was aimed at the rapprochement with Russia and the revival of the League of the Three Emperors. Such a foreign policy course was conducted by Baron Alois Lexa von Aehrenthal and Count Leopold Berchtold, the foreign ministers of the Dual Monarchy (Galántai 1980, 9–11; Czernin 1919, 51). The main challenge for the Austro-Hungarian security and integrity was the Balkan problem created by Serbia (Galántai 1980, 6–7). As the first step to resolve this issue Baron Alois Aehrenthal made the decision to annex Bosnia and Herzegovina (Galántai 1980, 6–8) then the next step should be to divide Serbia between Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria. If the Russian foreign policy had not been guided by Pan-Slavism the compromise would have been reached, the League of the Three Emperors would have been restored and the First World War could have been avoided. According to Archduke Franz Ferdinand's project, Austria-Hungary had a chance to be transformed to the federation of the kingdoms (including Serbia and Romania) as like the German Empire (Czernin 1919, 48–50).

As for Austria-Hungary, the First World War was a struggle for survival against the irredentism of neighboring countries such as Serbia, Russia, Italy, and Romania. In order to remove the threat of irredentism, at the beginning of the war, Austria aimed to divide Serbia with Bulgaria (North Serbia should be transferred to Austria and Macedonia to Bulgaria) and incorporate the Russian part of Poland (Watson 2014, 263; Meyer 1955, 135; Romsics 2002, 23–25). Nevertheless, at the end of the war, the Dual Monarchy practically agreed to make certain territorial concessions in favor of Serbia, Italy, and Romania, and recognize the independence of Poland (Romsics 2002, 23–25). However, the satisfaction of all the territorial claims of the neighbouring states such as Serbia, Romania, Italy, and the self-determination of the Czechs and the Poles automatically led the Empire to collapse.

Austrian-Hungarian goals were revised throughout the war. For instance, on 20 November 1914, the Austrian government, in a note addressed to the allies, announced that the aim of Austria-Hungary in the war was to separate the Ukrainian people from Russia and establish an independent the Kingdom of Ukraine. Austria-Hungary pursued an aim to reduce Russian capability to influence in the Balkan and the Black Sea (Lozinsky 2016, 158; Chornovol 1997, 65; AVPRI, f. OPO, op. 474, d. 36, l. 42-43). Nevertheless, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Ottokar Czernin in his memoirs demonstrated the disinterest of the Empire in the creation of an independent Ukraine and the separation of any territory from Russia, emphasizing that the main interest of Austria-Hungary was in the Balkans (the incorporation of part of Serbia and possibly Romania) (Czernin 1919, 50; AVPRI, f. OPO, op. 474, d. 439, l. 15). Moreover, exhausted by the war Austria-Hungary had been agreed to abandon its expansionist plans and even make some concessions to Russia in Galicia (AVPRI, f. Vojna, op. 473, d. 193, l. 13, 21, 36-37; f. OPO, op. 474, d. 21, l. 34). According to Count Ottokar Czernin, in February 1917, the conclusion of peace became possible because Russia had already lost interest in the Slav issue (AVPRI, f. Vojna, op. 473, d. 193, l. 21; f. OPO, op. 474, d. 26, l. 8).

If before the war France and Great Britain considered Austro-Hungary as an important *sui generis* bulwark against Russian expansion towards the Balkans, but during the war, the Allies changed their minds in favour of the independence of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs oriented to France and Great Britain to prevent both German and Russian dominance in Central Europe (Romsics 2002, 30-31; Stadler 1968, 178; Bideleux, Jeffries 2007, 322 –323). Besides that Sir Halford Mackinder insisted to create between Russia and Germany the so-called “Middle Tier” of the newly independent states, such as Poland, the Baltic States, and Finland in order to prevent the new war between Russia and Germany and reduce simultaneously the Russian and German dominance in Central and Eastern Europe (Mackinder 1919, 196–198). It should be noted that Mackinder’s plan did not include the establishment of Ukraine, that was the main difference from Rohrbach’s one and the German *Mitteleuropa*. However, Great Britain pursued to

disintegrate not only Austria-Hungary but also Germany, i.e., to return Germany to the state before the unification of 1871 (AVPRI, f. OPO, op. 474, d. 439, l. 2 ob., 8–11).

As shown above, there was a certain convergence of the geopolitics tasks both opponents and allies of Russia, i.e., to create the buffer states between Germany and Russia at the expense of Russia and Austria-Hungary. France, for example, did not want Russia to strengthen its position in Central Europe and aimed to create Poland and Czechoslovakia oriented to France. Clemenceau remarked that the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty, despite its shame, let France untie hands in the war for the liberation of the enslaved nations “from Prague to Bucharest, from Warsaw to the Nordic countries” (Milyukov 1990, 161).

Thus, if Germany and Austria-Hungary did not aim to disintegrate Russia but only separate some of its territories in order to reduce the Russian influence in Central and Eastern Europe, the Entente powers (Russia, Great Britain, France), on the contrary, pursued such a goal towards Austria-Hungary. However, as a result of World War I and the revolution, both Empires (Russia and Austria-Hungary) collapsed.

During the First World War, Germany and Austria-Hungary were in a worse geopolitical position than the Entente Powers. As Alexander Watson pointed out, the Central Powers (Germany and Austria-Hungary) were surrounded by the so-called Ring of Steel, which consisted of Great Britain, France, Italy, Serbia, Romania, Russia. So, in order to prevent such a state Russia should be either neutral or an ally of Germany. Even the Brest-Litovsk treaty did not break up the Ring of Steel because Germany and Austria-Hungary were forced to deploy a huge contingent of troops against Soviet Russia.

The war against Russia and since 1916 against Romania made some troubles for the Central Powers and in fact, led Austria-Hungary to the dissolution (Torrey 1985, 530-531). The collapse of the Russian Empire was also accelerated by war with Germany and Austria-Hungary because the Russian foreign policy guided by Pan-Slavism did not correspond to and even contradicted with both Russian national and

dynastic interests. As for Austria-Hungary, Serbia since 1903 and especially after the Bosnian Crisis of 1908-1909 and the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913 had become the national and dynastic security challenge that could have been resolved only by force. In this case, the real Russian interests and also the interests of European security were to support Austro-Hungary but not Serbia in order to prevent the European War and the future revolution and collapse of the three Empires in Central Europe.

## REFERENCES

Ajrapetov, O. 2016. Uchastie Rossijskoj Imperii v Pervoj Mirovoj vojne (1914-1917), T. IV: 1917 god. Raspad [The Participation of the Russian Empire in the First World War (1914-1917), Vol. IV: 1917. The Dissolution]. Moscow, Kuchkovo Pole, 416 s. (In Russian).

Айрапетов, О. 2016. Участие Российской империи в Первой мировой войне (1914-1917), Т. IV: 1917 год. Распад. Москва, Кучково поле, 416 с.

AVPRI. Arhiv Vneshnej Politiki Rossijskoj Imperii [The Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire], f. OPO (Osobyi Politichiskyi Otdel [the Special Political Department]), op. 474, d. 21. (In Russian).

АВПРИ. Архив внешней политики Российской Империи, ф. ОПО (“Особый Политический Отдел”), оп. 474, д. 21.

AVPRI. Arhiv Vneshnej Politiki Rossijskoj Imperii [The Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire], f. OPO (Osobyi Politichiskyi Otdel [the Special Political Department]), op. 474, d. 26. (In Russian).

АВПРИ. Архив внешней политики Российской Империи, ф. ОПО (“Особый Политический Отдел”), оп. 474, д. 26.

AVPRI. Arhiv Vneshnej Politiki Rossijskoj Imperii [The Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire], f. OPO (Osobyi Politichiskyi Otdel [the Special Political Department]), op. 474, d. 36. (In Russian).

АВПРИ. Архив внешней политики Российской Империи, ф. ОПО (“Особый Политический Отдел”), оп. 474, д. 36.



AVPRI. Arhiv Vneshnej Politiki Rossijskoj Imperii [The Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire], f. OPO (Osobyi Politichiskyi Otdel [the Special Political Department]), op. 474, d. 439. (In Russian).

АВПРИ. Архив внешней политики Российской Империи, ф. ОПО (“Особый Политический Отдел”), оп. 474, д. 439.

AVPRI. Arhiv Vneshnej Politiki Rossijskoj Imperii [The Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire], f. Vojna [the War], op. 473, d. 193. (In Russian).

АВПРИ. Архив внешней политики Российской Империи, ф. “Война”, оп. 473, д. 193.

Atkinson, D., Dodds, K. (eds.) 2000. Geopolitical Traditions: Critical Histories of a Century of Geopolitical Thought. London & New York, Routledge, 416 p.

Avdeev, N. 1923. Revolutsya 1917 goda. Hronika Sobytyi. T. II: Aprel-Maj [The Revolution of 1917. The Chronicle. Vol. II: April-May]. Moscow & Petrograd, Gosizdat, 307 c. (In Russian).

Авдеев, Н. 1923. Революция 1917 года. Хроника Событий. Т. II: Апрель-Май. Москва & Петроград: Госиздат, 307 с.

Bideleux, R., Jeffries, I. 2006. A History of Eastern Europe. Crisis and Change. New York, Routledge, 710 p.

Chertishchev, A. 2006. Politicheskie partii i massovoe politicheskoe soznanie dejstvujuschchej Russoj Armii v gody Pervoj Mirovoj vojny (Ijul 1914 - Mart 1918 gg.) [The Political Parties and Mass Political Consciousness of the Active Russian Army in the First World War (July 1914 - March 1918)]. Moscow, Zhukovsky Air Force Engineering Academy, 848 c. (In Russian).

Чертищев, А. 2006. Политические партии России и массовое политическое сознание действующей Русской Армии в годы Первой Мировой войны (июль 1914 – март 1918 гг.). Москва, Военно-Воздушная Инженерная Академия им. проф. Н.Е. Жуковского, 848 с.

Chornovol, I. 1997. Galitska shlyahtha i proekt “Kyivskogo Korolivstva” Otto Bismarka [The Nobility of Galicia and the Project of “the Kingdom of Kiev” of Otto von Bismarck]. Suchasnist’, issue 3, s. 65–71. (In Ukrainian).

Чорновол, І. 1997. Галицька шляхта і проект “Київського королівства” Отто Бісмарка. *Сучасність*, No 3, 65-71.

Czernin, O. 1919. *In the World War*. London, New York, Toronto, Melbourne, Cassell & Co, Ltd., 352 p.

Danilevsky, N. 2008. *Rossija i Evropa. Vzgljad na kulturnye i politicheskie otnoshenia slavjanskogo mira k germano-romanskomu* [Russia and Europe. View of the Cultural and Political Relations between the Slavic and the German-Roman Worlds]. Moscow, Terra - Knizhnyi klub, 816 s. (In Russian).

Данилевский, Н. 2008. *Россия и Европа. Взгляд на культурные и политические отношения славянского мира к германо-романскому*. (Москва: Terra - Книжный клуб, 2008), 816 с.

Feldman, G. (ed.) 1972. *German Imperialism, 1914-1918: the Development of a Historical Debate*. London, Sydney, and Toronto, ix, 221 p.

Fischer, F. 1961. *Germany's Aims in the First World War*. New York, W. Norton, xxviii, 652 p.

Galántai, J. 1980. *Austria-Hungary and the War: the October 1913 Crisis - Prelude to July 1914*. Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 28 p.

Goemans, H. 2000. *War and Punishment: The Causes of War Termination and the First World War*. Princeton & Oxford, Princeton University Press, 368 p.

Grekov, B. 1998. *Natsyonalnyi aspekt politiki Germanii v gody Pervoj Mirovoj vojny (Liga nerusskih narodov Rossii)* [The National Aspect of the politics of Germany in the First World War (The League of Non-Russian Nations of Russia)]. Malkov, V. (ed.). *Pervaja Mirovaja Vojna. Prolog XX stoletija* [The First World War. The Prologue of the XX Century]. Moscow, Nauka, s. 419–431. (In Russian).

Греков, Б. 1998. *Национальный аспект внешней политики Германии в годы Первой Мировой войны (Лига нерусских народов России)*. Мальков, В. (ред.). *Первая Мировая война. Пролог XX столетия*. Москва, Наука, с. 419–431.

Hoffmann, M., von 1925. *Vojna unushchennyh vozmozhnostej* [The War of Lost Opportunities]. Moscow, Leningrad, xi, 203 s. (In Russian).

Гофман, М. фон, 1925. Война упущенных возможностей. Москва, Ленинград, XI, 203 с.

Ignatiev, A. 2000. Ot “lichnoj diplomatii” k “politike interesov” [From “Personal Diplomacy” to “Politics of Interests”] T. Filippova, et. al. Rossiya: gosudarstvennye priority i natsionalnye interesy [Russia: the State Priorities and National Interests]. Moscow, ROSSPEN, s. 159–208. (In Russian).

Игнатъев, А. 2000. От «личной дипломатии» к «политике интересов». Т. Филиппова, С. Секиринский, Л. Нежинский, А. Игнатъев, О. Волобуев, Россия: государственные приоритеты и национальные интересы. Москва, РОССПЭН, с. 159–208.

Klyuchnikov, Yu., Sabanin, A. (eds.), 1926. Mezhdunarodnaja politika Novejshego vremeni v dogovorah, notah, i deklaratsyah [The International Politics of Contemporary History in Treaties, Notes, and Declarations]. Vol. II: Ot imperialisticheskoy vojny do snjatija blokady s Sovetskoj Rossii [From the Imperialist War to the Lifting of the Blockade Against Soviet Russia]. Moscow, Litizdat NKID, v, 463 s. (In Russian).

Ключников, Ю., Сабанин, А., (ред.) 1926. Международная политика Новейшего времени в договорах, нотах, и декларациях. Ч. II: От империалистической войны до снятия блокады с Советской России. Москва, Литиздат НКИД, V, 463 с.

Lieven, D. 2015. Towards the Flame: Empire, War and the End of Tsarist Russia. London, Allen Lane, 361 p.

Lozinsky, A. 2016. Ukrajna v geopolitychnyh planah Nimetchyny ta Avstro-Ugorshchyny naperedodni Pershoi Svitovoi vijny [Ukraine in the Geopolitical plans of Germany and Austria-Hungary on the Eve of the First World War]. Ukrajna-Evropa-Svit [Ukraine-Europa-World]. Seria: Istorija, Mizhnarodni vidnosyny [History, International Relations], Issue 18, s. 155–163. (In Ukrainian).

Лозинський, А. 2016. Україна в геополітичних планах Німеччини та Австро-Угорщини аапередодні Першої світової війни. Україна-Європа-Світ. Серія: Історія, міжнародні відносини, Вип. 18, с. 155–163.

Mackinder, H. 1919. *Democratic Ideals and Reality. A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction*. New York, Henry Holt & Co., 227 p.

Meyer, H. 1955. *Mitteleuropa in German Thought and Action, 1815-1945*. The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, xv, 378 p.

Milyukov, P. 1990. *Vospominaniya [Memoirs]. Vol. 2*. Moscow, Sovremennik, 445 s. (In Russian).

Милюков, П. 1990. *Воспоминания, Т. 2*. Москва, Современник, 445 с.

Milyukov, P. 1917. *Konstantinopol i prolivy [Constantinople and the Straits]. Vestnik Evropy*, issue 1, s. 354-381. (In Russian).

Милюков, П. 1917. *Константинополь и проливы. Вестник Европы, № 1*, с. 354-381.

Pavlov, N. 2017. *Rossija i Germanija: nesostojavshijsya alians (istorija s prodolzheniem) [Russia and Germany: Failed Alliance (A History with Continuation)]*. Moscow, Aspekt Press, 560 s. (In Russian).

Павлов, Н. 2017. *Россия и Германия: несостоявшийся альянс (история с продолжением)*. Москва, Аспект Пресс, 560 с.

RGASPI. *Rossijskiy Gosudarstvennyi Arhiv Socialno-Politicheskoi Istorii [The Russian State Archive of Social-Political History]*, f. 71: Institut Marxizma-Leninizma pri CK KPSS [The Institute of Marxism-Leninism of CC of CPSU], op. 35: Sektor istorii Grazhdanskoi vojny v SSSR. Podgotovitelnye materialy [the Department of the History of the Civil War in the USSR. The Primary Sources], d. 431 (In Russian).

РГАСПИ. *Российский государственный архив социально-политической истории*, ф. 71: Институт марксизма–ленинизма при ЦК КПСС, оп. 35: Сектор истории Гражданской войны в СССР. Подготовительные материалы по изданию истории гражданской войны в СССР, д. 431.

RGASPI. *Rossijskiy Gosudarstvennyi Arhiv Socialno-Politicheskoi Istorii [The Russian State Archive of Social-Political History]*, f. 71: Institut Marxizma-Leninizma pri CK KPSS [The Institute of Marxism-Leninism of CC of CPSU], op. 35: Sektor istorii Grazhdanskoi vojny v SSSR. Podgotovitelnye materialy [the

Department of the History of the Civil War in the USSR. The Primary Sources], d. 473 (IN Russian).

РГАСПИ. Российский государственный архив социально-политической истории, ф. 71: Институт марксизма–ленинизма при ЦК КПСС, оп. 35: Сектор истории Гражданской войны в СССР. Подготовительные материалы по изданию истории гражданской войны в СССР, д. 473.

Romsics, I. 2002. *The Dismantling of Historic Hungary: The Peace Treaty of Trianon, 1920*. Boulder, Social Science Monographs; New York, Columbia University Press, 201 p.

Sazonov, S. 1990. *Vospominanija [Memoirs]*. Moscow, *Mezhdunarodnye odnoshevija*, 400 s. (In Russian).

Сазонов, С. 1990. Воспоминания. Москва, *Международные отношения*, 400 с.

Stadler, K. 1968. *The Disintegration of the Austrian Empire*. *The Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 3, Issue 4, p. 177-190.

Tarle, E. 1961. *Germanskaja orientacija i P.N. Durnovo in 1914 godu [The German Orientation and Peter Durnovo in 1914]*. *Sochinenija [The Essays]*. Vol. XI. Moscow, *Izdatelstvo AN SSSR*, s. 503-522. (In Russian).

Тарле, Е. 1961. Германская ориентация и П.Н. Дурново в 1914 году. *Сочинения*, Т. XI. Москва: *Издательство АН СССР*, с. 503–522.

Torrey, G. 1985. *The Romanian Campaign of 1916: Its Impact on the Belligerents*. Béla Király and Nándor Dreisziger, Albert Nofi (eds.), *East Central European Society in World War I*. Boulder, Social Science Monographs; New York, Columbia University Press, p. 528–546.

Tupolev, B. 1998a. *Rossija v voennyh planah Germanii [Russia in the military plans of Germany]*. Malkov, V. (ed.). *Pervaja Mirovaja Vojna. Prolog XX stoletija [The First World War. The Prologue of the XX Century]*. Moscow, *Nauka*, s. 49–53. (In Russian).

Туполев, Б. 1998а. Россия в военных планах Германии. Мальков, В. (ред.). *Первая Мировая война. Пролог XX столетия*. Москва, *Наука*, с. 49-53.

Tupolev, B. 1998b. “Sredinnaja Evropa” v ekspansionistskih planah germanskogo imperializma nakanune i vo vremja Pervoj Mirovoj vojny [“Mitteleuropa” in the Expansionist Plans of the German Imperialism Before and During the First World War]. Malkov, V. (ed.). Pervaja Mirovaja Vojna. Prolog XX stoletija [The First World War. The Prologue of the XX Century]. Moscow, Nauka, s. 106–119. (In Russian).

Туполев, Б. 1998б. “Срединная Европа” в экспансионистских планах германского империализма накануне и во время Первой Мировой войны. Мальков, В. (ред.). Первая Мировая война. Пролог XX столетия. Москва, Наука, с. 106–119.

Utkin, A. 2001. Pervaja Mirovaja Vojna [The First World War]. Moscow, Algoritm, 732 s. (In Russian).

Уткин, А. 2001. Первая мировая война. Москва, Алгоритм, 732 с.

Vandam, A. 2002. Geopolitika i Geostrategija [Geopolitics and Geostrategy]. Moscow, Kuchkovo Pole, 212 s. (In Russian).

Вандам, А. 2002. Геополитика и геостратегия. Москва, Кучково поле, 212 с.

Vasjukov, V. 1966. Vneshnjaja politika Vremennogo Pravitelstva [The Foreign Policy of the Provisional Government]. Moscow, Mysl, 497 s. (In Russian).

Васюков, В. 1966. Внешняя политика Временного правительства. Москва, Мысль, 497 с.

Warth, R. 2006. Antanta i Russkaja revolutsija, 1917-1918 [The Entente and the Russian Revolution, 1917-1918]. Moscow, Centrpoligraf, 271 s. (In Russian).

Уорт, Р. 2006. Антанта и Русская революция, 1917–1918. Москва, Центрполиграф, 271 с.

Watson, A. 2014. Ring of Steel: Germany and Austria-Hungary in World War I. New York, Basic Books, 832 p.

Zastavenko, G. 1959. Krah nemetskoj interventsii na Ukraini v 1918 r. [The Failure of the German Intervention in Ukraine in 1918]. Kyiv, Derzhpolitvydav Ukrainy, 155 s. (In Ukrainian).

Заставенко, Г. 1959. Крах німецької інтервенції на Україні в 1918 р. Київ, Держполітвидав України, 155 с.

*Date of submission: 9 June 2021*