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Title:

*War By Design?
Silencing Peace Options Offered by the Military. French and Entente failure to face the
Central European Security Challenge after World War 1.*

French and military/naval actors had, strangely enough, a quite secondary role in shaping the post-war order in Central Europe. Civilians, that is the heads of government and Quai d'Orsay, did, in several occasions, silence naval or military proposals aiming at installing a lasting peace in the region. Building upon two case studies, the paper will assess how external actors, that is great powers, have contributed to the lasting instability of a vast region. The concerned area was clearly defined. On May, 21st, 1919 the military advisors of the five Allied and Associated main victors at the Paris Peace Conference (USA, UK, France, Italy, Japan) proposed to restrain military/naval manpower, industry and units, plus weapons in "Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, Czecho-Slovakia, Yugo-Slavia (including Serbia and Montenegro), Romania, Poland, and Greece". Ignoring Baltic countries and Finland, because these were out of the reach of the Paris Peace Conference, was logical.

The fate of this proposal and the failure of the one the French Navy fostered to create in Novembre 1918 a Yugoslavia excluding Serbia, will be used as case studies.

What is at stake?

The combined delusion of self-determination and aporia of sovereignty are usually attributed to Central European post-war governments and/or the main powers at the Paris Peace Conference. The various local actors struggled for the sake of territorial or other benefits, pretending to act on the grounds of ethnic fairness and national security, and the power brokers in Paris, unable to control the Central Europe theater of conflicts, were obsessed by maintaining the illusion of their leverage in the region, at least among their own internal political constituencies. Examining naval or military actors in the two aforementioned cases is meant to reconsider the complex interplay of various instances in the process of building a lasting conflicting regional environment.

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Belgrade and Bitola: Life in Two Balkan Border Cities in a Time of War and Occupation, 1912-1918

Between 1912-18, the Balkans were in a state of continual conflict as imperial Great Powers and nationalizing states fought for territory and allegiance among the peoples in this region. Through the two Balkan Wars and the First World War, the diverse and intertwined communities in this space experienced extreme violence, dislocation, and successions of regimes laying claim to their land and loyalty. Little was undisputed in this mosaic, messy space – from identity to territory to regime legitimacy, to the very words used to describe the events that unfolded - atrocity, terrorism, liberation, occupation.

This paper explores how competing imperial, national and local claims played out and impacted people at a grassroots level in two localities, Belgrade and Bitola (Manastir), at the northern and southern borders of the post-Bucharest Kingdom of Serbia. Both were capitals – Belgrade of the Serbian Kingdom and Bitola until recently of Ottoman Manastir – that served as political, economic, social and cultural centers with a significant international presence. Both were microcosms of experiences of war in this period, situated near frontlines and objects of incessant bombardment and foreign occupation. Drawing on Habsburg, Bulgarian and Serbian state and military archives, municipal and district records in Serbia and Macedonia, as well as writings of Red Cross doctors, Protestant missionaries, consuls, and foreign correspondents, this paper privileges voices of ordinary people and analyzes how they navigated everyday life in war and occupation, to understand its impact on the social fabric of local and emerging national communities.

Despite a growth in World War I literature in the past decade, the Balkans remain a significantly understudied, yet central, theater of war. The study of these two Balkan cities offers a unique comparison of Bulgarian, Serbian and Habsburg occupations that challenges imperial-national dichotomies and illuminates complex processes of post-imperialism in 20th-century eastern Europe.

Title: Central European Cities During the Coal Crisis of 1916-1918: Societal Impacts and Daily Life

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Abstract

While much has been written on the accounts of wartime everyday life both at front and in rear, the wartime coal scarcity and its societal impact has hitherto been an under-researched topic. This contribution focuses on the media reflection of coal scarcity of 1916–1918 in Vienna and in Prague, and compare them to Paris. Besides the examination of the intensity of coal crisis, it reveals how the period press framed the coal crisis and austerity measures and related it to broader geopolitical issues. It also demonstrates that coal scarcity in both Prague and Vienna led to social cleavages, contributed to social and nationalist tensions, fostered by socially divisive language employed by media discourse. This discourse foregrounded the ingroup and outgroup membership via the discursive strategies of ‘Othering’ and ‘Belonging’. It also brought forward nationalist and even revanchist narratives, identified by this contribution. Our study deals with a topic that has hitherto been scarcely reflected within academia. Therefore, it represents a substantial contribution to understanding the material crisis's societal impact in the Czech, Austrian, and French contexts.