

Apple of Discord: The “Hungarian Factor” in Austro–Serbian Relations, 1867–1881. By Ian D. Armour. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2014. 347 pp.

Ian D. Armour’s book is a perfect example of a work of diplomatic history that is “total” in its approach, by which I mean that it sets aims far more ambitious than those of traditional (and also quite numerous) analyses of bilateral relations, and it also surpasses these traditional studies in the scholarly standards it meets. Armour’s primary contention is that, after 1867, not only did new possibilities emerge for Hungarians to play roles in foreign policy, but opportunities also emerged for Hungarians to further their foreign interests, even though in principle the Compromise did not create any formal or institutional framework for this (formally, the Compromise only allowed for a single, “imperial” foreign policy). The foreign policy pursued by Hungarians often differed significantly from and even ran against the “imperial” ideas and interests, both in its goals and, even more frequently, in its means. One clear example of this was the appointment of the later common Foreign Minister and administrator of the Condominium of Bosnia and Hercegovina Benjamin Kállay to serve as consul in Belgrade in 1868, when at the same time Anton Prokesch-Osten, the ambassador in Istanbul, was a representative of the Austrian imperial idea. Another example would be the support given by Hungarians for Michael Obrenović, who had a Hungarian wife and estates in Hungary, and their opposition to the Karađorđević family, which was hardly beloved of the Hungarian nation because of the role it had played in 1848. For Austria, the Karađorđević family was emblematic of loyalty to the dynasty. In the background, the two Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Friedrich Beust and Gyula Andrassy, represented contradictory conceptions and ideologies. The former supported a foreign policy that focused on western Europe, while Andrassy promised a more active anti-Russian foreign policy in the Balkans. At the same time Andrassy and Kállay initially rejected the acquisition of Bosnia, in marked contrast with the aspirations of the Emperor, Beust and his circles. Andrassy opposed the idea of an essentially Southern Slav Balkan/Danubian Federation in the interests of protecting the Monarchy, and his opposition had an anti-Russian edge. At same time, he was apprehensive about the strengthening of the Slavic peoples within the Monarchy, which he feared might weaken the dualist structure of the state. For Kállay, the Danubian Confederation represented a counterweight to Habsburg rule (precisely these two reasons were behind his support for the idea of pledging Bosnia to Serbia—in other words,

he was not influenced by a Romantic vision of Southern Slav brotherhood, but rather by political self-interest). While Kállay may have been the first Hungarian follower of John Stuart Mill, his notion of liberalism was nonetheless very distant from that of the Englishman. The notion of a Danubian confederation as a counterweight to Habsburg rule may perhaps have fit into this framework, but for instance the role that Kállay exerted in the Karađorđević trial (a role driven by political interests) was in stark contradiction with the principles of classical liberalism. Added to all this was the Croatian question and the problem of the relationship to Serbia and Hungary of the Serbs of Voivodina, who had become more important pieces on the political chess board, since the fate of Bosnia was of key importance from the perspective of winning—or losing—their trust.

Obviously, Armour's "total" approach is rife with complexity and risk given the complicity of the network of relationships. The divergent visions of Beust and Andrassy make an analysis of the relationships between Prussia and France indispensable. Indeed, an analysis of Hungarian–Croatian, Austrian–Croatian, and Serb–Croatian relations is similarly indispensable to a nuanced understanding of Hungary's foreign policy ambitions. The prevailing domestic situation exerted a significant influence on Hungarian foreign policy, the essential goal of which was to ensure the viability of Dualism and dismantle the movements among the national minorities within the Empire. From this perspective, it was not at all obvious, for instance, that Andrassy, who was seen as liberal, would proffer Hungary's support for the liberal-nationalist party in Voivodina and the Serbian nationalist party in Serbia. Indeed, it seemed far more likely that they would enjoy the support of the conservative groups (who favored a limited constitution and strong central power), for instance Milivoje Blaznavac, who served as Minister of Defense and later regent, or Prince Michael. However, this support only seemed likely, for the fault lines in Serbian politics appeared not only on the ideological plane, but also in foreign policy orientation, and these fault lines did not overlap. Not every liberal was also pro-Russian, and not every conservative was pro-Austrian. The elements of French ideology that influenced Serbian politicians could be favorable (the idea of the nation state) or unfavorable (liberalism, nationalism) from the perspective of Hungarian foreign policy.

These complex networks of relationships and inclinations in domestic and foreign policy must be analyzed both from the Hungarian and the Serbian perspective, and this creates further complications. The Serbian prince had to appease public opinion, which called for the liberation of the oppressed Slavic

peoples, while also giving due consideration to the actual political constellation. It is hardly surprising that Armour has chosen 1867 as the starting point for his analysis, since with the defeat of the Austrian Empire at the Battle of Königgrätz a new European great power came into existence, namely Prussia, and Austria had to reassess its role and position in Europe, as well as its goals. The Habsburg Empire had effectively been pushed out of Western Europe, and the compromise with Hungary meant both a new Balkan orientation and a long-term rivalry with Russia (and Germany). Michael, Prince of Serbia had to choose between a Balkan Alliance the essential function of which was unclear (Kállay and his circle clearly would not have been pleased if the Alliance had been created in order to attack the Ottoman Empire or if it had acquired a defensive, anti-Habsburg edge) or having the support of a great power. The question was which was more likely to ensure Serbia's territorial growth and domestic and foreign policy stability. Bosnia was the Apple of Discord, since Austria, Serbia, and Croatia all sought to claim it, and Andrassy's original idea of promising it to Serbia (this offer may or may not have been sincere, as Armour discusses on pp. 121-155) sowed the seeds of discord between Austria, Croatia, and the Serbs of southern Hungary and Serbia. In Armour's assessment, originally the Hungarians had not intended to use Bosnia to drive a wedge between Austria, Croatia, and Serbia, but had pursued a genuinely "positive" foreign policy in the Balkans (in the service of their aforementioned anti-Russian and in part anti-Austrian aims). Only looking back had they realized the potential uses of this "premature" promise. Of course the idea of giving Bosnia to Serbia also meant that the other parties would turn against Hungary, which is why the plan was later abandoned.

The approach Armour has adopted requires knowledge of several languages, as well as research in a number of different sites given the scattered nature of the sources. Furthermore, since the secondary literature on the subject is marked by a striking one-sidedness, Armour had to show remarkable critical sensitivity and subtlety in his use of the works of other scholars. His knowledge of languages (Hungarian, Serbian, and German) enables him to offer a thorough assessment at the beginning of his book of the secondary literature in these three languages. This in and of itself constitutes a significant strength of his study in comparison with the relatively one-sided works, which are more limited in their use of sources and, hence, their perspectives. Armour's book is the first work in English in which the Serbian, Austrian, and Hungarian primary sources and secondary literature are given appropriate (and balanced) emphasis. (The

bibliography itself is twenty pages long.) In addition, he also discussed his ideas in person with other scholars on the subject (for instance Imre Röss).

The only weakness of his book lies precisely in its comprehensiveness and the array of perspectives it adopts. While the manner in which he presents contrasting stances in the historiography and identifies contradictions which arise from the one-sidedness of the existing secondary literature, Armour's own argumentation is not persuasive precisely because of this multiplicity of perspectives. It is often complex and circuitous, or it rests on assumptions (for instance, the contentions he makes concerning the hypothetical goal of Andrassy's agreements concerning Bosnia in 1867/68, pp.19–55, 121–55). At the same time, the structure of the book is logical, balanced, and proportional. The individual chapters address clearly identified diplomatic problems, and consequently the shifts in foreign policy are similarly clear and accessible to analysis. The emphasis on the events of 1870–1871 is also understandable, since the great power constellation (the Franco–Prussian War) and the maneuverings of the small states and their search for allies are all presented, along with the situation of the Bosniaks (pp.155–259). Armour could have devoted a few more pages to the events of 1875–1878 to discuss the ideas and aspirations of the Russians, the British, and the Austro–Hungarians (pp.259–83). Fundamentally, the reader gets the very clear impression that the foreign policy of the Hungarians was based not on any ideological principles, but rather on opportunistic attempts to further the interests of the moment. On the other hand, the appointment of Andrassy as Minister of Foreign Affairs constituted a sharp shift: the political visions and ideas which had been vying for prominence within the Monarchy gave way to a single, general bearing (perhaps a bit paradoxically, this general bearing later changed dramatically in comparison with the original logic, and several elements of Beust's vision for the Balkans were adopted).

This book was clearly written for specialists, i.e. scholars of the diplomatic history of the Balkans. It will be particularly edifying for representatives of the arguably narrowly focused, (romantic) nationalist historiography of the region, which always seems to be struggling to compensate a bit for the perceived marginality of the region and its states.

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