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ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH TSARIST RUSSIA DURING THE RENEWAL OF SERBIAN STATEHOOD IN THE 19TH CENTURY

Abstract:

The wide-ranging changes in Europe, the unrest Tsarist Russia endured, and Serbia's transition from a rebellious province of the Ottoman Empire to an independent and sovereign state provide the overall framework for comprehending and interpreting this period of Russo-Serbian relations. The complex, layered, and delicate political circumstances on the Balkan Peninsula crucially influenced the establishment and development of these relations. The first half of the 19th century saw increased Russian diplomatic and political activity in pursuit of plans pertaining to the region of the collapsing Ottoman Empire, coupled with a confrontation with the dominant Central European power, the Habsburg Monarchy (Austria-Hungary). According to the logic of international relations, Serbian political visions could only partially influence the dynamics of Russo-Serbian relations. For most of this period, Serbia had to adjust its visions, more or less successfully, to the direction of Russian politics and its growing diplomatic activities.

Keywords: Serbia, Tsarist Russia, Ottoman Empire, Habsburg Monarchy, 19th Century.

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INTRODUCTION

Amid the far-reaching processes that marked the 19th century, the general weakening of the Ottoman Empire and its positions on the Balkan Peninsula stands out, accompanied by the emergence of new national actors and stronger influences from the Habsburg Monarchy and Russia. Russia's diplomatic positioning as the protector of Christian communities in the Ottoman Empire began during the Russo-Turkish wars at the beginning of that century. A more active policy and vigorous assistance to these communities naturally influenced the development of their expectations and, thus, their relations with Russia. Serbia was no exception in this context, as evidenced by its aspirations and steps towards establishing closer ties with Russia. During this eventful period, marked by a series of Russo-Turkish wars, peace treaties, and regional crises, one can recognise not only the underlying interests and endeavours inherent in Russo-Serbian relations but also numerous international and internal constraints.

INITIAL PERIOD (1804–1815)

In a century that has heralded national revolutions and the weakening of traditional empires, the emergence and strengthening of national movements and their aspirations for creating new states and revitalising old ones are noticeable. As part of extensive reform efforts by Sultan Selim III (1788–1807), a series of *firmands* (decrees, orders) were issued banning the return of *Janissaries* (members of the elite corps of the Ottoman Empire) to the *Pashaluk* (territory administered by the pasha) of Belgrade, while the *nahiyahs* (districts, administration units) were granted broad self-government. Contrary to expectations, these reforms led to the return of the Janissaries and lawlessness, which further shook the foundations of Ottoman political authority in this region and provided an immediate pretext for a series of national uprisings. The transformation of the uprising under the leadership of Đorđe Petrović Karađorđe (1804) from a spontaneous peasant revolt into a war for

liberation and full independence, with a basis in mediaeval state traditions, attracted significant attention from the great powers.

The expansion of the Russian Empire on the Black Sea and the lower Danube inevitably influenced the strengthening of its interest in the Balkan Peninsula and the more precise formulation of its foreign policy towards this region. One of the first concrete initiatives for Russia's involvement in the national liberation process of the Serbian people was a proclamation of the Herzegovinian Archimandrite Arsenije Gagović in 1803 (Đorđević, 2017, pp. 47-49). The proclamation addressed the Russian ruling circles, suggesting the creation of a "Slavic-Serbian Empire" that would stretch from Serbia to Šibenik via the Bay of Kotor and Dalmatia (Đorđević, 2017, pp. 47-49). Although Serbo-Russian relations, due to spiritual and cultural ties, had been developing even during the long Ottoman rule, the Serbian Revolution laid the necessary foundations for modern Serbo-Russian relations.

During the reign of Alexander I Romanov (1801–1825), several Russo-Turkish wars were fought, the outcomes of which laid the groundwork for a more active Russian policy towards the Balkan and, thereby, the Serbian national territory. The first in this series of conflicts (1806–1812), fought in the regions of Wallachia and Moldavia, was marked by the arrival of Russian military forces on the outskirts of the Balkans. As emphasised by Alexey Timofejev, "Already in this first encounter, we can foresee the *modus vivendi* that will accompany Russia's behaviour in the western part of the Balkan Peninsula" (Timofejev, 2010, p. 20).¹ During this conflict, it was evident that Russia had neither the intention nor the ambition to include the "impoverished province"—the then-Serbia—"surrounded by powerful and not very friendly empires" in its composition (Timofejev, 2010, p. 20). The grave limitations of the sustainability of Russian policy towards this region were soon evidenced by

¹ In August 1806, the High Porte replaced the rulers of the mentioned principalities, and the Russian army immediately responded and entered these territories in accordance with Article 16 of the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, concluded in 1774. The Ottoman side viewed these military actions with disapproval, which, under the additional influence of the French envoy in Istanbul, turned into the Russo-Turkish war.

the complex strategic position it found itself in due to simultaneous warfare with the Ottoman Empire and Napoleon's France. The imperative of concluding peace with Turkey as quickly as possible indicated the realistic scope of Russian support for the liberation aspirations of the Balkan peoples. In the outcome, these circumstances inevitably forced the Russian negotiators to give up on the initial demands of both Serbia and Russia.

Given the complexity and gravity of this endeavour, the struggle for the national liberation of the Serbian people required obtaining stronger international support. Requests for assistance directed to the Habsburg Monarchy remained unanswered, primarily due to Vienna's caution in its relations with Turkey but also because of the danger posed by the possibility of unified action by the Serbs on both sides of the Danube and Sava rivers, which could be directed potentially against the Monarchy itself (Timofejev, Miloradović & Životić, 2018, p. 5).

In the hope of gaining more significant international support and assistance, the leaders of the uprising turned to Tsarist Russia. The geographical distance and a certain historical distance resulted in unclear perceptions of Tsarist Russia and the Russians among the uprising leaders. Their perception of Russia was primarily related to its Slavic and Orthodox nature, considering it a natural ally. In a letter to the Russian ambassador in Constantinople, Andrey Italinsky, dated May 1804, the insurgents openly emphasised that "the Serbs have never thought more unanimously about the liberation of their homeland, nor desired it more eagerly than today", highlighting "the unanimous desire of all Serbs to establish independent Serbian governance in Serbia under the name Serbian Principality, or any other similar name, as those seven Ionian islands, under the direct protection of Russia" (Đorđević, 2017, p. 55). In pursuit of this idea, the insurgents sent a diplomatic delegation to Russia in the autumn of 1804 led by Archpriest Mateja Nenadović. Reflecting on the impressions of this journey, Mateja Nenadović emphasised:

"Since we initially asked the Germans to receive us, but they refused, we should seek the Russians. They are of the same religion and our blood relatives; they will help us. (...) Let us make our pleas as best we can,

write down from every nahiyah wherever there are any walls, ruins, or piles of stones from churches and monasteries, and say that the Turks had destroyed them all so that the Russians would rise in greater anger and grievance and retaliate for so many churches. (...) In the name of God, we went and got on the boat, and when we embarked, I said, "This is how Columbus set sail with his crew on the blue sea and found America and acquainted it with Europe, and we are venturing on the calm Danube to find Russia, of which we know nothing but only what we heard in a song, and acquaint Serbia with Russia!" (Nenadović, 1980, p. 156).

The visit to the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Duke Adam Czartoryski, represented, to a certain extent, the first diplomatic encounter between representatives of insurgent Serbia and Tsarist Russia. Contrary to the great expectations of the insurgent leaders regarding assistance from "co-religion Russia," Archpriest Mateja testified that Minister Czartoryski, although aware of the fraternal relations, pointed out that the geographical distance to Serbia and friendly relations with Turkey represented real constraints for more open assistance to the insurgents. However, Russia provided some aid through the engagement of its envoy in Constantinople, who drew the High Porte's attention to the need to address the situation in Serbia (Jelačić, 1940, p. 45). Although Russian aid did not immediately arrive as expected, it was apparent that Russia's attitude was qualitatively different from that of the Habsburg Monarchy. From the statements and activities mentioned, it was evident that Serbo-Russian relations were rooted in a particular coincidence of interests, adherence to the Orthodox faith, linguistic affinity, and mutual political support. Ultimately, Russia's strategic objective—the necessity of gaining access to the warm seas—was at the centre of Serbian and Russian interests aligning. For this reason, the creation of national states in the Balkans was in line with the basic directions of Russian policy, and these national movements could find their support within it. In that regard, the aspirations of the Serbian people did not deviate from the mentioned international context, resulting in a particular alignment between Russian strategic goals and Serbian political endeavours (Đorđević, 2017, p. 56).

An excellent example of joint action was observed after the interruption of peace negotiations between the insurgents and the High Porte. It was followed by increasing Russian support in significant financial amounts, weapons, and ammunition. In the following period, the first official contact between Russian General Ivan Ivanovich Michelson (Ив́ан Михе́льсо́н) and Vozhd Karađorđe occurred on the occasion of organising Russian-Serbian military cooperation. On that occasion, the Russian general wrote to the Vozhd:

“The Ottoman Porte has declared war on Russia because of its (Russian) concern for the well-being of peoples sharing the same religion as we and for our rapprochement with you, dear co-religionists...”. On that occasion, he expressed his belief that the Serbian nation was worthy “to be a nation for which it is shameful to pay tribute to the Turks...” (Jelačić, 1940, p. 47).

As early as June 1806, a military unit under the command of Russian General Ivan Ivanovich Isaev (Иван Иванович Исаев) arrived in Serbia, which, in battles at Štubik and Malajnica, fought side by side with the Serbian army for the first time. Even though Russia’s war with Napoleonic France complicated its engagement in the Balkans and revealed limitations in the realisation of outlined goals, this aspect of Russian policy, accompanied by the first joint and official military action, attests to complementary interests.

Parallel to the aforementioned military cooperation, the first step towards the official establishment of diplomatic relations between Tsarist Russia and Serbia was taken. The political significance of this recognition influenced the growing confidence of the insurgents. Therefore, Sima Marković, in a session of the Council attended by Turkish proxies, emphasised that “Serbia considers itself a completely independent country”. In July 1807, at Karađorđe’s headquarters, Konstantine Konstantinovich Rodofinikin (Константи́н Константи́нович Родофиники́н) arrived as the permanent Russian representative. He held this position for the next two years, although his influence on Russo-Serbian relations remained visible until 1835 (Rajić, 2018, p. 12). Through Rodofinikin, Karađorđe sought to achieve two political goals: the

establishment of independent and autonomous authority and securing urgent, concrete, and extensive assistance from Russia. In his act "Foundation of the Serbian Government" (*Основаније Правитељства Сербскога*), Karađorđe was granted the right to preside over the Senate and the right to three votes. However, the same act did not provide for hereditary or lifelong leadership of the Vozhd, which did not align with his political ambitions. Although the "Foundations of the Serbian Government" did not formally come into force due to the lack of the Tsar's confirmation, some provisions were applied. In this way, the representative of Russia influenced the political organisation of Serbian insurgents. (Šarkić, 2015, p. 36).

Just a month later, on August 24, 1807, the Ottoman and Russian Empires signed a two-year armistice in Slobozia, whose provisions did not apply to the Serbian insurgents in any way. The argument of the Ottoman negotiators stemmed from the formal-legal conception of Serbs as their subjects. The armistice concluded in Slobozia ushered Russo-Serbian relations into a new phase, characterised by stronger and more continuous mutual reliance but also by failed expectations (Ljušić, 2008, p. 89).

The new coup and changes that affected the Ottoman authority and the state capital opened up the possibility of a new armed conflict with Russia, prompting the High Porte to attempt reconciliation with the insurgents on several occasions. At the end of December 1808, the insurgents addressed, through a delegation, the Russian commander in Iași, seeking recognition of Serbia's independence and border establishment according to the *status quo ante bellum*. However, the commander's response was once again disappointing: "The Serbs cannot demand from Russia to prioritise the interests of a small country over the interests of the vast Russian Empire". The situation would fundamentally change only after the shift in power in Europe in 1809 (Đorđević, 2017, p. 63). A contemporary of these events, writer Jakov Ignjatović, noted that despite everything, at that time, "patriotism and Russophilia were the same; moreover, anyone who was not a Russophile was considered unpatriotic, even a traitor" (Jovanović, 2011, pp. 181-182). No matter how small, every Russian victory represented a triumph for Serbia on the political and diplomatic front.

In the military convention signed in Negotin in 1807, the insurgents expressed the need for Russian military presence, financial aid, experts, and war materials (Vuković, 2023, p. 60). During 1810 and 1811, Serbian insurgents, together with Russian expeditionary corps sent to support them, achieved several victories, the most significant of which was won at the Battle of Varvarin Field (Radusinović, 2006, pp. 89-93).

The contemporary of these events, Anta Protić, wrote in 1810:

“This is the first time the Russians have come to our aid. When the Russians arrived among the Serbs, our people welcomed them with a parade; there was hugging and kissing, as if two brothers had been lost and then met, saw, and acquainted each other”.

The same year, a new representative of Tsarist Russia, Fyodor Ivanovich Nedoba (Фёдор Иванович Недоба), arrived in Serbia. In addition, the insurgents once again received assistance from the Russian Danube Military Command in the form of funds, ammunition, medical supplies, and instructors for artillery training. During this period, St. Petersburg also sent aid for Serbian churches and monasteries through the diplomatic courier Dmitri Nikolaevich Bantysh (Timofejev, Miloradović & Životić, 2018, p. 7).

However, the broader geopolitical situation again did not align with the successes on the fronts. Napoleon's threat in 1812 forced Russia to expedite the process of making peace with the Ottoman Empire. Russian soldiers and civilians left Belgrade on the eve of decisive moments, and in 1812, two armies signed the Bucharest Peace Treaty. In this way, Russia relieved itself of at least one military threat and, in military terms, alleviated pressure on one front.

The Bucharest Peace Treaty represents the first international agreement in Serbian history where Serbia was designated as a full legal entity (holder of rights and obligations) under such an act. Through it, the Tsarist Russia introduced Serbia into international legal processes. In other words, Serbia was recognised as a subject of international law. With the eighth article of the Bucharest Peace Treaty, Serbia became a privileged region of the Ottoman Empire, and the previous “*rayah*” (subjects, lower class) acquired

the status of “legal personality” by being included in the provisions of the Treaty. In general, the autonomy envisaged for the insurgents strongly resembled the one that the Serbs would enjoy from 1815 to 1830/33. Although the autonomy framework was not precisely defined, the mere mention of Serbian rights carried great political and international weight. Thus, the eighth article of the Treaty was created for the “security” of the Serbs and ensured their complete amnesty for participation in the war against the High Porte. On the other hand, its provisions allowed for the return of the armed Ottoman units into the cities, with the prior destruction of newly erected insurgent fortifications.

Although it is evident that autonomy itself was not clearly defined, the following provision of this peace document contained a certain concretization. On the one hand, the High Porte undertook to entrust the Serbs with the “care of the internal administration of the country”, and the Serbian authorities took on the obligation to pay a certain amount of tax. From a political point of view, Russia bound the High Porte to a crucial provision: everything mentioned above had to be done “contractually with the people”. That meant the Serbs had the chance to fight to improve self-government and political positioning, while the High Porte was deprived of the authority to impose rights and obligations on them. The remaining 16 articles of the Treaty regulated Russo-Turkish relations, amnesty for war participants, demarcation, and free navigation of the Danube. Although the terms of the Bucharest Peace Treaty have been seen as highly advantageous in Russia’s diplomatic history, Serbian historiography depicts this event as a crucial part of the First Serbian Uprising’s collapse (Jelačić, 1940, p. 50).

The Russo-Ottoman Peace Treaty in Bucharest on May 28, 1812, had a negative impact on the hopes and morale of the Serbian insurgents. Vozhd Karađorđe rejected the agreement and the eighth article, deeming it unacceptable for the insurgents and the entire nation. He failed to perceive the broader context or to recognise that the international circumstances necessitated such an act to preserve the previous results and achievements of the uprising. In this sense, it can be concluded that his intensive reliance on

the Russian Empire in insurgent endeavours, without prior insight into the current geopolitical constellation, had unfavourable political consequences. Encouraged by previous successes, the Vozhd desired the conclusion of the arduous process of state-building and the continuation of the armed struggle. However, amidst historical events, Karađorđe fled to the Habsburg Monarchy, and the uprising lost its leadership and subsequently came to a general collapse. Turkey eagerly welcomed this move by Karađorđe and, freed from the war with the Russian Empire, undertook extensive preparations for the war against insurgent Serbia. The stance that the Serbs had not fulfilled the provisions of the Bucharest Peace Treaty was highlighted as an excuse for this military campaign. In the circumstances of isolation from international aid, insurgent Serbia was left to a harsh historical fate (Ljušić, 2008, p. 90). Despite the inglorious end of the initial period, the subsequent and no less dynamic phase was marked by a gradual renewal, redefinition, and further strengthening of Serbo-Russian relations.

The Principality Of Serbia And The Establishment Of Official Diplomatic Relations

The era of Napoleon's conquests and the rise of France was replaced by the era of the Holy Alliance (a coalition of Prussia, Austria, Great Britain, and Russia), whose power was based on the decisions of the Congress of Vienna of 1814–1815, in which the Ottoman Empire did not participate. The order created in Europe by this coalition lasted almost thirty years, with harsh repercussions for regional circumstances. Under these conditions, Serbia's place and the evolution of the state-building process in the second and third decades of the 19th century should be observed through the lens of Russia's defensive posture and the growing involvement of the Habsburg Monarchy (Popov, 2010, pp. 4-16). The High Porte skillfully took advantage of Russia's temporary decline and exclusion of the Balkan from its external political agenda to gradually erode the rights granted to the Serbian people by the Bucharest Peace Treaty in 1812. That naturally caused a great deal of tension and discontent in Serbia.

At the request of the Serbian dukes, it was decided in August 1814 to take concrete action and again seek support from their Orthodox protector, Russia. In February 1815, Russia informed the Congress of Vienna about the difficult circumstances in Serbia through a diplomatic circular note, asking for adequate intervention from other European powers. Considering Russia's intention to control the warm seas and the Bosphorus, driven by its political interests, and having previously raised the issue of protecting Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire, other powers showed no interest in responding to this appeal. Thus, English diplomacy openly made it known that it would not jeopardise its strategically important relations with the High Porte for the sake of the rights of the Serbs (Đorđević, 2017, p. 84). In such international conditions and under the burden of Ottoman tyranny, the response of the Serbs could not have been different than to rise again, bringing out a new statesman, Miloš Obrenović. Successes, both on the battlefield and in negotiations, ensured the beginning of a phase in which Serbia achieved semi-autonomous status within the Ottoman Empire (Popović, 2007, p. 26). After the cessation of hostilities and the collapse of the uprising in 1815, the main characteristic of the new era in Russo-Serbian relations was marked by intense cooperation on the diplomatic front. Within the dynamic diplomatic activities of Duke Miloš Obrenović, the focus of foreign policy was redirected towards the High Porte and the mutual regulation of relations. However, on the operational level, it relied on the patronage of Russian diplomats to a large extent, especially those diplomats in Constantinople (Jovanović, 2011, p. 87). In the following period, after regional uprisings in Wallachia, Moldavia, and Greece (1821), Russia severed diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire, only to partially renew them three years later. Negotiations held in Akkerman (*Білгород-Дністровський*) led to the signing of the eponymous convention, which came into force on September 25, 1826 (Popović, 2007, p. 26). The fifth article of the Akkerman Convention, guaranteed by the members of the Holy Alliance led by Russia, concerned Serbia directly. Namely, invoking the eighth article of the Bucharest Peace Treaty, the High Porte pledged to establish within 18 months, with the deputies of the Serbian people, "privi-

leges, the enjoyment of which will be a completely fair reward and the best guarantee of loyalty that this people has given to the Ottoman Empire". The Convention envisaged that privileges related to the Serbian issue would be awarded by the provisions outlined in the Separate Act (*Acte séparé*), which served as an annexe to the Akkerman Convention. Additionally, the Separate Act outlined the desires of the Serbian people presented to the High Porte, such as respect for religious freedom, free choice of elders, and internal administration, as well as issues related to trade, cultural, and educational autonomy. These privileges were then incorporated into the firman supplied with a "*hatisherif*" (Sultan's decree) as an integral part of the Akkerman Convention. With this document, Russia undoubtedly transformed its right of protection into an actual protectorate, as the High Porte's hatisherif was considered an integral part of that agreement (Ljušić, 2008, p. 92). Although these provisions did not take effect immediately due to the delay of the High Porte in their implementation, this Convention represented an important diplomatic step in the development of Serbo-Russian relations.

The new uprising in Greece in 1827 and the intervention of Christian powers in its favour resulted in the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, paving the way for the Akkerman Convention's complete execution and amendment. The Treaty of Adrianople, signed on September 14, 1829, gave Greece the status of a vassal principality inside the Ottoman Empire and confirmed the former privileges for Wallachia and Moldavia. That marked the beginning of the future period of Serbo-Russian relations. The same document acknowledged the provisions of the previous convention regarding Serbia. In the sixth article of the Treaty of Adrianople, Russia obligated the High Porte to fulfil the Separate Act provisions and the fifth article of the Akkerman Convention within one month "without the slightest delay and with the greatest accuracy". Particular emphasis was placed on the obligation to return to Serbia the six nahiyahs (districts) taken away earlier in 1813, "thus forever ensuring peace and prosperity for those faithful and obedient people".

The political processes of the early 19th century testify to the undeniable contribution of these peace treaties and conventions (1812, 1826, and 1829)

to the process of renewing Serbian statehood (Ljušić, 2008, p. 94). Concrete political and legal achievements of this process became especially visible in the early 1830s, when, after obtaining the title of hereditary Serbian duke, Miloš Obrenović formed the State Council and thus rounded autonomy. The Ottoman authority could not interfere in the internal affairs of Serbia or the decisions of Serbian courts. A fundamental international achievement was Serbia's right to maintain diplomatic communication with the High Porte through permanent representatives (Serb. Kanyhexaja from Tur. Kapukahyasi) in Constantinople. Besides, in 1833, the Porte returned six disputed nahiyahs (districts) to Serbia (Krajina, Crna Reka, Paraćin, Kruševac, Stari Vlah, Jadar, and Rađevina). As historian Radoš Ljušić assesses, thanks to these political successes, Serbia became an autonomous principality in 1830 under the direct rule of the Serbian hereditary duke and the suzerainty of the Sultan (Đorđević, 2017, p. 97).

By enacting the Sretenje Constitution in 1835, Serbia attempted to further strengthen its autonomous status. However, its author, Duke's Secretary Dimitrije Davidović, expressed even more ambitious assessments of Serbia's status. He considered that the Principality had achieved the right to a fully independent internal policy. Therefore, in the first article of the Constitution, he stated, "Serbia is also unquestionably independent in governing its Principality as recognised by Sultan Mahmud II and Emperor Nicholas I". The High Porte considered that its rights in Serbia were violated with the adoption of such a constitution for the following reasons: external signs of statehood (flag and coat of arms) and how the Constitution was adopted (without agreement with the patron and suzerain court). Ultimately, Russia, the Ottoman Empire, and the Habsburg Monarchy reached an agreement to compel the Duke to suspend the Constitution (Ljušić, 2008, p. 120).

Serbia's constitutional question turned into a struggle of great powers to secure their influence in the Principality through the Constitution. The nature of their political interests was such that Tsarist Russia supported constitutional limitations on Duke Miloš's authority, while republican France and parliamentary England supported his unrestricted constitutional powers. In

order to gain a more immediate insight into the political circumstances and events in Serbia, the Habsburg Monarchy, despite Miloš's opposition, established its consulate in Belgrade in 1836. This move resulted in similar demands from other powers, so in May of the same year, Colonel Hodges was appointed head of the English consulate (Đorđević, 2017, p. 114). Soon after, the Russian Empire sent a diplomatic mission to the Principality, first Baron Peter Ivanovich Rickman in 1836 and then Vasily Andreyevich Dolgorukov in 1837. Finally, the official date of the establishment of the diplomatic mission is considered February 22, 1838, with the arrival of the Russian mission in Belgrade, led by Consul Gerasim Vasilyevich Vashchenko (Timofejev, Miloradović & Životić, 2018, p. 8).

Debates over the Constitution gave rise to a special political faction in Serbia, later named the *Defenders of the Constitution*. During its inception and development, this faction received significant support from Russia, primarily from its diplomatic representatives and later from the consul. On the other hand, their English colleague, Consul Hodges, consistently supported Duke Miloš's position. The dispute was resolved with the adoption of a new Constitution in December 1838, drafted in accordance with the High Porte, Russia, and the Defenders of the Constitution. This 1838 Constitution, known to the people as the "Turkish Constitution," replaced a single Duke with 17 advisors at the head of the 17 districts the Principality was divided into. The Constitution brought about significant changes in Serbia's internal political life, primarily seen at the end of Miloš's rule, ensuring conditions for the formation of a bureaucratic oligarchy. On the international front, the constitutional provisions influenced the limitations of the capacities of the Serbian state. Generally speaking, the Constitution was the result of complex negotiations between the Serbian delegation and the High Porte, with active intervention and assistance from Russia, which manifested in increasing pressure from Russian Tsar Nicholas I (Đorđević, 2017, p. 115).

Russia's influence on the resolution of the political crisis was particularly pronounced during the selection of a new duke—the ruler of Serbia. The High Porte accepted the election of Alexander Karađorđević, Karađorđe's son, but

Russian intervention was strong, managing to annul the election. However, since the new National Assembly also elected Alexander Karađorđević, Russia reluctantly agreed to the final decision.

In the 1840s, although recognising the supreme authority of the Sultan, the Serbian people, with their young state, found themselves facing significant and crucial questions: how to preserve the state surrounded by three great powers and how to strengthen its state-building capabilities. On that path, Serbia had to fulfil two basic conditions: to achieve material and cultural development comparable to the rest of Europe and to expand its national-political programme into the broader Balkan region in line with the principle of nationality. From this emerged the aspirations for the liberation and unification of the entire Serbian people and “South Slavdom” into one great state. Knowledgeable Serbs, both in the Principality and outside it, as well as members of other Slavic peoples, addressed these issues. One of the most prominent programmes of unification emerged precisely in the 1840s; it was the “*Nacertanije*” (draft, programme) drafted by the member of the Defenders of the Constitution, Minister of Interior Ilija Garašanin, which came as a revision of the Adam Czartoryski and Franjo Zah works (Đorđević, 2017, p. 123).

During the same period, however, there was an increasing divergence from Pan-Slavic ideas and a search for support in the leading power of Western Europe—the neighbouring Habsburg Monarchy (from 1867, Austria-Hungary). Initially, the interest was primarily economic and manifested through trade, but over time, it increasingly took on political characteristics. The initiative originated from bureaucrats, entrepreneurs, and political elites who aimed to connect with civic circles in European states. On the other hand, the idea of the importance of preserving ties with Orthodox and Slavic Russia came primarily from “below”, from the peasantry, soldiers, teachers, and low-ranking officials (Timofejev, Miloradović & Životić, 2018, p. 8).

Such societal circumstances led to the breakdown of Russian strategy in the western Balkan Peninsula during the Crimean War (1853–1856). On the eve of the war, three factions emerged in Serbia’s political life: one sought support from

France, another from the Habsburg Monarchy, and the third from Russia. The Crimean War marked the first major turning point in Serbo-Russian political relations. Despite the general atmosphere marked by youth demonstrations in Belgrade, Serbia avoided declaring war on the Ottoman Empire. It adopted a very cautious and restrained stance towards the High Porte at a time when the coalition of England, France, and the Ottoman Empire was already heavily engaged in fighting against the Russian Empire. In this way, Serbia was spared the new sufferings it had often endured throughout the 19th century. Serbia's position was all the more difficult because the Russo-Turkish war called into question all its international privileges achieved under the protection of the High Porte and Russia. The Serbian government approached the High Porte, requesting recognition of these privileges while at the same time justifying to Russia its difficult international position vis-à-vis the Habsburg Monarchy. Initially, the High Porte demanded that Belgrade cease arming and training its army, but by the end of 1853, it confirmed with a firman all the privileges previously granted to Serbia. In this way, Serbia avoided an unpleasant situation while its hands were simultaneously tied (Đorđević, 2017, pp. 124-126).

During this period, Duke Alexander Karađorđević and the government politically boycotted the Russian consul Fyodor Antonovich Tumansky, who tried to oppose the increased French influence in Serbia. The unpleasant diplomatic tension was further exacerbated when Tumansky died in Belgrade on June 5, 1853. At the same time, this was a period in which, as testified by the painter Dimitrije Marinković, the youth were almost entirely pro-Russian: "We, the students, then organised a demonstration in favour of Russia. Namely, on Mitrovdan (St. Mitar day), we were at the family patron's day celebration of our friend Veljković Jevrem, and from there, a bit intoxicated, we went to school and the big church, shouting along the way, 'Long live Tsar Nicholas!' We then reached the Varoš gate, where the Turkish guard was, and the Turks, seeing us without weapons and not understanding Serbian, just looked at us with curiosity. But the next day, when Pasha heard about it, he protested, and then an investigation was conducted to find which students had done that" (Jovanović, 2011, p. 172).

The war ended with the signing of the Treaty of Paris on March 30, 1856, which guaranteed the independence and integrity of the Ottoman Empire and obligated the High Porte to undertake reforms and respect the equality of all religions. By Articles 28 and 29 of the Treaty, Serbia remained a vassal state to the Ottoman Empire, with precisely defined autonomy. At the same time, the Russian protectorate over the Balkan Christians was abolished; thereby, Russia lost the legal right to intervene in favour of Serbia and other Balkan Christians in cases of violations of their rights by the High Porte. The Peace Treaty represented a discontinuity with the previous century of consistent policy since the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774. The departure of Russian consul Nikolai Yakimovich Mukhin from Belgrade aroused certain negative sentiments towards Serbia among Russian political elites. As a result of these events, Russia's capacity and influence in Serbia and the wider region were significantly diminished (Jovanović, 2011, p. 8).

Needless to say, there were also different moments and experiences. Soon after the end of the war, Tsar Nicholas I Romanov passed away, who was otherwise beloved among the Serbian people. One witness of the epoch, Živojin Žujović, stated that in the mid-19th century if you were to ask a Serb if they loved the Russian Tsar, you would receive the answer that they loved and accepted him as if he were their own Tsar:

"The Serbs mourned Tsar Nicholas so much that they looked as if someone had killed them. It was the same with the Serbs in Vojvodina. Dimitrije Marinković, the celebrated Serbian painter, was so deeply moved by this news that he had a stroke and died unexpectedly" (Jovanović, 2011, pp. 174-175).

CONCLUSION

The historical, political, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of Serbo-Russian relations represent a multifaceted area of scholarly research. The cited sources indicate that the diplomatic history of these relations can be traced back to as early as 1808, with the establishment of the Russian envoy's mission in insurgent Serbia. A particular scholarly focus is directed towards

elucidating the role of Tsarist Russia from the inception of the Serbian Revolution to a series of subsequent events related to the struggle for national liberation. Shared strategic interests and relatively aligned geopolitical approaches, a series of international treaties initiated by Tsarist Russia, and increasingly developed diplomatic relations have enabled Serbia's return to the international political stage.

A significant step in the arduous journey towards statehood was the establishment of the Russian embassy in the autonomous Principality of Serbia within the framework of the Ottoman Empire. Such developments in Serbo-Russian relations marked the beginning of a new diplomatic chapter, both practically and symbolically. Many international treaties and conventions in which Tsarist Russia acted as initiator, negotiator, or guarantor provided an opportunity for a deeper understanding of the dynamics of Serbian statehood development and a broader perspective on Serbo-Russian relations. This phase in the aforementioned relations testifies to both the developed political and institutional dimensions and the broader cultural and religious affinity and social connectedness. In this regard, it is possible to explore the contributions of numerous prominent figures in Serbian and Russian politics. Therefore, it is not surprising that Serbia, on numerous occasions since 1804, has been involved to a greater or lesser extent in most diplomatic and military activities led by Tsarist Russia, in line with its capacities and current circumstances. It unequivocally follows that the realisation of several of Serbia's national interests was inseparable from Russia's international engagement.

Such a constant historical legacy has strongly influenced subsequent events, which is why Serbia was viewed in some political and intellectual circles in the West, up to the present moment, as a precursor to Russia in the Balkans. The rich Serbian-Russian heritage exerts a latent but noticeable pressure on the sphere of politics and policy, both in the past and contemporary times. In addition to the turbulent political history of these relations, the continuous spiritual and cultural ties possess immeasurable significance, preserving their constancy despite historical shifts and setbacks from the 12th century

to the present day. Finally, despite occasional disagreements and historical setbacks, research shows that the key to Serbo-Russian relations lies in perseverance towards the realisation of common goals.

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USPOSTAVLJANJE DIPLOMATSKIH ODNOSA SA CARSKOM RUSIJOM U VREME OBNOVE SRPSKE NEZAVISNOSTI U 19. VEKU

Sažetak

Opšti kontekst za razumevanje i tumačenje ove ere srpsko-ruskih odnosa prikazan je dalekosežnim promenama u Evropi, turbulencijama koje je doživela Carska Rusija i razvojnom putanjom Srbije od pobunjeničke provincije unutar Osmanskog carstva do nezavisne, suverene države. Složene, višeslojne i zamršene političke prilike koje su se pojavile na Balkanskom poluostrvu bile su od suštinskog značaja za uspostavljanje i razvoj ovih odnosa. Uzimajući u obzir određene planove u vezi sa opadanjem osmanskog prisustva na Balkanu, dinamiku odnosa tokom prve polovine 19. veka diktirala je pojačana aktivnost ruske politike i diplomatije i sukobi sa vodećom centralnoevropskom silom - Habzburškom monarhijom (Austro-Ugarskom). U skladu sa logikom međunarodnih odnosa, srpske političke aspiracije mogle su samo u ograničenoj meri uticati na dinamiku srpsko-ruskih odnosa. Srbija je uglavnom morala da se prilagodi pravcu koji je zauzela ruska politika i njena povećana diplomatska aktivnost, u čemu je manje-više uspela.

Ključne reči: *Srbija, Carska Rusija, Otomansko carstvo, Habzburška monarhija, 19. vek.*