If a true judgment is to be formed of the part played by any individual, people must know not only what his words and acts were, but why he spoke or acted as he did.
Edward Grey, 1925[1]

'If we wish to learn from history,' Carl von Clausewitz remarked about Russia's successful response to Napoleon's invasion, 'we must realize that what happened once can happen again.'[2] Insights of this variety are commonplace, and variations on George Santayana's formulation—'Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it'[3]—remain fashionable. The idea is plausible. It could be argued, for example, that had Hitler internalised Clausewitz's dictum the history of the twentieth century might have been radically different.

But if ignoring history's 'lessons' is costly, so is learning the wrong lessons, and the latter error may be the more common.[4] Policymakers tend to be attuned to Clausewitz's truism, so much so that they implicitly modify it to: 'what has happened once *will* happen again.' This modification is a type of analogical reasoning. A present case is seen to share one or more similarities with a past case, and so it is inferred that the present case will also share other similarities. 'Korea is the Greece of the Far East,' President Truman remarked in June 1950. 'If we are tough enough now, if we stand up to

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[1] Edward Grey, *Twenty-Five Years*, vol. 1 (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1925), 301.
[2] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 616.
[3] George Santayana, *The Life of Reason*, vol. One: Reason in Common Sense (New York: Dover Publications, 1980), 284.
[4] Ernest R. May, *'Lessons' of the Past: The Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

them like we did in Greece three years ago, they won't take any next steps.'[5] The logic is alluring: analogies are 'central to all forms of human inference,' cognitive scientists tell us.[6] Analogies like Truman's allow policymakers to overcome uncertainty and to act decisively in time-sensitive environments where the evidence is ambiguous.

Despite its allure, reasoning analogically comes with a cost: past experiences tend to be over-generalised and present questions simplified to fit the pattern.[7] The result is a reductive and simplistic understanding of complex problems. Decisions are made 'based on face value information congruent with strong expectations.'[8] Dismissing anomalies, integrating ambiguous evidence, and not looking for alternative explanations, decision makers see what they expect to see, which increases their confidence and reinforces their initial analogical inference.

Understanding the foreign policy of Sir Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary from 1905-1916, within the context of analogical reasoning casts new light on British policy in July 1914. More consequentially, this essay argues that Grey's reliance on a powerful analogy—that what had 'worked' to solve the previous Balkan Crises would work to solve the present one—resulted in him ignoring evidence of fundamental differences and acting over-confidently. As a result, British policy during the crisis was

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[5] Quoted in Stephen Benedict Dyson and Thomas Preston, 'Individual Characteristics of Political Leaders and the Use of Analogy in Foreign Policy Decision Making,' *Political Psychology* 27, no. 2 (November 2006): 266.
[6] Allan Collins and Mark Burstein, 'Afterword: A Framework for a Theory of Comparison and Mapping,' in *Similarity and Analogical Reasoning*, ed. Stella Vosniadou and Andrew Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 546.
[7] Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, New Edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 233–34.
[8] Imran Demir, *Overconfidence and Risk Taking in Foreign Policy Decision Making: The Case of Turkey's Syria Policy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 25.

sub-optimal and, in consequence, a 'contributing cause'[9] to the outbreak of the First World War; that is, it favoured the eventual outcome, but 'may or may not' have been a necessary condition.

The agency-based explanation of British foreign policy advanced in this essay operates at a complementary level to the well-developed argument that the catastrophic final collapse of the Concert of Europe was driven by more fundamental structural factors.[10] There is an imposing list of these more secular trends. Foremost among them is the changing structure of the states' system in which new nations sought to destroy the Ottoman and Austrian Empires, thereby acquiring their own states.[11] Technological innovations, particularly railroads and dreadnoughts, fuelled arms races and created an 'armaments culture.'[12] The 'cult of the offensive' and mobilisation schedules destroyed

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[9] On which see Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 26–27.

[10] As Ole Wæver observes, a structure is 'anything that is more stable than something else' ('International Leadership After the Demise of the Last Superpower: System Structure and Stewardship,' *Chinese Political Science Review*, 2017, sec. 2, https://doi.org/10.1007/s41111-017-0086-7). In international politics, as in languages and games, structure includes 'rules and understandings' that shape outcomes. See Paul W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), xii–xiii.

[11] A. J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle For Mastery in Europe 1848-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), 232–34; K. J. Holsti, 'Governance without Government: Polyarchy in Nineteenth-Century European Politics,' in *Governance without Government Order and Change in World Politics*, ed. James N. Rosenau and Ernst-Otto Czempiel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 50–57; on nationalism more generally, Richard C. Hall, *Consumed by War: European Conflict in the 20th Century* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2010).

[12] David Stevenson, *Armaments and the Coming of War: Europe, 1904-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); A. J. P. Taylor, *War by Timetable: How the First World War Began*, Kindle Edition (London: Endeavour Press, 2013); Klaus Hildebrand, 'The Sword and the Scepter: The Powers and the European System before 1914,' in *The Schlieffen Plan: International Perspectives on the German Strategy for World War I*, ed. Hans Ehlert, Michael Epkenhans, and Gerhard P. Gross (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2014), 18.

the system's elasticity.[13] Changing norms and attitudes towards war, propelled partly by social Darwinism,[14] made war seem imminent and inevitable to the chiefs of staff of all the Great Powers, who then reasoned according to the logic of preventive war.[15] An extravagant culture of honour seemed to forbid backing down in a crisis,[16] and the elevation of prestige beyond states' actual interests was an essential part of the political culture.[17] Finally, the pull of Europe's alliances operated most strongly in 1914 because an era of détente, pursued out of a desire for more stable relations, actually reinforced the security dilemma and elevated the fear of abandonment.[18] And indeed, there is room as

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[13] Stephen Van Evera, 'The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War,' *International Security* 9, no. 1 (Summer 1984): 58–107; Jack Snyder, 'Civil-Military Relations and the Cult of the Offensive, 1914 and 1984,' *International Security* 9, no. 1 (Summer 1984): 108–46.

[14] Paul Crook, *Darwinism, War and History: The Debate over the Biology of War from the 'Origin of Species' to the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Richard F. Hamilton and Holger H. Herwig, 'World Wars: Definitions and Causes,' in *The Origins of World War I*, ed. Richard F. Hamilton and Holger H. Herwig (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 26.

[15] Klaus Hildebrand, *German Foreign Policy from Bismarck to Adenauer: The Limits of Statecraft* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1989), 113; 'The Sword and the Scepter,' 18; Günther Kronenbitter, 'The German and Austro-Hungarian General Staffs and Their Reflections on an "Impossible" War, in *An Improbable War?: The Outbreak of World War I and European Political Culture before 1914*, ed. Holger Afflerbach and David Stevenson (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 149–58; Paul W. Schroeder, 'Preventive Wars to Restore and Stabilize the International System,' *International Interactions* 37, no. 1 (2011): 96–107; Jack S. Levy, 'The Sources of Preventive Logic in Germany Decision-Making in 1914,' in *The Outbreak of the First World War: Structure, Politics, and Decision-Making*, ed. Jack S. Levy and John A. Vasquez (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 139–66.

[16] Avner Offer, 'Going to War in 1914: A Matter of Honor?,' *Politics & Society* 23, no. 2 (June 1995): 213–41; Ute Frevert, 'Honor, Gender, and Power: The Politics of Satisfaction in Pre-War Europe,' in *An Improbable War?*, 233–55.

[17] Hildebrand, 'The Sword and the Scepter,' 33; for examples for Russia and Germany respectively: Taylor, *The Struggle For Mastery*, 228, 246, 252; 366, 447, 478.

[18] Friedrich Kießling, 'Unfought Wars: The Effect of Detente before World War I,' in *An Improbable War*, 183–99; Hildebrand, 'The Sword and the Scepter,' 25–30; Jack S. Levy and Jack Snyder, 'Everyone's Favored Year for War—or Not?,' *International Security* 39, no. 4 (Spring 2015): 208–17.

well for increasingly bold German *Weltpolitik*[19] and the routinely erratic behaviour of the German Kaiser.[20]

It is generally accepted today that while these structural factors may have predisposed the system to conflict, they did not doom it to a world war.[21] None of them explain the two narrower questions explored in this essay. Why did Grey—who was seen by his colleagues not just as the pilot of the British ship-of-state but also of the European ship-of-state[22]—not even attempt to steer the latter away from the shoals of conflict in the

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[19] Taylor, *The Struggle For Mastery*, chap. XVII; Michelle Murray, 'Identity, Insecurity, and Great Power Politics: The Tragedy of German Naval Ambition Before the First World War,' *Security Studies* 19, no. 4 (2010): 656–88; Michelle Murray, 'Recognition, Disrespect, and the Struggle for Morocco: Rethinking Imperial Germany's Security Dilemma,' in *The International Politics of Recognition*, ed. Thomas Lindemann and Erik Ringmar (London: Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 131–51; Steven Ward, *Status and the Challenge of Rising Powers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), chap. 3.

[20] John C. Röhl, 'The Curious Case of the Kaiser's Disappearing War Guilt: Wilhelm II in July 1914,' in *An Improbable War?*, 75–94; John C. Röhl, 'Goodbye to All That (Again)? The Fischer Thesis, the New Revisionism and the Meaning of the First World War,' *International Affairs* 91, no. 1 (2015): 153–66.

[21] Afflerbach and Stevenson, *An Improbable War?*; Hildebrand, 'The Sword and the Scepter'; T.G. Otte, *July Crisis: The World's Descent into War, Summer 1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 505–24; Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), xxix; Margaret MacMillan, *The War That Ended Peace: How Europe Abandoned Peace for the First World War*, Kindle Edition (London: Profile Books, 2013) Kindle Location (KL), 12035.

[22] Keith Robbins, *Sir Edward Grey: A Biography of Lord Grey of Fallodon* (London: Cassell, 1971), 266–68; Richard J. Evans, *The Pursuit of Power: Europe 1815-1914* (New York: Penguin Books, 2016), 713; Andreas Rose, *Between Empire and Continent: British Foreign Policy before the First World War*, trans. Rona Johnston (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), 441; For an example see Cartwright to Nicolson 11 April 1913 in G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, eds., *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914*, 11 vols. (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1926) (hereafter BD), 9.2, no. 837, in which Sir Fairfax Cartwright, Britain's Ambassador in Vienna, reported that in Austrian circles: 'The prestige of England in this part of the world and among the Balkan States is supreme just now, and there seems to be a good probability that whatever course Sir Edward Grey may advise the Powers to follow will in the long run be accepted by them. . . .'

first phase of the July Crisis (28 June-22 July), thereby committing, in the words of Paul Schroeder, a 'great, astonishing departure from tradition'?[23] And why did Grey focus on preventing military operations rather than Russian mobilisation in the second phase of the crisis (23 July-4 August)?

The most common answer to the first question is that Grey and the Cabinet did not realise the situation was very dangerous until after the delivery of Austria's ultimatum on 23 July.[24] Poor diplomatic intelligence[25] or alternatively, distraction due to the Irish Home Rule Crisis,[26] thus explains the Cabinet's 'somewhat slow' and 'quite ineffectual' diplomacy during this period.[27] This answer is incorrect. To the contrary, Grey—who, unlike all his other Cabinet colleagues, was certainly not distracted by the Home Rule question[28]—almost immediately recognised the July Crisis as dangerous, something Michael Ekstein demonstrated satisfactorily almost half a century ago[29] in a

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[23] Paul W. Schroeder, 'Embedded Counterfactuals and World War I as an Unavoidable War,' in *Systems, Stability, and Statecraft: Essays on the International History of Modern Europe*, ed. David Wetzel, Robert Jervis, and Jack S. Levy (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 188 see also 191.
[24] Luigi Albertini, *The Origins of the War of 1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 3: 205-206; J. Paul Harris, 'Great Britain,' in *The Origins of World War I*, ed. Richard F. Hamilton and Holger H. Herwig (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 278–80; MacMillan, *The War That Ended Peace*, KL 10753, 10820, 11037.
[25] Harris, 'Great Britain,' 293–94.
[26] Jérôme aan de Wiel, '1914: What Will the British Do? The Irish Home Rule Crisis in the July Crisis,' *The International History Review* 37, no. 4 (2015): 666; MacMillan, *The War That Ended Peace*, KL 10820-10846.
[27] Harris, 'Great Britain,' 278.
[28] Otte, *July Crisis*, 139–40.
[29] Michael G. Ekstein, 'Some Notes on Sir Edward Grey's Policy in July 1914,' *The Historical Journal* 15, no. 2 (June 1972): 321–24.

brief article often curiously ignored in more recent accounts. The enigma remains: Grey believed Europe to be in real peril, but did very little for more than three weeks.[30]

The second question is not usually asked and so only rarely answered. For instance, both Margaret MacMillan[31] and co-authors Zara Steiner and Keith Neilson[32] indicate no awareness that Britain (as will be argued below) actually encouraged Russian mobilisation, and Neilson has more recently claimed that 'the British were quite aware of what Russia was doing, but unable to convince St. Petersburg not to mobilize.'[33] Thomas Otte treats Grey's implicit acceptance of Russian mobilisation as natural, equitable (given Austria's probable mobilisation in late July), and non-decisive.[34] Annika Mombauer sees Grey as 'peripheral' to the crisis's progression and argues his diplomacy was essentially irrelevant to its outbreak,[35] a position first articulated by Grey himself as part of Britain's propaganda effort during the war.[36] All of these positions share in common the belief that

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[30] Ekstein explained the apparent paradox of Grey's relative inaction by arguing Grey had learned from the Balkan Wars that the 'peace party' in Berlin would solve the crisis by pressuring Austria. See his 'Sir Edward Grey and Imperial Germany in 1914,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 6, no. 3 (1971): 121–31; cf. Zara Steiner and Keith Neilson, *Britain and the Origins of the First World War*, Second Edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 265. Christopher Clark, in contrast, argues that as early as 8 July Grey had already conceded the near inevitability of a European war, and consequently made no attempt to prevent it. See *The Sleepwalkers*, 410-411; 495-498. T.G. Otte, meanwhile, rejects the entire narrative, arguing Grey did exercise real leadership, but was powerless to sway the leaders of Paris, Berlin, and St. Petersburg. See his '"Postponing the Evil Day": Sir Edward Grey and British Foreign Policy,' *The International History Review* 38, no. 2 (2016): 258–60; Otte, *July Crisis*, 142, 146–49, 520–22.

[31] MacMillan, *The War That Ended Peace*, KL 11089-11115.

[32] Steiner and Neilson, *Britain and the Origins*, 237.

[33] Keith Neilson, '1914: The German War?,' *European History Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (2014): 406.

[34] Otte, *July Crisis*, 264, 295–302.

[35] Annika Mombauer, 'Sir Edward Grey, Germany, and the Outbreak of the First World War: A Re-Evaluation,' *The International History Review* 38, no. 2 (2016): 320.

[36] Edward Grey, *Why Britain Is in the War and What She Hopes from the Future* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1916), 5–8.

there were not any viable alternative paths for British policy during July Crisis.[37] Gordon Martel, almost alone,[38] has recognised that Grey and Nicolson tacitly encouraged Russian mobilisation as a tool to internationalise the dispute, thereby intending to force its resolution through collective mediation,[39] but he does not develop the point or assess the importance of this move in the larger causal chain of the crisis's development.

Grey's inaction in July 1914, and his indifference to—and even tacit encouragement of—Russian mobilisation, should be understood in the context of his experiences in the Ambassadors' Conference of 1912-1913, in which he sought to manage the Balkan Wars, of which the First World War was the third.[40] Political scientists have long observed that the previous Balkan Wars provided the 'frame' through which Grey understood the events of July 1914.[41] But the argument has remained embryonic and vague because Grey's involvement and thinking in the previous Balkan crises has not been adequately examined and compared with his actions in July 1914.[42]

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[37] Steiner and Neilson, *Britain and the Origins*, 274.
[38] Albertini, *Origins*, 2: 335-336 also criticised Grey's treatment of Russian mobilisation as inevitable, which undercut his own ambassador's warning to the Russian Foreign Minister; also see John W. Young, 'Ambassador George Buchanan and the July Crisis,' *The International History Review* 40, no. 1 (2018): 211-13.
[39] Gordon Martel, *The Month That Changed the World: July 1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 198–203.
[40] Joachim Remak, '1914--The Third Balkan War: Origins Reconsidered,' *Journal of Modern History* 43, no. 3 (September 1971): 353–66.
[41] Glenn H. Snyder and Paul Diesing, *Conflict Among Nations: Bargaining, Decision Making, and System Structure in International Crises* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 370; Yaacov Y. I. Vertzberger, *The World in Their Minds: Information Processing, Cognition, and Perception in Foreign Policy Decisionmaking* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 319; Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, xli; Sean M. Lynn-Jones, 'Détente and Deterrence: Anglo-German Relations, 1911-1914,' *International Security* 11, no. 2 (Fall 1986): 121–50.
[42] On indifference to the Balkan Wars in general, see Eugene Michail, 'The Balkan Wars in Western Historiography, 1912-2012,' in *The Balkan Wars from Contemporary Perception to Historic Memory*, ed. Katirn Boeckh and Sabine Rutar (New York:

Grey's comment to a friend in 1915 summarises the importance he assigned to the Ambassadors' Conference he proposed in 1914, modelled on his earlier 'successes':

> This war is one of the greatest catastrophes that have ever befallen the human race. The more I think of it, the more horrible it seems to me that Germany refused to agree to a Conference in July last year. . . . the outstanding points could have been settled easily and honourably, if they had been referred to an international Conference: it would not have taken a fortnight to dispose of them. . . . the refusal of a Conference decided the fate of peace or war for Europe.[43]

Understanding *why* Grey thought the failure of his proposed conference was a key cause of the First World War, *how* this conviction affected his understanding of the situation and his chosen course of action, and *if* this influenced the crisis's outcome is the remit of this essay.

The essay proceeds as follows. Section One, immediately below, considers the nature and use of analogies. Section Two summarises the origins of the Balkan Wars. Sections Three and Four examine the November (1912) Crisis and the October (1913) Crisis, focusing particularly on how war was avoided and the role of Grey's London

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Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 320; Dominik Geppert, William Mulligan, and Andreas Rose, eds., *The Wars before the Great War: Conflict and International Politics before the Outbreak of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016). The basic text on British foreign policy and the lead-up to the First World War is Steiner and Neilson, *Britain and the Origins*. It gives the Balkan Wars just nine pages, though Keith Neilson, *Britain and the Last Tsar: British Policy and Russia, 1894-1917* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), chap. 11 gives them more attention. Another key text (Harris, 'Great Britain'), gives the Balkan Wars three sentences. MacMillan, *The War That Ended Peace*, chap. 16 offers the best recent general treatment of the crises of 1912-13.

[43] Quoted in George Macaulay Trevelyan, *Grey of Fallodon* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1937), 249. Grey made parallel public comments in Aug.-Sep. 1915. Edward Grey, *Edward Grey's Reply to Dr. von Bethmann Hollweg* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1915), 7–9.

Conference. Section Five summarises the lessons of these wars. Section Six looks at the July (1914) Crisis and how Grey's analogy shaped his interpretation of events, conditioned his response, and affected the crisis. Section Seven considers whether British policy affected the outbreak of war. The conclusion places the findings of the article into the larger interpretive context of the causes of the First World War.

Section 1: The Nature and Use of Analogies

According to cognitive scientists, reasoning through 'pattern matching' is likely '*the* essential component to most cognitive behaviour.'[44] This process involves establishing a *correspondence* between 'conceptual entities' and then 'transferring properties of one conceptual system to another,' which is called *mapping*.[45] Analogical reasoning is a type of pattern matching, and in the context of political decision making it means establishing a correspondence between two different events and then mapping elements from one to the other.[46] The reasoning is intuitive: 'if two or more things agree in one respect, then they might also agree in another.'[47]

Previously it has been argued that, as helpful as analogies may be for the coding, storing, and recalling of information, they should be avoided in political decision making because of their tendency to dominate discourse in combination with an individual's

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[44] David E. Rumelhart, 'Toward a Microstructural Account of Human Reasoning,' in *Similarity and Analogical Reasoning*, ed. Stella Vosniadou and Andrew Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 300.
[45] Collins and Burstein, 'Afterword,' 546.
[46] David Patrick Houghton, 'Analogical Reasoning and Policymaking: Where and When Is It Used?,' *Policy Sciences* 31, no. 3 (1998): n. 1.
[47] David Hackett Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1970), 243.

tendency to mechanically map elements of one event to a second developing situation[48]—that is, to change Clausewitz's maxim from *can* to *will*. Students of international politics are not alone in this concern. A group of distinguished educators have argued that analogies in medicine are particularly dangerous because of the science's applied nature, and have resulted, for example, 'in the development of a major misconception about the nature of congestive heart failure.'[49] Analogies, these educators argued, 'seem to lull the learner into an unquestioning acceptance that leads to a durable entrenchment of the misconception.'[50]

Even so, analogical reasoning remains part of human cognition and it is not the case that analogies always seduce, lull, or mislead.[51] A long historical tradition has maintained that history is the 'school of statesmanship' (John Robert Seeley) and international history as a discipline, as imagined by the likes of Arnold Toynbee, Charles Webster, and Donald Cameron Watt, has always had a practical orientation.[52] John F. Kennedy's shrewd use of multiple analogies (including miscalculation as a cause of World War One; the importance of stopping aggression à la 1939; the significance of restraint, exemplified in 1956 in Suez and Hungary; and the necessity of deliberation during crises, illustrated by the Bay of Pigs disaster) helped him craft an intelligent policy

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[48] Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).
[49] Rand J. Spiro et al., 'Multiple Analogies for Complex Concepts: Antidotes for Analogy-Induced Misconception in Advanced Knowledge Acquisition,' in *Similarity and Analogical Reasoning*, 506.
[50] Spiro et al., 510.
[51] Hal Brands and William Inboden, 'Wisdom Without Tears: Statecraft and the Uses of History,' *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 2018, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2018.1428797.
[52] David Stevenson, 'Learning from the Past: The Relevance of International History,' *International Affairs* 90, no. 1 (2014): 12–14.

of resolve and restraint, ending peacefully the most dangerous crisis of the Cold War.[53] The issue, therefore, is not that analogies are used, but how they are used. Analogies are 'good' when they lead to 'helpful' mappings[54] that facilitate complex learning, inspire the imagination,[55] and spur on additional investigation, and 'bad' when they produce 'an exaggerated perception of similitude,'[56] when they reduce complex phenomena to simple states, and when they, alone, satisfy their users' curiosity.[57] Put metaphorically, analogies can be employed as either crutches or springboards; they are a hindrance to accurate analysis and learning in the first instance, but an aid in the second.

Analogies have been used both ways by political leaders. One study, for example, has found that Presidents Kennedy and Eisenhower used analogies in a sophisticated manner—considering multiple analogies, referencing the experience of previous generations and cultures, looking for similarities and differences, and making structural rather than surface comparisons—while Presidents Truman and Johnson had just a few analogies in their repertoire, made blanket comparisons, and substituted analogies for actual proof.[58] These two approaches to analogical reasoning seem to broadly reflect psychologist Daniel Kahneman's two cognitive systems, the first which 'thinks fast' and

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[53] Stevenson, 13–15, 17–20.
[54] Collins and Burstein, 'Afterword,' 562.
[55] An example: George Kennan's discovery of a third way in-between appeasement and war from Edward Gibbon's narrative of how imperial overstretch contributed to Rome's fall. See William Inboden, 'Statecraft, Decision-Making, and the Varieties of Historical Experience: A Taxonomy,' *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 2013, 16–17, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2013.829402.
[56] Yaacov Y. I. Vertzberger, 'Foreign Policy Decisionmakers As Practical-Intuitive Historians: Applied History and Its Shortcomings,' *International Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (June 1986): 234.
[57] Spiro et al., 'Multiple Analogies for Complex Concepts.'
[58] Dyson and Preston, 'Individual Characteristics.'

the second which 'thinks slow'[59]; recent cognitive psychology has refined this approach, arguing that the first type of cognitive process relies principally on intuition while the second relies upon reflection.[60]

Practically, the reflective use of analogies should lead to imaginative reasoning,[61] a desire for new information, puzzlement, and the Bayesian updating of early assessments as new diagnostic evidence is uncovered.[62] In contrast, the intuitive use tends to lead to overgeneralisation and oversimplification,[63] particularly when a policy is seen as having been successful in the past.[64] Overgeneralisation is a result of a few analogies (particularly those emotionally salient to the decision maker) being widely applied; oversimplification is a result of seeing causation where there is merely association.[65] The past and present are assimilated together to ensure the correspondence of the analogy; incoming evidence is then distorted by the overall framework.[66] What Arthur Schlesinger Jr. has called the 'bewitchment of analogy'[67] has now taken hold. The effect is not enlightenment but obfuscation; a discussion has ended rather than begun.

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[59] Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013).
[60] Jonathan St. B. T. Evans and Keith E. Stanovich, 'Dual-Process Theories of Higher Cognition: Advancing the Debate,' *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 8, no. 3 (2013): 224.
[61] Rumelhart, 'Toward a Microstructural Account,' 300.
[62] Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, xxxviii.
[63] Jervis, 233–34.
[64] Jervis, 278. The aphorism, 'nothing fails like success,' used in the essay's title, comes from William Ralph Inge, *Outspoken Essays*, First Series (London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1919), 41 and 88; quoted and discussed in Jervis, 278 ff.
[65] Jervis, 230.
[66] Jervis, xxx; xxxi; lviii, 237, 238.
[67] Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *War and the American Presidency*, Revised Edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005), 123.

Such bewitchment has become a pattern often observed of twentieth century U.S. foreign policy.[68] The rest of this article shows how this framework can help explain British foreign policy in July 1914. The first step in this process is to look at the history of the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913.

Section 2: The Coming of the Balkan Wars

The Entente Powers, in collaboration with Italy, were principally responsible for reopening the Eastern Question—the one issue capable of causing a European war—in the first decade of the twentieth century. The Question, which particularly regarded the disposition of Ottoman territories in Europe, had long troubled European statesmen. However, since the 1878 Congress of Berlin, which had redistributed the territories of the Balkan Peninsula, the Question had been effectively managed.[69] A May 1897 Accord between Russia and Austria had agreed to keep 'the Balkans on ice,'[70] and for the next decade these two powers worked together to preserve the status quo.[71] The Austro-Russian entente, however, fell apart in 1908. The previous year, Russia and Britain had agreed to an entente, which allowed Russia's gaze to return to Eastern Europe.[72] Then in

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[68] May, *'Lessons' of the Past*; Khong, *Analogies at War*; Andrew Mumford, 'Parallels, Prescience and the Past: Analogical Reasoning and Contemporary International Politics,' *International Politics* 52, no. 1 (2015): 1–19.
[69] F.R. Bridge and Roger Bullen, *The Great Powers and the European States System 1814-1914*, Second Edition (New York: Routledge, 2013), 197-211. Taylor, *The Struggle For Mastery*, 255–56, 271.
[70] Steven Wesley Sowards, *Austria-Hungary and the Macedonian Reforms, 1902-1908* (PhD Dissertation, Indiana University, 1981), 26; Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery*, 370.
[71] Bridge and Bullen, *The Great Powers*, 275-78.
[72] Barbara Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements, 1806-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 214-15 and 107-10, 200, 209–10; David MacLaren McDonald, *United Government and Foreign Policy in Russia 1900-1914* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 108.

1908 disputes over railway concessions and British interference regarding implementation of governance reforms in Macedonia provided Russia with the excuse of cashiering 'dual action with Austria,'[73] an outcome not uncongenial to the British Foreign Office, which saw an opportunity to draw closer to Russia.[74]

But it was the constructed crisis that followed Austria's annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, also in 1908, which would provide the frame though which the future Balkan crises were interpreted.[75] The annexation, undertaken by an Austria convinced that the Eastern Question was re-emerging,[76] was initially supported by Alexander Izvolsky, the Russian Foreign Minister, who was in turn backed by Tsar Nicholas II.[77] Izvolsky, according to one explanation of an undeniably tortuous episode, conceived of the annexation as a 'trap' intended to force the convening of a European Conference in which the Straits Question could be revised.[78] But as a result of opposition within the 'unified' Russian government; the British Cabinet's refusal to compromise with Russia on the Straits question whilst Russia misbehaved in Persia,[79] despite Grey earlier having

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[73] Izvolsky, as quoted in Bridge and Bullen, 289. As a German diplomat would comment in December of 1908: "in place of the Austro-Russian stepped the Anglo-Russian entente." Quoted in Anne Louise Antonoff, *Almost War: Britain, Germany, and the Bosnia Crisis, 1908-1909* (PhD Dissertation, Yale University, 2006), 80 n. 148; cf. 144.
[74] Douglas Dakin, 'British Sources Concerning the Greek Struggle in Macedonia, 1901-1909,' *Balkan Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1/2 (1961): 76-77; Rose, *Between Empire and Continent*, 371, 375–76, 382, 385; Paul W. Schroeder, 'Stealing Horses to Great Applause: Austria-Hungary's Decision in 1914 in Systemic Perspective,' in *An Improbable War?*, 31, 34.
[75] McDonald, *United Government*, 169.
[76] Antonoff, *Almost War*, 154 n. 18; 157 n. 35.
[77] Neilson, *Britain and the Last Tsar*, 301–2; Bridge and Bullen, 291.
[78] McDonald, *United Government*, 135; Antonoff, *Almost War*, 137; 147-48.
[79] Rose, *Between Empire and Continent*, 414–15; Taylor, *The Struggle For Mastery*, 452; Antonoff, *Almost War*, 259 n. 48.

indicated it might; and Austria's premature leaking of the agreement,[80] the trap became a bomb and was recast as a 'humiliation' of Russia, resulting in a new period of Austro-Russian hostility and much British umbrage ('a great international crime' Prime Minister H. H. Asquith was later to call it[81]). Throughout the crisis, which came to focus on whether Serbia would receive compensation for Austria's annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Foreign Office 'supported Russia' in a 'loyal manner,'[82] in the words of Sir Arthur Nicolson, then Britain's ambassador in St. Petersburg. From the beginning of the crisis, Grey was unsure 'how far Isvolsky means to go in support of Servia,' but was determined—despite having himself no sympathy for the Serbian cause—to 'support the line which Russia might take.'[83] While Grey did not threaten British involvement in a potential war,[84] at the same time he was 'unwilling to insist on peace,' in the words of one historian.[85] In the end, Russia's reticence for conflict, Franco-German collaboration, nimble Austrian diplomacy, and creative German crisis-management prevented the crisis's escalation.[86] Even so, a myth of Russian/*Entente* 'humiliation' afterwards

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[80] McDonald, *United Government*, chap. 6; Manfried Rauchensteiner, *The First World War and the End of the Habsburg Monarchy, 1914-1918* (Vienna: Boehlau Verlag, 2014), 19.

[81] H. H. Asquith, *The Genesis of the War* (London: Cassell and Company, 1923), 42; cf. Karl Max Lichnowsky, *My Mission to London 1912-1914* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1918), 33. The British position, Harold Temperley would later write, "displayed astounding ignorance and naïveté." "Professor Temperley on the Origins of the War of 1914," *The Cambridge Historical Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (1948): 254.

[82] Nicolson to Grey 17 Mar. 1909, BD 5, no. 701.

[83] Grey to Nicolson 27 Oct. 1908, BD 5, no. 412; idem, no. 411; also see Antonoff, *Almost War* 176 n. 152.

[84] *Pace* Rose, *Between Empire and Continent*, 423; see, in contrast, Grey to Nicolson, 10 Nov. 1908, BD 5, no. 441.

[85] Antonoff, *Almost War*, 214.

[86] Antonoff, 673-75; cf. Bridge and Bullen, *The Great Powers*, 293-95, 297; Rose, *Between Empire and Continent*, 433, 436.

predominated, generating bitter feelings and hardening resolve: statesmen thereafter learned the 'wrong lessons' of history.[87]

The second opening of the Eastern Question, in 1911, was the result of imperial compensation agreements. In 1901, France had recognised Italy's right to 'influence' in Libya if anyone modified 'the political or territorial integrity of Morocco.'[88] Then, in 1904, France recognised Britain's position in Egypt in exchange for British recognition of French predominance in Morocco.[89] Such recognition enhanced French resolve and culminated in France's reckless 1911 occupation of Morocco.[90] Italy, theretofore quiescent, then sought to cash her 'Libyan cheque'[91] by invading Ottoman Libya in September 1911.[92] This was the development that got the Balkan wrecking ball swinging,[93] beginning the three years of 'unremitting crisis' that would result in the First World War.[94] Russia in particular supported Italy diplomatically, eager to extend its influence in the Balkans, cause problems for Austria, and resolve the Straits question.[95]

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[87] Antonoff, *Almost War*, 675-78; Bridge and Bullen, *The Great Powers*, 295.
[88] Quoted in Timothy W. Childs, *Italo-Turkish Diplomacy and the War Over Libya 1911-1912* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1990), 5; see also Taylor, *The Struggle For Mastery*, 406. Other Powers had also tacitly accepted this arrangement. See Taylor, 463; Childs, *Italo-Turkish Diplomacy*, 10; Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 244.
[89] Taylor, *The Struggle For Mastery*, 413–31; Grey, *Twenty-Five Years*, 1:49–52.
[90] Bridge and Bullen, *The Great Powers*, 302, 304 ff.
[91] Quoted in Childs, *Italo-Turkish Diplomacy*, 9.
[92] R. J. B. Bosworth, *Italy, the Least of the Great Powers: Italian Foreign Policy before the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 151-52.
[93] Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 244–51; Evans, *The Pursuit of Power*, 688–93; Taylor, *The Struggle For Mastery*, 474; Richard Ned Lebow, 'Agency versus Structure in A. J. P. Taylor's Origins of the First World War,' *The International History Review* 23, no. 1 (2001): 71.
[94] Bridge and Bullen, *The Great Powers*, 295, 310-11.
[95] John F. V. Keiger, *France and the Origins of the First World War* (London: Palgrave, 1983), 89-93; Luciano Monzali, 'A Half-Hearted Friendship: France and the Italian Conquest of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica 1911-12,' in *The Libyan War 1911-1912*, ed.

Bulgaria and Serbia, the most significant Balkan states, were eager to take advantage of the Ottoman Empire as it focused on fighting Italy, and in the spring of 1912 Russia helped them broker a deal. Sergei Sazonov, the Russian Foreign Minister, was anti-Austrian, though in a manner he thought defensive[96]; Bulgaria and Serbia were anti-Ottoman. Together, these motives made a potent brew,[97] and in the autumn of 1912, the Balkan allies, having divvied up the Ottoman Empire in secret agreements, provoked a war.

The development of the Balkan Wars has been masterfully treated elsewhere and need not be recapitulated.[98] Yet a few points require summary treatment. Until hostilities commenced (on 8 October 1912), Sazonov opposed their initiation.[99] Even so, at the time it was common to fault Sazonov himself (and Russian policy more generally) for the eventual outbreak of war.[100] Two insights explain how this could be.

The first was his capriciousness. Sazonov was always unchaining the 'tempest' and then excitedly seeking to dull 'the appetites which he himself has whetted,' the French Ambassador in Constantinople had complained in late September.[101] Baron

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Luca Micheletta and Andrea Ungari (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 99–102, 109.

[96] Taylor, *The Struggle For Mastery*, 484–85; Stevenson, *Armaments*, 232–33.

[97] Raymond Poincaré, *The Origins of the War* (London: Cassell and Company, 1922), 132.

[98] Ernst C. Helmreich, *The Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars, 1912-1913* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1938); Albertini, *Origins*, vol. 1; Richard C. Hall, *The Balkan Wars 1912-1913: Prelude to the First World War* (London: Routledge, 2000); also see R. J. Crampton, *Bulgaria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), chap. 7.

[99] McDonald, *United Government*, 180–81.

[100] Albertini, *Origins*, 1: 372; Taylor, *The Struggle For Mastery*, 486–88; Stevenson, *Armaments*, 233; James M. Miller, Jr., *The Concert of Europe in the First Balkan War 1912-1913* (PhD Dissertation, Clark University, 1969), 29-30. Also, for example, Buchanan to Grey Received (hereafter R.) 4 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 78.

[101] Quoted in Albertini, *Origins*, 1: 375.

Taube, a senior legal advisor in the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, described Sazonov as 'Sickly by nature, overly sensitive and a little sentimental, nervous and even neurotic.' Sazonov, he continued, was 'constantly changing because of his impressions and intuitions, resisting all sustained efforts at thinking, incapable of following through his reasoning to the logical end.'[102] The Russian Foreign Minister had 'started the motor' as Raymond Poincaré, France's Premier and Foreign Minister, was to remark, on something he could not stop.[103]

The second insight was the reality of 'two Russias.' Official Russia, according to contemporary British diplomatic reporting, might urge caution, but unofficial Russia sympathised with the Serbian cause and was always looking for an opportunity to harm Austria.[104] The two would not come into alignment until Russia was prepared for a general war, which the French and Russian chiefs of staff agreed in August 1911 would take at least two years.[105] Sazonov was aware of this and knew that the moment for reordering the Balkans had not yet come,[106] which had been the position of official Russia since 1905.[107] But since he was unwilling or unable to exert the pressure necessary to restrain his Balkan allies, they started a war in October 1912.[108]

Once hostilities commenced, Sazonov worked assiduously for a policy of

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[102] Quoted in MacMillan, *The War That Ended Peace*, KL 9019. For British comments along the same lines, see the Minute on Paget to Grey, D. Sep. 24 1912, R. Sep 30, BD 9.1, no. 743.
[103] Quoted in Stevenson, *Armaments*, 233.
[104] Barclay to Grey Dispatched (hereafter D.) 9 Sep. 1912, R. 16 Sep., BD 9.1, no 711; Cartwright to Nicolson 8 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 165; Paget to Nicolson 2 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 104.
[105] Helmreich, *Diplomacy*, 153.
[106] Helmreich, 153; Stevenson, *Armaments*, 234.
[107] McDonald, *United Government*, 104, 110, 117, 146, 148, 151, 159.
[108] Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 262–63.

localisation. He feared that Austria would mobilise and occupy Belgrade, forcing Russia to mobilise in return. To prevent this he proposed that Russia and Austria agree on a policy of 'complete disinterestedness': the Balkan Allies were to be given the space to have it out with the Ottoman Empire, with neither Russia nor Austria getting involved.[109] The alternative to localisation was widely seen to be a European war.[110] But the Dual Monarchy, far from complete disinterest, was willing to fight in order to prevent Montenegro or Serbia from dominating Albania. That fight nearly happened in November 1912 because of Sazonov's intransigence.

Section 3: The November Crisis

The key question of the winter of 1912 was where the Balkan states would stop in their conquest of Ottoman Europe. As it turned out, 'The Balkans for the Balkan states' applied no more to those nations—like Albania—that were not part of the Balkan Alliance than Pan-Slavism applied to Poles or Ukrainians within Russia.[111] Serbia's ambitions, 'borne on the tide of her own victories' in Grey's retrospective phrase,[112] had expanded with its success, to Austria's consternation. The crisis of 1908-9 had in part been about who would, given an Ottoman withdrawal, occupy the Sandjak of Novi-Bazar. That Serbia had not then occupied it was in part the supposed 'humiliation' that

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[109] Buchanan to Grey D. 18 Sep. 1912, R. 23 Sep., BD 9.1, no. 722.
[110] Paget to Grey D. 24 Sep. 1912, R. 30 Sep., BD 9.1, no. 743.
[111] Grey to Paget 6 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 142. See also Taylor, *The Struggle For Mastery*, 485; Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 257; Katrin Boeckh, 'The Rebirth of Pan-Slavism in the Russian Empire, 1912-13,' in *The Balkan Wars from Contemporary Perception to Historic Memory*, ed. Katirn Boeckh and Sabine Rutar (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 107; 112; Ethem Çeku, 'The Policy of Serbian Expansionism, with Specific Reference to Albanians in the Decade Preceding the Balkan Wars,' *The International History Review*, 2017, https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2017.1402802.
[112] Grey, *Twenty-Five Years*, 1: 255.

Entente leaders frequently referenced.[113] But by November 1912, the Sandjak was a moot question. Serbia's demands had expanded from merely Kosovo to the Sandjak, Scutari, and along the Albanian coast, Durazzo, Media, and Alessia; Greece was to get the rest of Southern Albania, and Austrian diplomats believed the question of Bosnia and Herzegovina would come up next. 'It is being thought in many influential quarters here,' Cartwright, reported, 'that the moment is rapidly coming that—if the Powers will do nothing—Austria by herself will have to erect a dam against Servian ambitions, just as Russia, it is understood, had placed a veto on Bulgaria's desire to hold Constantinople.'[114] This was a way for Austria to 'reassert' its prestige in an increasingly disastrous situation.[115] The dam had three parts: an autonomous Albania, no Serbian ports on the Adriatic, and an assurance of future good behaviour from Serbia.[116] These conditions were not unreasonable; Albertini has argued that they were foolishly accommodative.[117]

Even so, neither Serbia nor Russia was willing to be restrained by Austria's dam, and the dispute would nearly take Europe to war in the winter of 1912-13. What made the dispute so dangerous was that the course of events was driven by the newly victorious Balkan states (Serbia, Bulgaria, Montenegro, and Greece). 'If Austria were to shed one drop of Servian blood it would,' Izvolsky warned, 'be nearly impossible for the Russian Government to resist the pressure of Russian national opinion.'[118] Despite Austria's

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[113] Grey, 1: 179–88; Rose, *Between Empire and Continent*, 407, 417–18, 426–27.
[114] Cartwright to Nicolson 8 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 165.
[115] Taylor, *The Struggle For Mastery*, 491.
[116] Cartwright to Grey 7 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 146.
[117] Albertini, *Origins*, 1: 382.
[118] Saunders to Braham 25 Nov. 1912, The National Archives (TNA, hereafter implied in FO citations) FO 800/161, no. 36.

reservations, Russian foreign policy was still driven by the objective of localisation: the Balkan States had to be given a free hand.[119] If Austria intervened, even to pursue legitimate and obvious interests,[120] Russia would go to war, ostensibly for reasons of public opinion. And in such a development 'it would be impossible for the British Government, even if it desired, to side diplomatically with Austria against Russia,' Grey observed.[121]

Despite initially coordinating diplomatically with Austria, by the end of October it appeared as if Russia was going to pursue a 'trial of strength' strategy[122] over the question of a Serbian port on the Adriatic, elevating the demand to a question of national prestige. It was not the intrinsic value of the question that mattered—Russia was not affected one way or another by the outcome—but the '*amour propre*' of the nation and her leaders. Isvolsky put the matter without equivocation: 'if Servia failed to get access to Adriatic owing to opposition of Austria it would mean fresh humiliation of Russia.'[123] Either Austria would have to endanger what were perceived as her vital interests[124] or Russia's leaders would have to sacrifice their national pride.[125] Since neither alternative appeared likely, war appeared to be in the cards.[126]

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[119] D.C.B. Lieven, *Russia and the Origins of the First World War* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1983), 44.
[120] Cartwright to Nicolson 27 Aug. 1912 quoted in T.G. Otte, *The Foreign Office Mind: The Making of British Foreign Policy, 1865–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 370.
[121] Grey to Bertie 30 October 1912, BD 9.2 no. 82.
[122] The phrase comes from the German Ambassador at St. Petersburg. Buchanan to Grey 10 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 174.
[123] Goschen to Grey 7 Nov. 1912 BD 9.2, no. 151.
[124] Cartwright to Nicolson 22 Nov. 1912, FO 800/360, no. 53.
[125] Goschen to Grey 9 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 169.
[126] McDonald, *United Government*, 183.

Berlin was apparently willing to defend Austria in the event of a clash.[127] London, despite believing that the conflict was caused by the unreasonableness of Russia's leaders,[128] was determined to support the Triple Entente.[129] The French, not wishing to be seen as restraining Russia, concurred.[130] The next month, Isvolsky would report from Paris that anxiety over Entente prestige, not fear of Great Power war, was the dominating feeling.[131] Previously, France had shown no interest in going to war over a Balkan dispute; its new willingness, motivated by the French General Staff's growing confidence of victory in a European war, was seen as a 'completely new French view' by the Russians, whose resolve it strengthened.[132] The Franco-Russian Alliance had now become—if it had not been already—'Balkanized.'[133]

Was Russia really going to start a war over a question that did not matter for the sake of its pride? Francis Bertie, Britain's Ambassador in Paris, thought perhaps Sazonov would ultimately back down.[134] Sir George Buchanan, London's Ambassador in St. Petersburg—echoing the evaluations of Taube, Poincaré, and others—frequently

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[127] Goschen to Nicolson 10 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 175
[128] Minute on Buchanan to Grey 8 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no 161; Minute to Paget to Grey D. 11 Nov. 1912, R. 26 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 176; Grey to Goschen 8 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 162; Buchanan to Grey 9 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no 171; Nicolson to Paget, 13 Nov. 1912, no. 197.
[129] Goschen inquired whether Russia could 'be told that if she goes to war on such a question she will have to do it *alone* and at her own risk?' Goschen to Nicolson 10 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no 175. His question was never answered.
[130] Bruce W. Menning, 'The Russian Threat Calculation, 1910-1914,' in *The Wars before the Great War: Conflict and International Politics before the Outbreak of the First World War*, ed. Dominik Geppert, William Mulligan, and Andreas Rose (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 170; Taylor, *The Struggle For Mastery*, 494. Bertie to Grey 16 Nov. 1912, BD 92, no. 213.
[131] 18 Dec. 1912 quoted in Albertini, *Origins*, 1: 411-412.
[132] Lieven, *Russia and the Origins*, 48.
[133] Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 293–301.
[134] Bertie to Nicolson 8 Nov. 1912, FO 800/161, no. 123.

observed how Sazonov's convictions were apt to rapidly change in contradictory ways.[135] The disagreement was being driven by what Arthur Nicolson, now Britain's Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, called 'so much wild talk.'[136]

In mid-November, Count Leopold Berchtold, Austria-Hungary's Foreign Minister, seemed convinced that a détente was in the air and that 'the height of the crisis' had passed.[137] Even as he was speaking these words, Sazonov was declaring, 'Servia's claim to such a port was perfectly legitimate and that it was one that must be satisfied.' Without such satisfaction, Sazonov thought it undesirable 'to postpone the inevitable conflict' and instead preferred 'to settle the matter once for all with the sword.'[138]

Insisting that a Serbian port was a question of Russia's '*amour propre*,' Sazonov believed, would justify Russia's position. But, as Buchanan observed, all Sazonov had to do was admit that this was not in fact a test of Russia's resolve, and it would cease to be one. Russia would not be humiliated if she refrained from overcommitting herself.[139] Intent on a victorious outcome, Russia was determined to play a game of chicken in which Austria, and by extension Germany, would be forced to swerve if they desired to avoid a collision.[140] The system itself had become based on someone backing down, and

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[135] Buchanan to Grey R. 18 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 195; Buchanan to Nicolson 14 Nov. 1912, no. 205; Buchanan to Grey 17 Nov. 1912, no. 219.
[136] Nicolson to Bertie 11 Nov. 1912, FO 800/161, no. 125; cf. Buchanan to Grey 17 Nov. 1912, no. 216.
[137] Cartwright to Grey 13 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 192.
[138] Buchanan to Grey D. 13 Nov., R. 18 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 195.
[139] Buchanan to Nicolson 14 Nov. 1912 FO 800/360, no. 26.
[140] Paul W. Schroeder, 'World War I as Galloping Gertie: A Reply to Joachim Remak,' *The Journal of Modern History* 44, no. 3 (September 1972): 319–45; see also Bridge and Bullen, *The Great Powers*, 336. For the coming Great War as a 'multiparty game of chicken' see John A. Vasquez, 'The First World War and International Relations Theory: A Review of Books on the 100th Anniversary,' *International Studies Review* 16, no. 4 (December 2014): 623–44.

Sazonov, according to a report from Buchanan in mid-November, had assessed the 'moment' as 'favourable'[141] for winning this round of Russian roulette. The British Foreign Office, more concerned with supporting 'Russia loyally throughout the entire crisis,'[142] as Buchanan wrote in late November, than with the peace of Europe, made doing nothing Russia would object to its policy.[143] Indeed, on 3 and 4 December first Richard Haldane, the Lord Chancellor, and then Grey himself intimated British involvement in any Great Power war, enraging the German Kaiser and provoking his so-called 'War Council.' This joint *demarche* had been made despite the Foreign Office's belief that the dispute over a Serbian port had no intrinsic merit, had been provoked by Sazonov's 'Frankenstein,'[144] and would 'turn' entirely 'on the attitude of Russia at the moment.'[145] The Foreign Office's indifference to the nature of the dispute, its ignorance of how far Russia would go, and its determination to support its ally regardless exactly mirrored the British response during the earlier Bosnia crisis;[146] only in more obviously intimating British involvement in a Great Power war did the response differ.

The Ambassadors' Conference, which Grey would in the future recall so fondly,

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[141] Buchanan to Grey 18 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 226.
[142] Buchanan to Nicolson 28 Nov 1912, FO 800/360, no. 39.
[143] Grey to Goschen 14 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 203; Nicolson to Buchanan 19 Nov 1912, FO 800/360, no. 242; Nicolson to Bax-Ironside 26 Nov., no. 239; Nicolson to Cartwright, 26 Nov 1912, no. 250.
[144] Keith M. Wilson, 'The British Démarche of 3 and 4 December 1912: H. A. Gwynne's Note on Britain, Russia and the First Balkan War,' *The Slavonic and East European Review* 62, no. 4 (October 1984): 552–59. On 12 December, Grey also warned the King that because of the logic of the Entente, 'it might become necessary for England to fight. . . .' Grey to King 9 December 1912, FO 800/103 no. 438; also King to Grey 8 December 1912, FO 800/103, no. 435
[145] Cartwright to Nicolson 22 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 256.
[146] See, e.g., Nicolson to Grey 17 Mar. 1909, BD 5, no. 701 and Grey to Nicolson 27 Oct. 1908, BD 5, no. 412; idem, no. 411.

was not created by him in any exclusive sense, contrary to his later claims[147] (repeated subsequently by historians[148]). There had been talk of a Great Power agreement even before the war began,[149] but no definite proposal had been made, and as recently as 19 November Grey had found a French suggestion for a Conference premature (though Nicolson disagreed).[150] On 21 November, however, the German Ambassador in London, Prince Lichnowsky, pressed for a Great Power agreement on 'Albania, Serbian access to Adriatic, Constantinople, Adrianople, and Mount Athos' while Alfred von Kiderlen-Waechter, the German Secretary of State, simultaneously brought the proposal to the French Ambassador in Berlin, Jules Cambon.[151] Grey, for the first time, agreed to informal discussions,[152] suggesting that the Conference be an Ambassadors' Conference in Paris.[153]

All then rested on what Sazonov would say. On 25 November, he conceded an alternative to his original demand for a Serbian port: 'the neutralisation of all Albanian ports under an international guarantee.' Sazonov also eagerly assented to talk of a Conference, assuming that Paris had already been agreed upon as the location.[154] Grey responded with relief: the Ambassadors' Conference would be held, contingent on

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[147] Grey, *Twenty-Five Years*, 1: 255.
[148] E.g., Steiner and Neilson, *Britain and the Origins*, 119; Robbins, *Sir Edward Grey*, 266.
[149] Miller, *The Concert of Europe*, 49-50; 140-41.
[150] Minutes on Bertie to Grey 19 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 234.
[151] Grey to Bertie 21 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 247. The immediate German origins of the proposal are correctly noted in Milan N. Vego, *Austro-Hungarian Naval Policy* (London: Routledge, 1996), 144.
[152] Grey to Goschen 21 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 243. Also Goschen to Grey 22 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 251.
[153] Idem, 22 Nov., no. 249.
[154] Buchanan to Grey 25 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 270.

Sazonov's willingness to concede an 'alternative' solution to the port dispute.[155] But the very next day Sazonov, no longer enthusiastic about his 'alternative' solution or a Conference of Ambassadors, temporised, leading Robert Vansittart in the Foreign Office to comment: 'M. Sazonow is a sad wobbler.'[156] Later that day Sazonov, wobbling again, reaffirmed his acceptance of the compromise solution and Conference.[157] Even so, the devil was in the details—the German Government suggested a Conference of Great Powers, the French Ambassador in Berlin replied that the Balkan States should also be participants, and Grey insisted on just the Ambassadors of the Great Powers in Paris[158]—and, despite Grey's wish that the consultations 'should be begun without delay,'[159] it would be three more weeks before the Conference would actually meet, in the compromise location of London.

The Ambassadors' Conference began (on 17 December) even as most of the crisis had already been dissipated. The question of a Serbian port on the Adriatic had been 'the great matter at issue' and which way Russia's attitude would 'turn' was the principal unknown variable.[160] Consequently, once this was established at the end of November, Great Power war had been avoided 'in principle,' as David Stevenson has observed, so the Kaiser's War Council of 8 December had already been 'overtaken by events.'[161]

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[155] Grey to Buchanan 26 Nov. 1912, in ed. note, p. 200-201 of BD 9.2.
[156] R.G. V. Minute on Buchanan to Grey 27 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 290.
[157] Grey to Bertie 27 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 292.
[158] Idem, 26 Nov., no. 282.
[159] Grey to Buchanan 26 Nov. 1912, in ed. note, p. 201 of BD 9.2.
[160] Cartwright to Nicolson 22 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 256.
[161] David Stevenson, 'Militarization and Diplomacy in Europe before 1914,' *International Security* 22, no. 1 (Summer 1997): 146; cf. Taylor, *The Struggle For Mastery*, 494–95.

Much the same, presumably, could be said of Russia's own war council,[162] where partial mobilisation was supported by the Tsar and his War Minister but then rejected after Kokovtsov intervened.[163]

War was avoided in winter 1912 because Austria did not provoke it and Russia, in the end, did not insist upon fighting it over a point of 'self-esteem.'[164] Sazonov, wobbling, decided the dispute was not worth a war, accepting 'things' which had a few weeks earlier 'aroused his indignation,' to the general mystification of Buchanan.[165] The view of the British Foreign Office was that Austria-Hungary was imperturbably patient throughout the crisis.[166] She did not desire war, but neither would she yield.[167] Had Austria directly confronted Russia or taken more extreme military measures, the situation would have quickly escalated, as it nearly did already.[168] Grey's London Conference

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[162] In his memoirs, Kokovtsov reported this discussion to have occurred on 22 and 23 Nov. See V. N. Kokovtsov, *Out of My Past: Memoirs of Count Kokovtsov* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1935), 346. However, recent evidence indicates the correct date is 24 Dec. See Bruce W. Menning, 'Russian Military Intelligence, July 1914: What St. Petersburg Perceived and Why It Mattered,' *The Historian* 77, no. 2 (Summer 2015): 232 fn. 73.

[163] Kokovtsov, *Out of My Past*, 346.

[164] McDonald, *United Government*, 186–87. The 'self-esteem' description comes from Prince Lichnowsky, who sympathised with Russia's position. See *My Mission to London 1912-1914*, 11.

[165] Buchanan to Grey D. 11 Dec. 1912; R. 16 Dec., BD 9.2, no. 371. John Zametica insists that Sazonov all along did not support war over the question of an Albanian port, and cites some evidence to this effect. See his *Folly and Malice: The Habsburg Empire, the Balkans and the Start of World War One* (London: Shepheard-Walwyn, 2017), 252–53. This does not negate the argument of this section; to the contrary, it confirms the wild swings in Russian policy the Foreign Office found so confusing.

[166] E.g., Nicolson to Buchanan 19 Nov. 1912, FO 800/360, no. 242. See also Stevenson, *Armaments*, 253–60.

[167] *Pace* David Alan Rich, 'Russia,' in *The Origins of World War I*, ed. Richard F. Hamilton and Holger H. Herwig (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 211.

[168] Helmreich, *Diplomacy*, 159–62; Samuel R. Williamson Jr., 'Military Dimensions of Habsburg-Romanov Relations During the Era of the Balkan Wars,' in *East Central European Society and the Balkan Wars*, ed. Bela K. Kiraly and Dimitrije Djordjevic

commenced *after* these events had already been concluded; the Conference, as Grey himself recognised, was 'not still-born' because Russia had 'in principle' conceded the point that threatened to make a European war 'inevitable'[169] as a *precondition* to the convening of the Conference.[170] The London Conference contributed to (but did not *cause*[171]) the peaceful outcome of the November Crisis insofar as it encouraged and formalised the Russian decision to back down from war. This decision had been helped, Grey believed at the time, because it was not 'a question of yes or no.'[172] Serbia may not have gotten its Albanian port, but it had received the Sanjak and much else. And anyway, as Grey had told Russia's Ambassador, Count Benckendorff, at the height of the crisis, the port question 'was really not worth a European war.'[173]

Unfortunately, merely avoiding war in the winter of 1912 did not resolve Europe's systemic instability.[174] On 23 October 1912, Isvolsky had predicted that a conclusive victory for the Balkan Allies 'would bring forward, in its full historical development, the question of Slavdom not only with Islam but also with Germanism. In that case, one could scarcely hope for any palliative measures and must prepare for a

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(New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 317–37; Stevenson, *Armaments*, 234, 236–223; 'Militarization,' 143; Menning, 'Russian Military Intelligence,' 226.

[169] Grey, *Twenty-Five Years*, 1: 255; cf. 257.

[170] Grey to Buchanan 26 Nov. 1912, in ed. note, p. 200-201 of BD 9.2; see also Grey, 1:265–66.

[171] *Pace* many general accounts, including Steiner and Neilson, *Britain and the Origins*, 120.

[172] Grey to Goschen 4 Dec. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 327.

[173] Grey to Buchanan 26 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 283; Helmreich, *Diplomacy*, 220.

[174] R. J. Crampton, 'The Decline of the Concert of Europe in the Balkans, 1913-1914,' *The Slavonic and East European Review* 52, no. 128 (July 1974): 393–419; M. B. Hayne, 'Great Britain, the Albanian Question and the Concert of Europe, 1911-1914,' *Balkan Studies* 28, no. 2 (January 1987): 327–54.

great and decisive general European war.'[175] As far as 'palliative measures' went, the London Ambassadors' Conference proved inadequate. Though it would keep the Great Powers from conflict in the spring of 1913, particularly over Scutari—a bomb which might set the whole of Europe on fire,' Grey declaimed in January 1913[176]—it did so at the expense of Austria's interests.[177] In the midst of the November Crisis, Sazonov had promised 'to 'make difficulties about Albania and its eventual delimitation' were Austria to maintain its 'dam' against a Serbian port in Albania.[178] And this is exactly what he did.

Throughout the term of the Ambassadors' Conference—17 December 1912-13 August 1913—Russia did all it could to prevent the emergence of a viable Albanian state.[179] Grey would do nothing to significantly impede Russia's vindictive foreign policy because, as he forthrightly explained to Prince Lichnowsky on the *second* day of the Conference, 'having done so much to promote the agreement about Servian access to the Adriatic'[180] he was unwilling to further oppose Russia's claims. The peace of Europe was only worth so much political capital. Throughout the crises of 1912-1914, Grey would

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[175] Quoted in Dominic Lieven, *Towards the Flame: Empire, War and the End of Tsarist Russia* (London: Allen Lane, 2015), 252.
[176] Grey to Count de Salis 28 Jan. 1913, BD 9.2, no. 565.
[177] Keith Wilson, 'Grey,' in *British Foreign Secretaries and Foreign Policy: From Crimean War to First World War*, ed. Keith Wilson (London: Croom Helm, 1987), 183; F.R. Bridge, 'Sir Edward Grey and Austria-Hungary,' *The International History Review* 38, no. 2 (2016): 264–74.
[178] Buchanan to Grey 19 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 235.
[179] This interpretation agrees with Verena Steller's argument that 'offensive conferences'—in which Europe's powers sought diplomatic victories—had by the twentieth century come to replace the older tradition, which prioritised consensus. See William Mulligan, 'The Trial Continues: New Directions in the Study of the Origins of the First World War,' *English Historical Review* CXXIX, no. 538 (2014): 653. Grey found the experience 'intolerably wearisome' (*Twenty-Five Years*, 1: 256; cf. 257-258). Also see Bridge and Bullen, *The Great Powers*, 319–20.
[180] Grey to Goschen 18 Dec. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 395; Grey to Buchanan 3 April 1913, BD 9.2, no. 797; Nicolson to Buchanan 22 April 1913, BD 9.2, no. 871; Grey to Buchanan 1 May 1913, BD 9.2, no. 920; and Bridge and Bullen, *The Great Powers*, 320–21.

remain indifferent to the 'merits' of any particular question; he was animated instead by the logic of Britain's Entente relationships, which he consistently prioritised higher than Europe's peace, and he willingly intimated to others as much.[181]

As a result of Grey's indifference, Sazonov was free, after the resolution of the port question, to keep his earlier promise and prevent the formation of a coherent Albanian state, which he did by forcing the exclusion of cities integral to the commercial life of the nation.[182] Scutari was the most important of these; it was ultimately included in Albania's bounds, but only after months of intense negotiations, a British statement authorizing independent enforcement of the Conference's decision to evict the Montenegrins from the city,[183] an Austrian threat of war, and mobilisation measures along Montenegro's border.[184] Until the end Germany was largely indifferent to the negotiations—the Kaiser cared only for Austrian prestige and wanted to avoid a 'world war'[185]—leaving Austria isolated.[186] The outcome was a frustrated, fearful, and

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[181] E.g., Grey to Cartwright 1 May 1913, BD 9.2, no. 926; Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 495–98; this had been a position long in the making, see Bridge and Bullen, *The Great Powers*, 282 and 299-300, arguably since the 1908-09 annexation crisis, see Antonoff, *Almost War*, 213-14, 583, 650-51.

[182] For a map, Helmreich, *Diplomacy*, 256; Andreas Rose, 'From "Illusion" and "Angellism" to Détente' in *The Wars before the Great War: Conflict and International Politics before the Outbreak of the First World War*, ed. Dominik Geppert, William Mulligan, and Andreas Rose (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 334–36.

[183] Grey to Bertie 14 April 1913, BD 9.2, no. 850.

[184] John D. Treadway, *The Falcon and the Eagle: Montenegro and Austria-Hungary, 1908-1914* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1998), 157–58; Rauchensteiner, *The First World War*, 27. Stephen Pichon, the French Foreign Minister, summarised the desultory nature of the Conference's proceedings: 'The Powers are floundering about in a way which will probably lead to war. It takes a fortnight for them to agree on a communication to the Balkan Allies who take a fortnight to reply. Their answer is not satisfactory and another fortnight is occupied in considering a counter-reply….' Bertie to Grey 6 April 1913, Draft, FO 800/161 no. 136.

[185] John G. Röhl, *Wilhelm II: Into the Abyss of War and Exile, 1900–1941*, trans. Sheila De Belliaigue and F.R. Bridge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 925–27.

belligerent Austria, as Sir Fairfax Cartwright wrote from Vienna at the end of January 1913:

> Servia will some day set Europe by the ears and bring about a universal war on the Continent . . . . I cannot tell you how exasperated people are getting here at the continual worry which that little country causes to Austria under encouragement from Russia. . . . The next time a Servian crisis arises . . . I feel certain that Austria-Hungary will refuse to admit of any Russian interference in the dispute and she will proceed to settle the differences with her little neighbor by herself "coûte que coûte."[187]

No better analysis could have been offered. Sazonov's diplomacy of retribution vis-à-vis Albania, represented in the muddle over Scutari, prodded the Dual Monarchy out of the lethargy that largely defined its policy in November-December 1912.[188] In the crisis of 1914, Austria would again assert its independence as a Great Power; this time Russia would not back down. The Great War was the result. But before July 1914, a penultimate crisis—the October crisis of 1913—created a final precedent for Austria's behaviour in that fateful summer of 1914.

Section 4: The October Crisis

'The basis of Servian policy' towards Albania, the British representative in Belgrade, Dayrell Montague Crackanthorpe, reported to the Foreign Office on 10

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[186] Helmreich, *Diplomacy*, 293–96.
[187] Cartwright to Nicolson 31 Jan. 1913 BD 9.2, no. 582. See also Röhl, *Wilhelm II*, 926, 928–29.
[188] F.R. Bridge, *From Sadowa to Sarajevo: The Foreign Policy of Austria-Hungary, 1866-1914* (New York: Routledge, 1972), 349–52; cf. Stevenson, *Armaments*, 266.

September 1913, 'is to establish the fact that the new Principality cannot possibly become "viable" and to encourage centrifugal tendencies for this purpose.'[189] Serbia reinforced Albania's many problems by two stratagems: the first was to disregard the boundary divisions on which the Great Powers had concurred, occupying territory assigned to Albania; the second was to insist that the Great Powers act collectively to enforce their will—an unlikely proposition given Russian ill-will and British reserve.[190]

On 19 September 1913, the Serbian Government issued a memorandum justifying the closure of the new Serbian border with Albania—which cut off Albanians from their commercial centres that Russia had previously ensured ended up in Serbia—and put the Great Powers on notice that a further expedition to 'restore order' in Albanian territory might be necessary.[191] Sir Eyre Crowe, Britain's Assistant Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs, understood that Serbia was probably seeking a pretext for 'a Servian occupation of the Albanian frontier districts.'[192] The situation was further enflamed when, to recover stolen cattle,[193] the Albanians conquered Dibra, which had been assigned to Serbia.[194] The clash endangered the whole settlement by making a war between Austria and Serbia again likely, Crackanthorpe reported to Grey.[195] This little bothered the Serbian Government, which counted 'on Russia's finally pulling the chestnuts out of the fire for her, should things go badly.' Serbia was 'openly flouting' the

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[189] Crackanthorpe to Grey D. 10 Sep. 1913, BD 10.1, no. 6.
[190] E.g., Idem, D. 12 Sep., no. 8; Miranda Vickers, *The Albanians: A Modern History* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1999), 78–79.
[191] Crackanthorpe to Grey D. 19 Sep. 1913, BD 10.1, no. 11.
[192] Minute on Communication from M. Cruic 20 Sep. 1913, BD 10.1, no. 12
[193] Grey to Bertie 5 May 1914, BD 10.1, no. 128; Vickers, *The Albanians*, 81.
[194] Poincaré, in his usual conspiratorial manner, later attributed this development to Austrian influence. See *The Origins of the War*, 153.
[195] Crackanthorpe to Grey 23 Sep. 1913, BD 10.1, no. 15.

'decisions of the Ambassadors' Conference' (which had been concluded with no fanfare on 11 August) in a bid to revoke them, Crackanthorpe explained.[196]

Serbia's aggressive behaviour did not surprise the Ballhausplatz, which had always insisted 'that trouble would come from the artificial frontier-line accepted by the London Conference' and had accepted it only 'as a concession to Russia,' Cartwright reported.[197] The Serbians themselves recognised the incoherence of the border, Crackanthorpe told Grey, but insisted the only solution was for more of Northern Albania to be assigned to Serbia.[198] On 27 September, the Italian Government recommended a collective warning to Serbia not to press further into Albanian territory, but this was met with little enthusiasm by the Powers (such a *démarche* had already been made on 17 August to no effect).[199] Fearing Serbia was permanently occupying new positions in Albania, Austria-Hungary sent a *démarche* on 14 October to Serbia demanding that she respect the settlement of the London Conference, warning that an ultimatum would follow if she did not.[200] Grey reacted angrily, declaring that Austria's action 'is tantamount to breaking up the concert without any warning.'[201] The conference had already been disbanded, and now the Concert appeared 'finished as an effective mechanism for resolving international crises.'[202]

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[196] Idem, D. 25 Sep., no. 20.
[197] Cartwright to Nicolson 27 Sep. 1913, BD 10.1, no. 23.
[198] Crackanthorpe to Grey D. 8 Oct. 1913, BD 10.1, no. 33.
[199] Minute on Crackanthorpe to Grey 2 Oct. 1913, BD 10.1, no. 30.
[200] Stevenson, *Armaments*, 275.
[201] Minute on Goschen to Grey 16 Oct. 1913, BD 10.1, no. 38.
[202] William Mulligan, *The Origins of the First World War*, Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 83–84, 209; cf. Stevenson, *Armaments*, 278.

On 18 October the Austrian ultimatum was delivered, giving Serbian soldiers eight days to evacuate Albania.[203] Having been confronted with Austria's action, the Wilhelmstrasse chose to support her 'because it was not in Germany's own interest that her ally should send in an ultimatum and then retreat from it. . . . she [Austria] was evidently gambling for her position as a Great Power.'[204] According to Berchtold, Austria was at the end of her rope: she 'had yielded with regard to Djakova and other places in order to maintain European concert unbroken, but she could not tolerate that such territory as she had saved for new State of Albania should be encroached upon by Servia,' Cartwright reported to Grey.[205] On 21 October, Serbia replied to Austria and agreed to remove all soldiers.[206] Austria's gamble had paid off.

All the Great Powers seemed satisfied with the result. Although Grey objected to the method, he did not baulk at the outcome.[207] Serbia's initial action stuck the Dual Monarchy on the horns of a dilemma: if Austria took no action, she would face a *fait accompli* in Albania; if she did take action, she would be alienated from the Concert. The latter was what happened, causing Hartwig in Belgrade to celebrate, Crackanthorpe reported to Grey.[208] Since Sazonov himself acknowledged that Serbia was responsible for inciting the conflict, the result was seen as satisfactory in Russia,[209] where public opinion had wearied of Balkan intrigues,[210] Minister Hugh O'Beirne informed Grey. And in

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[203] Crackanthorpe to Grey 19 Oct. 1913, BD 10.1, no. 45.
[204] Goschen to Grey 19 Oct. 1913, BD 10.1, no. 46.
[205] Cartwright to Grey 20 Oct. 1913, BD 10.1, no. 47.
[206] Crackanthorpe to Grey D. 20 Oct. 1913, BD 10.1, no. 49 and Ed. note p. 43.
[207] Grey to Cartwright 22 Oct. 1912, BD 10.1, no. 51.
[208] Crackanthorpe to Grey D. 22 Oct. 1913, BD 10.1, no. 52.
[209] O'Beirne to Grey D. 28 Oct. 1913, BD 10.1, no. 56; Samuel R. Williamson, Jr., *Austria-Hungary and the Origins of the First World War* (London: Palgrave, 1991), 154.
[210] Idem, D. 30 Oct., no. 61.

Germany, Cartwright reported that the Emperor 'expressed his satisfaction . . . that for once Austria had shown her teeth and he hoped that she would continue to do so.'[211]

The lessons of the October Crisis appear to have been twofold. First, in the face of passive resistance, the Concert of Europe had become impotent. Austria, the most vulnerable of the Great Powers, no longer trusted it and had determined to place her fate into her own hands.[212] Second, as O'Beirne reported to the Foreign Office, Russia was 'little disposed to run the risk of war in order to defend the interests of the Slav States in the Balkans.'[213] She would protect her clients diplomatically, but had apparently assessed that a war over their petty disputes was imprudent. This latter lesson was shortly, in the crisis of July 1914, to be shown to be erroneous.

Section 5: Taking Stock

By the summer of 1914, the Great Powers of Europe had successfully negotiated a series of crises, or so it seemed. A European war had not occurred in November 1912 because Russia had finally accepted Austria's position that Serbia would not be given an Albanian port. This Russian 'concession' was possible, Grey and his subordinates thought at the time, because the question was not of great importance[214]; Russia and her allies had already gained much else[215]; and Austria patiently restrained herself,[216]

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[211] Cartwright to Grey 29 Oct. 1913, BD 10.2, no. 56.
[212] Stevenson, *Armaments*, 278; Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 287–88; Bridge and Bullen, *The Great Powers*, 326–27; Mulligan, *The Origins*, 82–87. 'Our purpose ultimately will be only to go under honorably . . . like a sinking ship,' wrote Conrad von Hötzendorf, Austria's chief of the general staff, that Dec. Quoted in Lawrence Sondhaus, *Franz Conrad Von Hötzendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse* (Boston: Humanities Press, 2000), 135.
[213] Ibid., no 61 and O'Beirne to Nicolson 30 Oct. 1913, BD 10.1, no. 62.
[214] Grey to Buchanan 26 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 283; Helmreich, *Diplomacy*, 220.
[215] Grey to Goschen 4 Dec. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 327.

allowing Sazonov, the 'sad wobbler,' the time he needed to wobble in the direction of peace.[217]

The second crisis, over Scutari, was finally resolved when Austria threatened unilateral action.[218] This did not result in war because Sazonov suddenly decided that since Austria was merely enforcing the collective decision of the Conference and against only Montenegro (and not Serbia) it 'was not of sufficient interest for Russia to justify a war.'[219] The incredulousness of the Foreign Office at this reversal is seen in Arthur Nicolson's minute on this report. Sazonov:

> certainly always gave us to understand that separate action by Austria would lead to the gravest consequences and urged strenuously that we and France sh[oul]d, therefore, lose no time in taking part in the naval demonstration. Now he is quite ready to admit Austria taking action ag[ains]t Montenegro. He w[oul]d have preserved us all from considerable anxiety if he had let us know this earlier. . . . While criticizing M. Sazonoff's tergiversations and vacillations as long as the net result is to preserve European peace we can bear with them, but in future we should, before taking any action, ascertain from M. Sazonoff without ambiguity what his policy is and whether he intends to abide by it.[220]

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[216] E.g., Nicolson to Buchanan 19 Nov. 1912, FO 800/360, no. 242.
[217] R.G. Vansittart Minute on Buchanan to Grey 27 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 290; Buchanan to Grey, R. 18 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 195; Buchanan to Nicolson 14 Nov. 1912, no. 205; Buchanan to Grey 17 Nov. 1912, no. 219; Grey to Bertie 27 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 292. Buchanan believed Sazonov's wobbles merely reflected the Russian Tsar's swaying states of mind. See his *My Mission to Russia and Other Diplomatic Memories* (London: Cassell, 1923), 1: 126.
[218] Miller, *The Concert of Europe*, 259.
[219] Buchanan to Grey R. 10 April 1913, BD 9.2, no. 820.
[220] Nicolson minute on ibid. Heretofore this minute seems to have gone unnoticed by scholars other than Miller, *The Concert of Europe*, 321, who quotes it in part.

The Scutari crisis ended peacefully because, as in the November Crisis, Sazonov wobbled, and, despite Montenegro's eventual evacuation of the city (on 4 May), 'Slav gains' remained 'very great.'[221] As in the earlier crisis,[222] Britain's policy trailed Russia's[223]; had this been the 'spark that created a European conflagration' Grey would have acted according to the logic of the Entente,[224] as he was to do in the coming July Crisis. Whether this was indeed the spark, as Nicolson reflected shortly after the crisis ended, had been left to the Montenegrins.[225] Had they not decided to evacuate Scutari at the last minute, a general war was conceivable.

The final crisis, in October 1913, did not result in war, from the perspective of the Foreign Office, because Austria broke the rules in such a way that it handed Russia a (negative) diplomatic victory without costing it anything: Austria had enforced the collective decision of the Concert, but in doing so she had alienated herself from it.[226] Russia, meanwhile, was believed to have temporarily lost interest in Serbia,[227] explained, perhaps, by 'a temperamental reaction to lethargy after excitement' Grey wrote in early November 1913.[228]

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[221] Grey to Buchanan 12 April 1913, BD 9.2, no. 839; cf. Buchanan to Grey R. 21 April 1913, BD 9.2, no. 849; Buchanan to Grey R. 19 May 1913, BD 9.2, no. 975.
[222] Stevenson, *Armaments*, 251–52.
[223] E.g., Minutes on Buchanan to Grey 1 Jan. 1913, no. 431.
[224] Grey to Cartwright 1 May 1913, BD 9.2, no. 926.
[225] Nicolson to Cartwright 13 May 1913, BD 9.2, no. 972. Charles Hardinge had made a similar comment during the first Balkan Crisis of 1908-09, where Grey allowed Europe's peace to rest on what 'those two pugnacious states—Servia and Montenegro' decided to do. Quoted in Rose, *Between Empire and Continent*, 427; cf. 429, 433.
[226] Grey to Cartwright 22 Oct. 1912, BD 10.1, no. 51; Minute on Goschen to Grey 16 Oct. 1913, BD 10.1, no. 38; Crackanthorpe to Grey D. 22 Oct. 1913, BD 10.1, no. 52; O'Beirne to Grey D. 28 Oct. 1913, BD 10.1, no. 56; Idem, D. 30 Oct., no. 61.
[227] Ibid., no 61 and O'Beirne to Nicolson 30 Oct. 1913, BD 10.1, no. 62; Goschen to Grey 19 Oct. 1913, BD 10.1, no. 46.
[228] Grey Minute on O'Beirne to Grey R. 3 Nov. 1913, BD 10.1, no. 61.

In summary, by the end of 1913, Grey and his subordinates in the Foreign Office had witnessed four Balkan crises, all of which could have resulted in war. Each crisis had its own complications, but one driving fact seemed to explain why none of them had escalated: in the end, Russia had 'declined to run the risk' of war for its Balkan client states, as O'Beirne reflected to Grey in late October 1913.[229] The relative intensity of each crisis, according to the Foreign Office, seemed to reflect Sazonov's fluctuating moods—which may have themselves been reflecting deeper concerns of the Russian state, but Grey and his advisors were not sure.[230] This, in turn, was a matter of much anxiety because the British Foreign Office seemed destined to follow, in a cockboat, the Russian man-of-war wherever it went, including the shoals of catastrophe.[231]

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[229] O'Beirne to Grey R. 3 Nov. 1913, BD 10.1, no. 61; also O'Beirne to Nicolson 11 Dec. 1913, FO 800/371 no. 43.

[230] E.g., Nicolson Minute on O'Beirne to Grey R. 3 Nov. 1913, BD 10.1, no. 61; Buchanan to Grey R. 19 May 1913, BD 9.2, no. 975. Even today, scholars continue to debate the influence of the press on Russian foreign policy. Compare McDonald, *United Government*, 183, 189, 218 with Ronald Bobroff, 'Behind the Balkan Wars: Russian Policy toward Bulgaria and the Turkish Straits, 1912-13,' *The Russian Review* 59, no. 1 (January 2000): 79; and Dietrich Geyer, *Russian Imperialism: The Interaction of Domestic and Foreign Policy, 1860-1914*, trans. Bruce Little (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 315.

[231] This interpretation rejects the view that Britain, acting as the 'leader' of the Entente, had 'restrained' the Russians in the crises of 1912-1913, as argued by, for example, Hildebrand, *German Foreign Policy*, 106–9. Russia's leaders, believing peace was imperative for internal stability and war undesirable until about 1917, by and large restrained themselves. See McDonald, *United Government*, 186–87, 206, 217–18; Geyer, *Russian Imperialism*, 310–11; Rose, *Between Empire and Continent*, 436. William Mulligan has argued ("We Can't Be More Russian than the Russians": British Policy During the Liman von Sanders Crisis, 1913-1914,' *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 17, no. 2 [2006]: 261–82) that Britain's role in the Liman von Sanders Crisis (Nov. 1913-Jan. 1914) demonstrates that Britain used its Entente to restrain Russia, that she remained the shaper of Entente policy, and that the Concert of Europe continued to function and the system was not on the verge of war. As Mulligan shows, Grey refused to support Russia's escalatory demands (264-265, 270, 276-277), and France followed the British position (268). As with the previous crises, the affair seemed rather like a manufactured quarrel to the British (269) and it was understood that it was driven by Russia's

Section 6: The July Crisis

Franz Ferdinand's assassination on 28 June 1914 was met with indifference in most quarters of Europe.[232] In Britain, the 'successes' of Grey's diplomacy over the preceding three years seemed reassuring. H. H. Asquith, the Prime Minister, later recalled:

> It was with this happy precedent still fresh in the memory that, two years later, we strove to solve a new crisis by the application of the same machinery. The trouble had again arisen in the Balkan area; the Powers directly interested were against Austria and Russia; the rest had no concern of their own in the quarrel. The experience of 1912-13 had shown that, given a genuine desire to preserve the peace, the groupings of the great States might be superseded, or even for the time obliterated, by concerted action under the supreme test of a common emergency.[233]

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unpredictability (270). Where it differed, as Mulligan acknowledges, is that both the British and the French had independent interests at the Porte (271), the British, of course, with a figure analogous to Sanders in the Ottoman Navy. What Mulligan misses is the *new* recklessness of Russian policy: Sazonov and his coterie of hawkish ministers were determined to deploy 'firm resolve' to gain political concessions, explicitly risking an 'all-European war' (McDonald, *United Government*, 193–95). In this specific instance, likely because of their own imperial interests, the British and French demurred; at the same time Kokovtsov, a lone voice in the wilderness, opposed Sazonov's policy in his last involvement in questions of foreign affairs (McDonald, 194–97). Immediately thereafter, the Tsar dismissed him, and in the coming crisis Russia's policy of 'firmness' would be unchecked by Britain and France.

[232] Holger Afflerbach, 'The Topos of Improbable War in Europe before 1914,' in *An Improbable War?*, 161–82.

[233] Asquith, *The Genesis of the War*, 66.

Asquith directly credited Grey's diplomacy with 'largely, if not mainly' preventing war between the Great Powers; he was confident his foreign secretary could repeat the act for a fourth time.[234] During the crisis, consequently, Asquith—who was focused on the Home Rule crisis—left British diplomacy entirely in Grey's hands until the very end, when complicated cabinet manoeuvrings materialised.[235]

Grey and Nicolson believed the localisation of the conflict was probable but not certain.[236] Their fallback strategy was to host a second Ambassadors' Conference. 'Day by day I consulted with Nicolson at the Foreign Office,' he later recollected: 'We agreed that, if things become more anxious and the prospect became darker, I should propose a conference. In one aspect the proposal was hopeful and attractive. It would be on the same lines of the Conference of Ambassadors in 1912-13. That was of good augury, and could be set to work at a day's notice.'[237] Grey believe that the emerging crisis could be with managed 'same methods which had preserved peace hitherto,'[238] that is, 'as in the last Balkan Crisis, that of 1912-13.'[239] Even before Archduke Franz Ferdinand was

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[234] Asquith, 65; the King had made parallel comments expressing his confidence in Grey in the Winter of 1912/13, see Robbins, *Sir Edward Grey*, 268. .
[235] Keith M. Wilson, *The Policy of the Entente: Essays on the Determinants of British Foreign Policy, 1904-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), chap. 8. In his memoirs, Asquith says nothing of British action or thinking in the crisis before 24 July, illustrating the totality of his focus on the Irish question and his confidence in Grey's concert diplomacy. See *The Genesis of the War*, 142–186, 187 ff. The same confidence in Grey's concert diplomacy can also be found in Poincaré's memoirs. See *The Origins of the War*, 183, 187. On the evolving views of the Cabinet in the crisis's last days: John W. Young, 'Lewis Harcourt's Journal of the 1914 War Crisis,' *The International History Review*, 2017, https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2017.1387164.
[236] Grey, *Twenty-Five Years*, 1: 309, 299; Harold Nicolson, *Sir Arthur Nicolson, Bart, First Lord Carnock: A Study in the Old Diplomacy* (London: Constable & Company, 1937), 413.
[237] Grey, *Twenty-Five Years*, 1 :314.
[238] Grey, 1: 292.
[239] Grey, 1: 296.

assassinated on 28 June 1914, Grey had been thinking along these lines, agreeing in a conversation with Prince Lichnowsky to continue 'the consultations' amongst the Powers 'if a fresh crisis arose in the Balkans.'[240] Grey was particularly committed to this because the earlier Conference had promoted 'good relations' with Germany, which he desired to maintain despite Britain belonging to an opposing bloc that talked 'as intimately as allies.'[241]

As the crisis developed, Grey continued to follow this line. In a conversation with Prince Lichnowsky on 6 July, who warned Grey that Austria was determined to secure 'compensation in the sense of some humiliation for Servia,' Grey replied: 'If trouble did come, I would use all the influence I could to mitigate difficulties and smooth them away, and if the clouds arose to prevent the storm from breaking.'[242] On 8 July, in a similar conversation with the Russian ambassador, Grey—who was already anxious that 'this terrible crime might unexpectedly produce a general war'[243]—encouraged the Russian Government to 'reassure Germany.'[244] These conversations were hardly 'a form of early intervention,' as one scholar[245] has described them. Counsels of moderation had been standard diplomatic fare from the Foreign Office throughout the whole course of the Balkan Wars. Grey's actual intervention, as he made clear to Lichnowsky the next day, was a determination—'if trouble did come'—to reproduce the earlier 'successes' of the Ambassadors' Conference. 'I would continue the same policy as I had pursued through the Balkan crisis. . . . The greater the risk of war, the more closely would I adhere to that

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[240] Bertie Memorandum 25 June 1914, F.O 800/171 no. 71
[241] Grey to Goschen 24 June 1914, BD 11, no. 4; Lynn-Jones, 'Détente and Deterrence.'
[242] Grey to Rumbold 6 July 1914, BD 11, no. 32.
[243] Quoted in Otte, *July Crisis*, 146.
[244] Grey to Buchanan 8 July 1914, BD 11, no. 39.
[245] Otte, '"Postponing the Evil Day,"' 258.

policy.'[246] Grey's plan was to wait until matters became more pressing, which would provide the justification for Conference mediation—to defuse the crisis once it climaxed, not to interrupt its progression. If a dispatch that same day from Maurice Bunsen, Ambassador to Vienna, was correct, such a climax could not be far off: The consensus was that 'Austria will at last be compelled to give evidence of her strength by settling once and for all her long-standing accounts with Servia….' If this was the case, then Europe's peace was threatened, for the Russian Ambassador in Vienna had declared: 'an isolated combat with Servia would be impossible and Russia would be compelled to take up arms in defense of Servia. Of this there could be no question. A Servian war meant a general European war.'[247]

Grey's position remained unaffected over the next two weeks by the streams of incoming dispatches. On the 13th, the Foreign Office received a dispatch from Berlin stating that there was a consensus in Germany to stand by Austria.[248] On the 15th, news was received from Vienna of an upcoming 'transmission of a menacing note to Servia.'[249] On the 16th, Grey told Bertie that Germany is 'really frightened at the growing strength of the Russian Army' and it may 'bring on a conflict with Russia' before it can complete its strategic railways (though he hardly mentioned the burgeoning crisis).[250] That same day, Bunsen warned that failing an 'immediate unconditional compliance' on Serbia's part, 'force will be used'—information confirmed by the Austrian chargé d'affaires in

[246] Grey to Rumbold 9 July 1914, BD 11, no. 41.
[247] Bunsen to Grey D. 5 July 1914, R. 9 July, BD 11, no. 40.
[248] Rumbold to Grey D. 11 July 1914, R. 13 July, BD 11, no. 44.
[249] Alexander Cadogan for Bunsen to Grey D. 11 July 1914, R. 15 July, BD 11, no. 46.
[250] Memorandum by Bertie 16 July 1914, FO 800/161, no. 168.

London.[251] On the 17th, the British envoy in Belgrade reported that the 'general feeling' in Serbia was that any serious demands would be rejected.[252] On the 18th another report arrived from Bunsen, emphasizing Austria's angry mood and the Ballhausplatz's desire to reduce Serbia 'to impotence for a generation.'[253] That same day, Sazonov warned that in response to an Austrian ultimatum, Russia might undertake 'precautionary military measures.'[254] On the 20th, Lichnowsky reported that Grey still took 'an optimistic view of the Austro-Serbian dissension and believes in a peaceful solution.' Grey's hope that Austria's demands would be kept 'within reasonable limits' apparently justified this position.[255] On the 21st, a dispatch arrived from the British representative at Budapest, warning Grey that Austria 'is willing to go to any lengths in its desire to revenge itself on the despised and hated enemy.'[256] Grey 'felt a great apprehension' but still placed his hope in moderate Austrian demands limited by Germany.[257] On the 22nd, Count Benckendorff, the Russian Ambassador, demurred on Grey's request for direct talks between Austria and Russia.[258] And then finally, on 23 July, a dispatch arrived from Belgrade, reporting that the Serbian Secretary-General had declared, in language strikingly reminiscent to that used by Russia's Ambassador to Vienna on 5 July, that 'a war between a Great Power and a Balkan State must, inevitably . . . lead to a European

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[251] Bunsen to Grey 16 July 1914, BD 11, no. 50.
[252] Crackanthorpe to Grey 17 July 1914, BD 11, no. 53.
[253] Bunsen to Grey D. 13 July 1914, R. 18 July, BD 11, no. 55.
[254] Buchanan to Grey 18 July 1914, BD 11, no. 60.
[255] Karl Kautsky, *Outbreak of the World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924), DD. I, 92.
[256] Müller to Grey D. 14 July 1914, R. 21 July, BD 11, no. 70.
[257] Grey to Bertie 21 July 1914, BD 11, no. 72. Belief that Germany would restrain Austria was another one of the 'lessons' of the Balkan crises. Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 325.
[258] Grey to Buchanan 22 July 1914, BD 11, no. 79.

conflagration.'[259] After seeing Austria's note to Serbia on the 24th, Grey's 'apprehension' grew even more, and he became aware of the acute time pressure pushing the crisis forward.[260]

Grey's diplomacy then moved into high gear on 25 July. It was time to exhort Austria and Russia 'not to cross frontier' and for the four other Powers (Britain, France, Germany, and Italy) to 'endeavor to arrange matters.'[261] In promoting this plan to Lichnowsky, Grey again referenced the Balkan crisis, where the Great Powers had avoided a 'world war . . . by means of the ambassadorial conferences,' as his precedent.[262]

The trouble was not only that time was running out and Austrian and Russian mobilisation seemed probable, but also that by this point in the crisis Britain's options seemed circumscribed.[263] This can be seen in a Foreign Office communiqué from 25 July: 'Whatever we may think of the merits of the Austrian charges against Servia, France and Russia consider that these are pretexts, and that the bigger cause of the Triple Alliance versus Triple *Entente* is definitely engaged.'[264] This assessment becomes only more weighty in retrospect: the French had urged Russia to stand firm (20-23 July)[265] and

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[259] Crackanthorpe to Grey D. 18 July 1914, R. 23 July, BD 11, no. 70.
[260] Grey to de Bunsen 24 July 1914, BD 11, no. 91; Grey to Rumbold 24 July 1914, BD 11 no. 99.
[261] Grey to Buchanan 25 July 1914, BD 11, no. 112.
[262] Lichnowsky to Foreign Office 25 July, D. 2 PM, DD. I, no. 180 in Kautsky, *Outbreak*.
[263] Stevenson, 'Militarization,' 154.
[264] Crowe Minute (25 July 1914) on Buchanan to Grey 24 July 1914, BD 11, no. 101. On the importance of this shift, see Herbert Butterfield, 'Sir Edward Grey in July 1914,' *Historical Studies*, no. 5 (1965): 12–15.
[265] Marc Trachtenberg, 'French Foreign Policy in the July Crisis, 1914: A Review Article,' *H-Diplo/ISSF*, no. 3 (December 1, 2010), http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/ISSF/PDF/3-Trachtenberg.pdf.

Russia had counselled Serbia not to give in as she had done in October 1913 (24 July).[266] Belgrade did not offer Vienna 'full satisfaction,'[267] making at least a localised conflict inevitable. This was no longer a minor Balkan struggle—it was a 'trial of strength.' And Britain had to choose: According to Sazonov, the choice was between 'giving Russia active support or renouncing her friendship.'[268]

Grey, as seen above, had already *in principle* made his choice, but in the four previous 'trials of strength' (if the crisis of 1908-09 is included) he had never been obligated either to publicise unambiguous support for Russia and her Balkan clients (which might unduly inflame matters) or to practically implement the logic of the policy (i.e., war) because each crisis had been resolved when, in the end, Russia did not force the question. In the first and second, Russia had backed down; in the third, she had avoided a definite commitment; and in the fourth, she had (apparently) temporarily lost interest in the Slav cause. At the time, Grey and the Foreign Office had more or less comprehended this point,[269] hence the exasperation with what was seen as wild swings in Russian policy.

But this was not the 'lesson' Grey was animated by in July 1914. His interpretation of the Ambassadors' Conference was then, like Asquith's, much more general: the Conference itself had been the collective anchor that prevented the Great Powers 'from being swept away'; what was needed to prevent Europe being 'swept into

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[266] Sean McMeekin, *The Russian Origins of the First World War* (Harvard: Belknap Press, 2013), 53 ff.; Albertini, *Origins*, vol. 2.
[267] Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 461–69.
[268] Buchanan to Grey 25 July 1914, BD 11, no. 125.
[269] Summarized succinctly in Buchanan's memoirs: 'During the Balkan Wars Russia had had on more than one occasion to recede from positions which she had somewhat rashly taken up' (*My Mission*, 149).

the cataract of war' was to lay anchor again, permitting this or that Balkan dispute (Grey was never interested in the details) to be 'settled with increasing ease.'[270] Through a conference, he later wrote, 'we could keep the peace of Europe in any crisis.'[271] The whole future of Europe, hence, was seen to hang on whether a Conference could be organised.[272]

Organizing a conference was clearly Grey's plan to maintain Europe's peace, but his initial proposal (for four-power mediation, made on 25 July) simultaneously performed two other essential tasks: it allowed the Foreign Office to overlook Russian mobilisation measures—avoiding any new tensions in the Entente relationship but undercutting Buchanan's warning to Sazonov that mobilisation meant war[273]—and it advantageously positioned the Entente Powers for a conflict, were one to develop in the end. This was, in other words, a 'dominant strategy'; it was the Triple Entente's best move regardless of what happened. As Grey explained to the Russian Ambassador on the 25th, four-power mediation would *follow* Austrian and Russian mobilisation, which Grey had already conceded to be 'almost inevitable.'[274] Russia's position would be strengthened *regardless* of Germany's response. If Germany, in response to 'the threat of Russian mobilisation,' restrained Austria, well and good; if after a few days of discussions Germany refused, this was only to Russia's advantage, as Germany would have been 'throwing away the advantage of time,' which was the key to its war plans.[275]

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[270] Grey, *Twenty-Five Years*, 1: 267.
[271] Ibid., 314.
[272] Trevelyan, *Grey*, 249.
[273] Buchanan, *My Mission*, 195-96; Young, "Ambassador George Buchanan," 213.
[274] Grey to Buchanan 25 July 1914, BD 11, no. 112.
[275] Grey to Buchanan 25 July 1914, BD 11, no. 132.

Finally, if Germany refused to join a conference at all, this would become evidence of its bad faith.

Grey's dominant strategy was further developed the next day (26 July) when he decided to upgrade his proposal for four-power mediation into a proposal for a full Conference. This putative Conference was to be made contingent on the suspension of 'active military operations.'[276] Even as the Foreign Office was formulating this proposal, Prince Lichnowsky called, saying that it appeared Russia was beginning to mobilise and that if she did, Germany would be compelled to respond. Nicolson replied: 'The main thing was to prevent, if possible, active military *operations*,' a word he emphasised.[277] The Foreign Office took this position because it knew that mobilisation followed by a Conference would be to the 'disadvantage of Germany.'[278] Grey thought formulating the Conference proposal in this manner would make Russia more congenial to joining a Conference. He was positively uninterested in Russia's enactment of the Period Preparatory to War on the 25 and 26 July,[279] even though it was immediately seen by some observers (including the French Ambassador in St. Petersburg) as the beginning of general mobilisation.[280] In his memoirs, Grey later recalled being willing 'to give or get guarantees that there would be no mobilizations during the Conference' even though he did not believe that 'there would be substance in such points: it seemed so certain after the Serbian reply that a Conference, once summoned, must succeed and could not break

[276] Nicolson to Grey 26 July 1914, BD 11, no. 139.
[277] Communication by German Ambassador 26 July 1914, BD 11, no. 146.
[278] Grey, *Twenty-Five Years*, 1: 315.
[279] Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 495–96; Albertini, *Origins*, 2: 417.
[280] McMeekin, *The Russian Origins*, 62 ff.

down or fail.'[281] He indeed may have been willing, but in the actual event he did not act accordingly.

Grey's proposed conference was never held because of a confluence of factors: initial Russian objections, French hesitation, German and Austrian opposition, the short time frame in which an agreement had to be reached, and the competition of many other simultaneous and overlapping proposals.[282] What did happen was Russian mobilisation, beginning with the Period Preparatory to War. Now, given the demands of the Schlieffen Plan, where before there were weeks, there were mere days to reach some settlement. Grey later blamed this on Germany: 'after he [Bethmann Hollweg] had refused and Russia had accepted a Conference I could not protest against Russian preparation for the event of war.'[283] But this recollection is false; to the contrary, restraining Russia from mobilisation had already been taken off the table. Only a meek exhortation 'not to cross frontier'[284] remained. And Russian mobilisation, which found tacit approval both in Grey's backdoor diplomacy and in his formal conference proposal, in fact became the sufficient cause for the outbreak of World War I.[285]

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[281] Grey, *Twenty-Five Years*, 1: 306.
[282] On the many competing proposals, see the annoyance of the Foreign Office in Nicolson's Minute on Buchanan to Grey 27 July 1914, BD 11, no. 179. For detailed explanations: Albertini, *Origins*, vol. 2; Sidney Bradshaw Fay, *The Origins of the World War*, Second Edition (New York: Macmillan, 1964), vol. 2; Otte, *July Crisis*, chaps. 5–6; Martel, *The Month That Changed the World*, 165–335; Sean McMeekin, *July 1914: Countdown to War* (London: Icon Books, 2014), chaps. 14–21; MacMillan, *The War That Ended Peace*, chaps. 19–20.
[283] Quoted in Trevelyan, *Grey*, 249.
[284] Grey to Buchanan 25 July 1914, BD 11, no. 112.
[285] Stevenson, 'Militarization,' 152–54; Hew Strachan, *The First World War*, vol. 1, To Arms (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 83–90; Samuel R. Williamson Jr. and Ernest R. May, 'An Identity of Opinion: Historians and July 1914,' *Journal of Modern History* 79, no. 2 (June 2007): 366–71; Vasquez, 'The First World War,' 633–35; Levy, 'The Sources of Preventive Logic,' 158. It is debated whether partial mobilisation or only

Tragically, Grey's tacit facilitation of hasty Russian mobilisation also created the conditions in which the one proposal[286] that might have actually prevented war's outbreak—the German Kaiser's last minute 'Halt in Belgrade' solution, in which Austria would occupy Belgrade while the Kaiser secured satisfaction from Serbia for her—also failed. When the Kaiser in the early morning of 30 July learned from Tsar Nicholas that Russia had been actually been undertaking military measures for five days, he reacted with predictable rage: 'I cannot agree to any more mediation' because Russia 'secretly mobilized behind my back.'[287] If ever there was a case of action perceived as wrongful provoking 'sudden shifts in preferences towards retaliatory satisfaction, lax attitudes towards risk, impulsivity, and urgency'[288] this was it.[289] Four days later, Grey would tell the Parliament, 'The situation has developed so rapidly that technically, as regards the

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full mobilisation made war inevitable. Marc Trachtenberg has argued forcefully that partial mobilisation did not make war inevitable, but that full mobilisation *was* war. See his *History and Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 72–95. Stephen Cimbala has convincingly argued that mobilisation was understood in different ways by Russia's leaders. For Sazonov, the Period Preparatory to War, implemented on the 25th and 26th, was a way to engage in 'brinkmanship' and 'manipulate risk,' but for the military it was a way to preempt and gain an advantageous position vis-à-vis Germany. Sazonov's strategy apparently failed when Austria declared war on Serbia on the 28th, and, now believing war to be inevitable, he sought mobilisation instead. Partial mobilisation (originally proposed on the 24th as a tool of coercive diplomacy) now became the 'bridge' to general mobilisation (for this term, Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy*, 95). Stephen J. Cimbala, *Military Persuasion: Deterrence and Provocation in Crisis and War* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 27–59. For our purposes, it is adequate to see each move as part of a chain of escalation towards war; each, moreover, severely restricted the diplomatic time window. Even if, as Trachtenberg argues, Russian partial mobilisation provoked Bethmann's last minute peace overtures, it also contributed to a growing 'feeling of helplessness in the face of doom' (MacMillan, *The War That Ended Peace*, KL 11219; cf. Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 525).

[286] Taylor, *War by Timetable*, KL 798, 1213; Otte, *July Crisis*, 347.

[287] Quoted in Martel, *The Month That Changed the World*, 313.

[288] Todd H. Hall, 'On Provocation: Outrage, International Relations, and the Franco-Prussian War,' *Security Studies* 21, no. 1 (2017): 16.

[289] Offer, 'Going to War in 1914,' 226.

condition of the war, it is most difficult to describe what has actually happened.'[290] That his own proposals had helped facilitate the process, he remained—apparently—blissfully unaware.

Why was Grey so confident that an Ambassadors' Conference was *the* solution to the July Crisis? Most broadly put, the answer seems to be that Grey 'learned' the lessons of history. He had been the lead actor in three immediately previous crises, and these episodes were emotionally salient to him, one of the key elements of analogical reasoning.[291] The previous crises also resembled the present crisis. The July Crisis was, after all, the enactment of the 'Balkan inception scenario' that had come to define the continental policy of the Triple Entente.[292] Grey, therefore, engaged in pattern matching: he drew a correspondence between the crises of 1912-1913 and the crisis of 1914, and then he 'mapped' content from the former to the later. The central idea of this mapping was the association between the holding of an Ambassadors' Conference and a peaceful outcome, an idea encouraged, perhaps, by the simultaneous Anglo-German détente.[293] Grey believed in 1914 (and afterwards) that the association was one of causation. Had he carefully queried his own memories and the Foreign Office's records, he would have

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[290] Quoted in Martel, *The Month That Changed the World*, 388.
[291] Stephen Peter Rosen, *War and Human Nature*, Kindle Edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 51.
[292] Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 239–358.
[293] T. G. Otte, 'Détente 1914: Sir William Tyrrell's Secret Mission to Germany,' *The Historical Journal*, 56, no. 1 (2013): 175-204. The causes of the détente—the Anglo-German convention on the Baghdad railway and agreement on the Portuguese colonies question (184), the relaxation of the naval arms race (190), and the growth of Russian power and assertiveness in Persia (191-193)—were independent from, but obviously in a sense connected with, cooperation in the Balkans.

discovered it was barely an association of correlation, much less causation.[294] The lessons Grey had learned were the wrong lessons.

If Grey had undertaken a comparison of similarities and differences, which it should be recalled is the most basic step in using analogical reasoning reflectively instead of intuitively, he almost certainly would have been able to assemble a hefty file. Apologists for Grey's policy in 1914 bristle at the suggestion that he could have known more than he actually did. 'It is difficult to see how Britain might have been able to perceive' the differences across crises, Annika Mombauer has written, 'given the secrecy that was in place in Vienna and Berlin.'[295] But it is not the case that the Foreign Office needed additional secret information. This objection seriously underestimates both what the Foreign Office did know and what it could have known had it engaged in more rigorous reflection.

The most glaring similarity, as has already been indicated, is that the dispute of July 1914 would trigger the European War that had been so much talked about since 1908-09. What mattered to the Foreign Office was not the nature of the dispute (Balkan matters were irksome to Grey), but its mere existence, and it was to the latter that

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[294] This point is well made in Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860-1914* (New York: Humanity Books, 1980), 456; cf. Jervis, *Perception and Misperception,* 279 and Keiger, *France and the Origins,* 101; and overlooked in many standard accounts, which simply recapitulate the version of events given in Grey's later memoirs; e.g., Martel, *The Month That Changed the World*, 44; and even Richard Langhorne, *The Collapse of the Concert of Europe: International Politics 1890-1914* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1981), 105–10.

[295] Annika Mombauer, *The Origins of the First World War: Controversies and Consensus* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 198–99; see also Harris, 'Great Britain,' 293–94.

Britain's response was directed.[296] As in the earlier crises, Grey wanted to preserve Europe's peace, yet in such a way that Britain was not estranged from the Entente it so valued (particularly for colonial and imperial reasons).[297]

A second similarity was that the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Sazonov, continued to shape Russia's foreign policies. The unanimous view of the Foreign Office was that Sazonov was fickle, resulting in wild swings in Russian foreign policy.[298] This view of Sazonov was shared both by Russian[299] and French[300] diplomats. Sazonov's 'tergiversations and vacillations'[301] were of immense concern to the Foreign Office because of the first similarity above: with reference to the Balkan inception scenario, where Russia went Britain had to follow. Nicolson and Grey might fall in line regardless of the actual origins of the dispute, but there was always the matter of bringing the Cabinet along as well, which was to cause Grey much anxiety.[302]

By 1914, it looked as if Sazonov's capriciousness might be paralleled with a new general commitment to resoluteness in foreign policy. At the end of January Tsar Nicholas had dismissed Kokovtsov from the Council of Ministers. This left a vacuum in

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[296] In contrast, for example, in July 1914 Francis Bertie decried Russia's 'pretension' to be the 'protectress of all the Slavs' to be 'rubbish' and unworthy of a general war. See G. P. Gooch, *Recent Revelations of European Diplomacy* (London: Longmans, 1927), 184.
[297] Keith Wilson, 'Grey and the Russian Threat to India, 1892-1915,' *International History Review* 38, no. 2 (2016): 275–84.
[298] Buchanan's summary is representative: 'Sazonow is so continually changing his ground that it is difficult to follow the successive phases of pessimism and optimism though which he passes…. it is very despairing having to deal with a man who is never of the same mind for two days in succession.' Buchanan to Nicolson 28 Nov. 1912, FO 800/360, no. 36. Also see, in addition to the other references above, Nicolson to Goschen FO 2 Dec. 1913, FO 800/371, no. 149; and idem 8 Dec., no. 162.
[299] MacMillan, *The War That Ended Peace*, KL 9019.
[300] Albertini, *Origins*, 1: 375; Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 466; 499; Otte, *July Crisis*, 519.
[301] Nicolson Minute on Buchanan to Grey R. 10 April 1913, BD 9.2, no. 820.
[302] On which see, Douglas Newton, *The Darkest Days: The Truth Behind Britain's Rush to War, 1914* (London: Verso Books, 2014).

Council and gave Sazonov a free hand.[303] In the crisis of November-December 1912, it should be recalled, it was principally Kokovtsov's advice that had prevented more escalatory Russian mobilisation moves. The Foreign Office was not privy to the details of this story, but it understood that Kokovtsov was a restraining hand in the formation of Russian policy. In September 1913, O'Beirne had reported that 'So long as he [Kokovtsov] remains President of the Council there will be a strong influence at work here in favour of a pacific policy at any price.'[304] Kokovtsov's dismissal at the end of January 1914, had made Grey 'very much preoccupied at the internal situation in Russia and the vacillating policy of the Russian Govt in foreign affairs.'[305] In March 1914 Nicolson wondered whether 'a more pronounced and active foreign policy' might result.[306] This in fact was precisely what Buchanan had reported to Grey just weeks later: 'there is strong evidence to show that the Emperor and the majority of his present advisers are in favour of giving a new course to Russian foreign policy and of adopting a firmer and more resolute attitude than that which characterised it during the recent Balkan crisis.'[307] The influence of the Russian Minister of Agriculture, Alexander Krivoshein, 'a confirmed Nationalist,' had filled the place of Kokovtsov, and the winds were now in favour of a 'strong foreign policy,[308] as seen in the press war that began in March.[309] In addition to the change in cabinet, numerous cables reported that Russia's

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[303] McDonald, *United Government*, 198, 203.
[304] O'Beirne to Nicolson 18 Sep. 1913, FO 800/370, no. 89.
[305] Bertie Memo 11 Feb. 1914, quoted in Neilson, *Britain and the Last Tsar*, 335.
[306] Nicolson to de Bunsen 2 March 1914, FO 800/373, no. 62.
[307] Buchanan to Grey R. 25 March 1914, BD 11, no. 528.
[308] Ibid.
[309] Neilson, *Britain and the Last Tsar*, n. 131.

growing military strength was increasing her resolve.[310] Russia had her 'finances in splendid order and reorganized her army'; her goal was 'to reassert and re-establish her predominant position in the Balkans.'[311]

Even as Russian strength and resolve were seen as increasing, Austria was seen as increasingly defined by negative trends; here was a second major difference. Austria's patience was running out, its position in the Balkans was worsening, its value as an ally to Germany was declining, and the Ambassadors' Conference had created desperation in Vienna.[312] The very survival of Austria had become a matter of speculation.[313] Serbia's successes in the Second Balkan War, meanwhile, had made the anti-Austrian Serbia, rather than the more neutral Bulgaria, the focus of Russia's intrigues.[314] And the Concert of Europe—the body assigned with the task of ensuring a peaceful outcome to the Balkan instability—was widely seen to be fragile, perhaps even dead.[315]

These two basic similarities (the repeat of the Balkan inception scenario and the fickleness of Sazonov's diplomacy) and these two basic differences (swelling Russian

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[310] Buchanan to Nicolson 14 March 1914, FO 800/374, nos. 42-43; Buchanan to Nicolson 18 March 1914, FO 800/373, no. 21; Nicolson to Bax-Ironside 25 May 1914, FO 800/374, no. 15; Nicolson to Hardinge 11 June 1914, FO 800/374, no 209.
[311] Nicolson to Cartwright 8 July 1912, quoted in Zara S. Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 134; also see Keith Neilson, '"My Beloved Russians": Sir Arthur Nicolson and Russia, 1906-1916,' *The International History Review* 9, no. 4 (1987): 546–47; Christopher Clark, '1914 in Transnational Perspective,' in *German History in Global and Transnational Perspective*, ed. David Lederer (New York: Palgrave, 2017), 59–60.
[312] E.g., Cartwright to Nicolson 31 Jan. 1913, BD 9.2, no. 582; Nicolson to Bunsen 30 March 1914, FO 800/373, no. 80.
[313] Nicolson to Hardinge 11 June 1914, FO 800/374, no 209.
[314] Bax-Ironside to Nicolson 17 June 1914, FO 800/374, no. 17; Bertie Memo 23 July 1913 quoted in Otte, *The Foreign Office Mind*, 374.
[315] Nicolson to Goschen 10 March 1914, FO 800/373, no. 104; Buchanan to Grey D. 3 April, R. 7 April, BD 11, p. 95; Grey to F. Elliot 27 Sep. 1913, BD 10.1, no. 150; Grey to Bertie 13 March 1914, BD 10.1, no. 260 fn. 2; Buchanan to Grey 22 April 1914, BD 10.1, no. 266; Marling to Grey R. 1 Sep. 1913, BD 10.1, no. 567.

resolve and increasing Austrian weakness and desperation) were not inscrutable mysteries hid away in obscure dispatches; they were often acknowledged elements of the political environment, which the most basic survey of similarities and differences between 1912-13 and 1914 would have highlighted. Other smaller points were also pertinent. The previous crises had been about *localisation* (keeping Austria out of already existing wars) and settlement[316] while the proposed Conference of 1914 was about *prevention* (keeping Austria from starting a war).[317] The previous Balkan disputes had been over relatively insignificant matters[318] that had a positive sum aspect (divvying up Ottoman Europe)[319]; 1914, in contrast, was zero sum: Serbia would either be humiliated by Austria or saved by Russia. Finally, Grey was later to claim that the Conference in July 1914 could have gotten to work in just a day[320]; presumably this belief influenced his decision to not make a mediation/conference proposal until it looked like the crisis was climaxing. But in fact, it had taken *three weeks* of negotiation before the Powers had assented to a Conference in 1912. While it is true the precedent of an Ambassadors' Conference had now been set, Austrian and German reticence to repeat the earlier 'odious' experience[321] surely would lead to extended pre-conference negotiations.

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[316] Grey to Bertie 16 Oct. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 38.
[317] Hence the proposal was contingent on the suspension of 'active military operations.' Only once the Conference solution had failed would Grey pivot back to localisation, as discussed below, but by then it was too late.
[318] Grey to Goschen 27 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 293; Grey to Goschen 29 Nov. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 310.
[319] Grey to Goschen 4 Dec. 1912, BD 9.2, no. 327.
[320] Grey, *Twenty-Five Years*, 1: 314. In Aug.-Sep. 1915, Grey said one week. See Grey, *Edward Grey's Reply*, 7–9.
[321] Prime Minister Stürgkh**,** Cabinet Council for Mutual Affairs 31 July 1914 in *Austrian Red Book: Official Files Pertaining to Pre-War History*, vol. 3 (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1920), vol. III, no. 79; Fay, *The Origins of the World War*, vol. II: 381. Cf. Bertie to Grey 27 July 1914, BD 11, no. 192.

From this analysis, new 'lessons' could have been developed. The first might have regarded the revival of the Concert of Europe, and the Ambassadors' Conference nested within it. Only a bold, committed, and reassuring British proposal—that proposed something like the collective investigation of Serbia and promised the satisfaction of Austria[322]—would have a chance of convincing Austria the game was not rigged against it. Such a proposal would have had to be made early, before Austria and Russia jointly framed the struggle as a trial of strength. A proposal aimed at merely repeating the experiences of 1912-13, such as Grey envisioned, was simply—and for good reason—unpalatable to Austria-Hungary.

The second, and equally important, 'lesson' might have involved a frank recognition that Austria, in the previous crises, had never backed down from salient points on which it had staked its prestige (the Albanian port, Scutari, and Albania's borders); a state fearing for its existence could likely not do otherwise. What had prevented each of these points from becoming triggers for war, in contrast, was—from the Foreign Office's perspective—Sazonov's wobbling or (in the last crisis) more general Russian indifference. Preserving the peace meant helping Sazonov wobble in the right direction. Germany and Austria could be seen as constants: Russia was the variable.[323]

A third lesson might have focused on how localisation was possible—and preferable—to a European catastrophe. In 1912, initial Concert action to restrain the Balkan Allies had failed, but Russia had succeeded in localising the fight between the

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[322] Schroeder, 'Embedded Counterfactuals,' 189; Egbert Jahn, 'Sarajevo 1914. A Century of Debate About the Guilt for the First World War,' in *World Political Challenges*, vol. 3 (Berlin: Springer, 2015), 111–14.

[323] A point reinforced in the Liman von Sanders episode. See Mulligan, 'We Can't Be More Russian,' 270 ff.

Balkan states and the Ottoman Empire. In 1913, localisation had again succeeded when Austria had unilaterally enforced Concert decisions against Montenegro and Serbia. Such localisation, however, could only succeed so long as Great Powers refrained from mobilising against *one another*. The logic here *was* in fact well understood[324]: 'if Russia mobilised, Germany would not be content with mere mobilisation, or give Russia time to carry out hers, but would probably declare war at once,' Buchanan told Sazonov on 25 July.[325]

That these 'lessons' were ignored while Grey placed his faith instead in his idealised association of a Conference and European peace resulted from his 'failure to acknowledge the differences between this crisis and earlier ones,' as Samuel Williamson, Jr. has observed.[326] In consequence, during the initial phase of the crisis, when time was abundant and options open, Grey did almost nothing. Other than urging restraint in diplomatic conversations and suggesting Austro-Russian talks (already too late, as Poincaré was in St. Petersburg to veto them[327]), no substantial action can be credited to the Foreign Office, which hardly even thought of Russia 'outside of the negotiations about Persia.'[328] Despite believing the situation to be dangerous,[329] Grey had not even

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[324] *Pace* Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 222.
[325] Buchanan to Grey 25 July 1914, BD 11, no. 125.
[326] Samuel R. Williamson, Jr., 'The Origins of World War I,' *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, no. 4, The Origin and Prevention of Major Wars (Spring 1988): 814.
[327] Michael G. Ekstein and Zara Steiner, 'The Sarajevo Crisis,' in *British Foreign Policy Under Sir Edward Grey*, ed. F.H. Hinsley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 400.
[328] Neilson, *Britain and the Last Tsar*, 339.
[329] Ekstein, 'Some Notes'; Otte, *July Crisis*.

bothered to notify the Cabinet until 24 July.[330] This was likely a result of Grey's overconfidence,[331] generated by his intuitive analogical reasoning. As the Marquess of Crewe, who in 1914 was Leader of the House of Lords, commented in retrospect: 'probably the whole government, including Grey, were a little over-flattered by the success of the Balkan Conference the year before.'[332] This overconfidence is the only judicious explanation for Grey's otherwise mysterious choice to leave the Foreign Office for a weekend in the country (but not fishing[333]) on 25-26 July.[334] Grey's overconfidence, and resulting failure to act decisively in the first phase of the July Crisis, Schroeder has called 'the most important development in pre-war diplomacy and in the July Crisis.'[335]

Hindsight is 20/20, the sceptical reader might reply: the criticisms of Williamson and Schroeder are only so much after-action excoriation. Not quite. On the last day of July 1914—indeed, the last day of European peace—Grey (his favoured conference solution having undeniably been taken off the table by 29 July[336]) actually put forward a somewhat bold proposal. In a message to the British Ambassador in Berlin, who was to present it to the German Chancellor or Secretary of State, Grey wrote:

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[330] George H. Cassar, *Asquith as War Leader* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1994), 11–12. TNA, CAB 41/35/20. Also see Holger H. Herwig, *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary 1914-1918*, Second Edition (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 27. The choice to leave the cabinet—which was entirely focused on the Irish Home Rule debate—ignorant of European developments was likely a way to retain a free hand in the management of the crisis. On the role of the Home Rule crisis, see Wiel, '1914.'
[331] Williamson, Jr., 'The Origins of World War I,' 814.
[332] Quoted in Ekstein and Steiner, 'The Sarajevo Crisis,' 402.
[333] Michael Waterhouse, *Edwardian Requiem: A Life of Sir Edward Grey* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2013), 335.
[334] Robbins, *Sir Edward Grey*, 290.
[335] Schroeder, 'Embedded Counterfactuals,' 189.
[336] Grey, *Twenty-Five Years*, 1: 315–17.

> The stumbling block hitherto has been Austrian mistrust of Servian assurances, and Russian mistrust of Austrian intentions with regard to the independence and integrity of Servia. It has occurred to me that in the event of this mistrust preventing a solution being found by Vienna and St. Petersburg . . . whether it would be possible for the four disinterested Powers to offer to Austria that they would undertake to see that she obtained full satisfaction of her demands on Servia, provided that they did not impair Servian sovereignty and the integrity of Servian territory…. All Powers would of course suspend further military operations or preparations.

Grey added that Britain would wash its hands of any side that rejected a moderate proposal.[337] Here was a proposal that had potential. And there was no reason, moreover, why this approach could not operate in parallel with some version of Halt in Belgrade, a solution proposed independently by *both* the Kaiser (in the early morning of 28 July, after reading the Serbian reply to Austria's ultimatum[338]) *and* Grey (to the German ambassador on the afternoon of 29 July,[339] who was himself ignorant of his own government's proposal[340]) in which Austria would occupy Belgrade until Serbia satisfied Austria's demands.[341] Importantly, Grey seems to have finally recognised that military preparations (and not merely operations) had to be suspended to prevent the crisis's escalation; localisation, in other words, held priority over prevention. In matters of honour, it is the

[337] Grey to Goschen 31 July 1914, BD 11, no. 340.
[338] Otte, *July Crisis*, 343-348.
[339] Grey to Goschen 29 July 1914, BD 11, no. 285.
[340] Otte, *July Crisis*, 386.
[341] Albertini, *Origins*, 2: 232-236.

duty of seconds to find an honourable solution that averts the final duel.[342] This has always been a difficult, but not impossible, task,[343] and here at the end of July the two seconds that mattered (France had already chosen the path of an assistant rather than mediator; Italy was missing in action) appear—for a moment—to have converged on a compromise equilibrium.

It was not to be; it was simply too late. Austria's prestige was engaged in a military solution, Russia had mobilised, and Germany was about to respond in kind. Russian mobilisation had alienated 'all hope of a peaceful solution.'[344] Furthermore, Grey's fetish for 'Servian sovereignty,' which he emphasised throughout the whole crisis, effectively took with one hand what he offered with the other.[345] Even so, Grey's final proposal practically admitted that if Austria-Hungary was not to be granted 'the right to defend its close-range interests in the manner of a European power,'[346] then the Concert would have to do it for her. And for a Concert solution to be acceptable to Austria, she would first have to be convinced that the other Powers would not gang up against her. Given even Italy's resistance to Austrian action,[347] this was something only Britain was positioned to accomplish. That this reality only occurred to Grey on the last day of July attests to the 'decline of the concert of Europe.'[348] Yet the irony is that Grey's concentration on what he believed to *be* the Concert, his Conference of Ambassadors,

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[342] Frevert, 'Honor, Gender, and Power,' 250.
[343] Barry O'Neill, 'Mediating National Honour: Lessons from the Era of Dueling,' *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* 159, no. 1 (March 2003): 229–47.
[344] Goschen to Grey 31 July 1914, BD 11, no. 349.
[345] Private communication with Paul W. Schroeder 31 Aug. 2016; cf. Otte, *July Crisis*, 510.
[346] Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 356. See also 427-8, 449-50, 480-1, 558.
[347] Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 255; Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 429.
[348] Crampton, 'The Decline of the Concert'; R. J. Crampton, *The Hollow Détente: Anglo-German Relations in the Balkans, 1911-1914* (London: George Prior, 1981).

had heretofore blinded him to even a gesture in the direction of a realistic solution until Russian mobilisation—eased by his own Conference proposal—had already determined the course of events, forestalling the 'few days' delay' that the now recalled Ambassador to Austria, Maurice de Bunsen, reflecting on 1 September 1914, believed 'in all probability' might have 'saved Europe from one of the greatest calamities in history.'[349]

Section 7: Did It Matter?

Grey had learned a general and inaccurate 'lesson' from the previous Balkan crises, and this influenced both what he did not do (make an early proposal to secure satisfaction for Austria) and what he did (tacitly facilitate Russian mobilisation) during the July Crisis. Is there any reason to think this actually affected the outcome of the July Crisis?

The answer depends on one's overall view of the July Crisis. As Marc Trachtenberg observes, interpretations can be placed on a spectrum, ranging from Germany intentionally seeking war or war being the result of fundamentally irresolvable political differences between the alliance groupings to war as a result of 'non-volitional' crisis-dynamic factors ('miscalculation, misperception, and misunderstanding') or as a consequence of war plans and mobilisation pressures.[350] Those who fall in the first two camps see British diplomacy as superfluous, for war was coming anyway; for those in the second two, war was the result of diplomatic failures, military culture, and time pressures, and so—notionally—was avoidable. One way to summarise these positions is

[349] De Bunsen to Grey 1 Sep. 1914, BD 11. No. 676.
[350] Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy*, 56.

with the distinction between 'real incompatibility' and 'illusory incompatibility.'[351] In the first, different fundamental images of the future are truly incompatible; in the second, compatibility is possible but prevented by misperception and the dynamics of conflict.

The different possibilities on the spectrum of interpretation have been fiercely debated ever since the midst of the July Crisis itself, and it is not this article's purpose to resolve or even survey this debate. It is enough to state that a long line of scholars—from Luigi Albertini to Christopher Clark—have argued that the war that followed the assassination of Franz Ferdinand fell into the second part of Trachtenberg's spectrum and was—at least notionally—avoidable.[352] As Thomas Otte has recently concluded: the causes of the First World War 'are to be found in the near-collective failure of statecraft by the rulers of Europe. . . . the Powers were not destined to descend into a general war.'[353] This 'agency-centric' view is echoed in many of the centennial histories of the war.[354]

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[351] K. E. Boulding, 'National Images and International Systems,' *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 3, no. 2 (June 1959): 130.

[352] Albertini, *Origins*; Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*. For an example of a historian pulled both ways on this question, Bernadotte E. Schmitt, *The Coming of the War: 1914*, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), 480–82. Representative views that stress Germany's desire to dominate Europe—and therefore real incompatibility—include Fritz Fischer, *Germany's Aims in the First World War* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1968); Fritz Fischer, *War of Illusions: German Policies from 1911 to 1914* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975); Röhl, 'The Curious Case'; Keir A. Lieber, 'The New History of World War I and What It Means for International Relations Theory,' *International Security* 32, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 155–91; Dale C. Copeland, 'International Relations Theory and the Three Great Puzzles of the First World War,' in *The Outbreak of the First World War: Structure, Politics, and Decision-Making*, ed. Jack S. Levy and John A. Vasquez (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 167–98; Röhl, 'Goodbye to All That.'

[353] Otte, *July Crisis*, 507.

[354] Martel, *The Month That Changed the World*; MacMillan, *The War That Ended Peace*; McMeekin, *July 1914*; Hew Strachan, 'Review Article: The Origins of the First World War,' *International Affairs* 90, no. 2 (2014): 429–39; Mulligan, 'The Trial Continues'; Richard Ned Lebow, *Archduke Franz Ferdinand Lives!: A World without World War I*

Assuming the soundness of the second perspective, this analysis suggests two ways the Powers' illusion of incompatibility could have been overcome.

First, to avoid a general war it may have been sufficient merely to establish the facts of the assassination. This is one of the basic functions of a second in a duel,[355] and such an initiative would have allowed Grey to assert British leadership without abandoning Russia. One compelling reason Sazonov insisted that Austria's response was disproportionate to the offense—thereby justifying his policy of 'firmness'—was simply that Austria had not proven the connection between the terrorists and the Serbian state. The Austrian investigators had not found the link between the Black Hand and Colonel Apis, nor had they even communicated the dossier of evidence they did have to St. Petersburg.[356] The fact that the truth was never objectively established led Austrian and German decision-makers to 'frame' the issue as an attack on the monarchical principle and the viability of the Austrian state. Meanwhile Russian decision-makers—informed misleadingly from Belgrade by Nicholas Hartwig and, after his death, his chargé d'affaires[357]—framed the crisis as an Austrian ploy to expand in the Balkans against innocent Serbia.[358] 'Firmness' was the default response to such a challenge to Russian prestige.[359] The result of such 'firmness' was ultimately war. But as Dominic Lieven has

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(New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). Naturally, a scholar can hold that individual decisions mattered, but that Grey's were still relatively inconsequential (as does T. G. Otte).

[355] O'Neill, 'Mediating National Honour,' 15.

[356] Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements*, 258.

[357] Jelavich, 248–55; Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 407–9.

[358] Martel, *The Month That Changed the World*, 172–74, 192–94.

[359] See the comments of Alexander Krivoshein on 24 July in Lieven, *Russia and the Origins*, 142–44; Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 412, 486; Reinhard Wolf, 'Status Fixations, the Need for "Firmness," and Decisions for War,' *International Relations* 28, no. 2 (2014): 256–62.

observed, 'Had the truth been known about the conspiracy it is possible that Sazonov would have from the outset of the crisis been more willing to compromise with Vienna.'[360]

Second, assuming this first solution failed for whatever reason—e.g., Austrian resistance as a result of its past experience and newly-found resolve[361] or a failure to discover the role of Apis—once Austria issued its ultimatum on 23 July, the crisis would have entered its acute phase. Here, based on the 'lessons' of the earlier crises, the key to preventing a general war was to get Sazonov to wobble against Russian intervention; practically this meant pressuring him with the goal of averting mobilisation moves, which in the actual event would slam the door on any last-minute solutions.[362] The Foreign Office was not sure what determined Russia's policies, but the impression it had was that Russia's foreign policy was often determined more by the emotional states of Russia's leaders—witness the world war that nearly occurred over the demand for a Serbian port described in Section Three above—than an ironclad definition of state interests or immediate military objectives. After the war, Grey admitted as much in retrospect: 'It may fairly be thought, in the light of after-knowledge, that more allowance should have been made for the inherent instability in Russian Government; for the possibility that, in a moment of great crisis and excitement, the Tsar might be rushed into some imprudent

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[360] Lieven, *Russia and the Origins*, 140.
[361] Samuel R. Williamson Jr., 'Aggressive and Defensive Aims of Political Elites? Austro-Hungarian Policy in 1914,' in *An Improbable War?*, 61–74; Samuel R. Williamson Jr., 'Austria-Hungary and the Coming of the First World War,' in *History and Neorealism*, ed. Ernest R. May, Richard Rosecrance, and Zara Steiner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 103–28; Private communication with Alan Sked 31 May 2017.
[362] Otte, *July Crisis*, 360.

act.'[363] Much still remains obscure about Russia's road to mobilisation, but recent examinations basically reinforce Grey's assessment. Sazonov's decisions were 'at time curious and at other times convoluted' and witnesses described him as 'shaken.'[364] London's perceived support during the crisis 'appears to have been a real factor in his calculations,' one analysis has concluded.[365] As for the Tsar, he only finally authorised general mobilisation after Sazonov spent 'almost an entire hour' attempting to demonstrate 'that war had become inevitable.'[366] A personal plea from George V to Nicholas II to delay any mobilisation moves could have tipped the Tsar's resolve against the counsel offered by his hawkish advisors—indeed, such a message from the Kaiser led the Tsar to rescind the order for general mobilisation on the 29th.[367] A wobbling Russian policy that left the door to a solution open might have created the conditions in which the last-minute convergence between the Kaiser's Halt in Belgrade and Grey's proposal for Austria's satisfaction was recognised.[368] Whether the Powers could have at this late stage capitalised on the convergence of the seconds remains a matter of judgement, but the assessment of Albertini remains compelling: 'had Russia waited longer before mobilizing, probably if not certainly, some agreement could have been found on a formula in the nature of the *Halt in Belgrade*.'[369]

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[363] Grey, *Twenty-Five Years*, 1: 297.
[364] Menning, 'Russian Military Intelligence,' 251.
[365] McDonald, *United Government*, 207; cf. 195.
[366] Dominic Lieven, *Nicholas II: Emperor of All the Russias* (London: John Murray, 1993), 196–202 quote at 202.
[367] Otte, *July Crisis*, 397, see also 402.
[368] As it was, the Kaiser's plan was poorly communicated by Jagow and Bethmann, undercut by the German ambassador to Vienna, and ignored by Berchtold. See Otte, *July Crisis*, 352–54, 372, 384–85, 397, 406, 416–17.
[369] Albertini, *Origins*, 2: 578.

Conclusion

Looking back, Grey believed that the security dilemma and corresponding arms race had been the 'real and final' cause of the Great War.[370] Scholars have amassed much evidence for this explanation,[371] and this article's examination of the Balkan crisis of 1912-1913 supports the broader judgment that by 1914 the Concert of Europe had grown anaemic and Europe's leaders, riven by rivalry, no longer seemed capable of focusing their diplomacy—above all—on Great Power peace.[372] Russia, in particular, had defined its increasingly dominant position in the Balkans vis-à-vis Austria and Turkey from 1912-1913 as the new status quo,[373] placing any revision of this arrangement in the category of loss,[374] something it was unwilling to tolerate given its determination to 'speak' the language of firmness rather than restraint.[375] What was for Russia, however, the ordinary 'stealing of horses,' was for Austria-Hungary a challenge to its existence.[376]

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[370] Grey, *Twenty-Five Years*, 1: 90.
[371] David Stevenson, 'Land Armaments in Europe, 1866–1914,' in *Arms Races in International Politics: From the Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Thomas Mahnken, Joseph Maiolo, and David Stevenson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 41–60; Niall Ferguson, 'Public Finance and National Security: The Domestic Origins of the First World War Revisited,' *Past & Present*, no. 142 (1994): 141–68.
[372] William Thompson, 'A Streetcar Named Sarajevo: Catalysts, Multiple Causation Chains, and Rivalry Structures,' *International Studies Quarterly* 47, no. 3 (September 2003): 453–74; Stevenson, 'Militarization.' This assessment does not necessarily conflict with Richard Ned Lebow's argument that: 'There was a narrow window in which war was possible, and it required a very special kind of catalyst' ('What Can International Relations Theory Learn from the Origins of World War I?,' *International Relations* 28, no. 4 (2014): 395).
[373] Jack S. Levy and William Mulligan, 'Shifting Power, Preventive Logic, and the Response of the Target: Germany, Russia, and the First World War,' *Journal of Strategic Studies* 40, no. 5 (2017): 731–69.
[374] On which in general see, Jack S. Levy, 'Prospect Theory, Rational Choice, and International Relations,' *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (March 1997): 87–112.
[375] McDonald, *United Government*, 217; Geyer, *Russian Imperialism*, 251–54.
[376] Schroeder, 'Stealing Horses'; Williamson, 'Austria-Hungary and the Coming of the First World War.'

Three times from 1912-1913, Austria risked her survival over points of prestige. Each time, Russia, operating still in the domain of gains and not yet ready for a general war, demurred. Throughout this period Sir Edward Grey's Ambassadors' Conference enabled to the Powers to tie up some loose ends, but it was not in itself responsible for maintaining Europe's general peace.[377]

When a new crisis arose following the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, Grey reasoned analogically in an intuitive and self-flattering[378] manner that allowed him to ignore the determinative role of Russian decision making: over the previous two years, his Conference had kept the peace in Europe; he would use it to maintain Europe's peace in this new crisis. As the crisis developed, this confident conviction justified relative inaction at the Foreign Office and then, as the crisis climaxed, the tacit encouragement of Russian mobilisation as a way to secure assent for a meeting and to better position the Entente Powers were a war to break out. As July was giving way to August, Grey realised the inadequacy of his Conference solution—which focused on prevention—and proposed a more direct promise of satisfaction to Austria, which assumed localisation. But Russian war preparations, and then mobilisation, had made it too late. Whatever room there was for a compromise equilibrium—and there may not have been any—was now gone.

The finding of this article, that Grey's reliance on analogical thinking prevented him from responding optimally to the July Crisis,[379] lends evidence to Schroeder's

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[377] A point demonstrated half a century ago in Miller, *The Concert of Europe*, but generally ignored since.

[378] Called, technically, the ego-centric attribution bias, and described in another context as 'something of a law of political psychology.' Christopher J. Fettweis, 'Unipolarity, Hegemony, and the New Peace,' *Security Studies* 26, no. 3 (2017): 448.

[379] An alternative explanation of the same evidence, consistent with Christopher Clark's interpretation of Grey in the July Crisis (*The Sleepwalkers*, 410–11, 495–98) is that Grey

overall argument that the First World War was objectively preventable, 'strategies and tactics were still available to the great powers that might have averted a collision by changing crucial prevailing mindsets,' but subjectively inevitable, 'by reason of wrong beliefs, hubris, and folly too broadly and deeply anchored in the reigning political culture to be recognized.'[380] Yet it also supports an explanation more immediate than Schroeder's appeal to political culture. Until the end of the crisis, Grey's reasoning reflected less his cultural milieu than his *confidence* in what he believed to be a sure solution derived from his past 'successes.' It was *not* that he did not think about acting, which is the error Schroeder emphasises[381]; it was that his plan of action was flawed, because it was based on a faulty understanding of the past and a simplistic application to the present. Grey's supposed 'successes,' in the end, ensured the Concert of Europe's failure.

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chose to believe, or represent himself as believing, the generalised Conference story because he was simply unwilling to risk the existence of the Entente by taking any action that Russia would look unfavorably upon; this interpretation, indeed, would seemingly fit the pattern of the previous Balkan crises. The Conference, it could be argued, functioned as a suitable justification to the Cabinet for British policy and as a psychic crutch to Grey, both as the crisis developed and thereafter. The most compelling evidence against this view is that Grey, as the prospect of a general war loomed, expressed his willingness to abandon the Entente were Germany and Austria to put forward 'any reasonable proposal' not reciprocated by Russia and France. Grey to Goschen 31 July 1914, BD 9.2, no. 340.

[380] Schroeder, 'Embedded Counterfactuals,' 184.

[381] Schroeder, 189–90.

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