


## Cornwall, Mark, ed. *Sarajevo 1914: Sparking the First World War* London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020. Pp. 320.

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Despite its deceptively catch-all and inconspicuous title, *Sarajevo 1914: Sparking the First World War* offers the reader an original, perceptive, and stimulating assessment of the much-discussed but too often poorly understood context—both local and international—that preceded (and followed) the events of 28 June 1914. Mark Cornwall, by way of his introduction (chapter 1), opens the book with a clear synthesis of the Southern Slav Question and its proposed solutions. He correctly points out that, in the decade preceding 1914, Vienna tried both reform and repression in attempting to deal with the issue, while nationalities such as the Croats and Slovenes championed internal solutions as late as 1917–18. Throughout its fourteen essays, the book contains two threads: “the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, its causes and its repercussions,” and “the Southern Slav context in all its complexity.”

Part I (“Tinder and Spark”) begins with Alma Hannig’s fine characterization of the complex and polarizing Franz Ferdinand and a critical dissection of his activities as successor to the throne (chapter 2). Although he built up a wide network of “advisers and disciples” in his military chancellery in the Belvedere Palace, he failed to develop a coherent strategy for his future role. Abroad, he shunned potential allies, while refusing to build bridges with rival powers; in domestic matters, he failed to engage constructively with all the nationalities, proved unable to settle on one plan for reforming the empire, and exerted no party-political influence. Only militarily did he make strides. All in all, his public image, then and now, remains ambiguous and divisive.

In the following chapter (3), Andrej Rahten concentrates on the heir’s response to the South Slav question. It quickly becomes apparent that the much-trumpeted Trialism associated with him (the addition of a South Slav entity to Austria and Hungary) was merely a way to break Hungarian power and create a bulwark against Serbian expansionism. If one accepts that Franz Ferdinand indeed planned for a third, Yugoslav, entity (and this is a matter for dispute), one must concede, as Rahten does candidly, that he was no Slavophile and no federalist but rather a pro-German centralizer whose aim was “the establishment of Greater Austria and consolidation of the power of the imperial throne and the central government.”

Iskra Iveljić (chapter 4) helps compound the complexity of the picture by exposing the considerable differences in outlook, strategy, and loyalty of the Croatian aristocracy before 1914. This piece will no doubt add new information and considerations to the debate, as the topic is not well known. From the numerous currents we discover, it is clear that there was no unity whatsoever among the aristocracy. Although, as Iveljić puts it, they ultimately had something in common: “In the long run, all Croatian aristocrats would fare badly.”

Tamara Scheer (chapter 5) delves into another thorny issue present in the South Slav lands, namely that of terminology in designating the nations and languages present in the region. Scheer’s piece skillfully exposes the inconsistencies, lack of logic, contradictory linguistic policies of uncoordinated institutions, as well as the official and unofficial uses that hindered the answer to the one apparently simple question: How to call the people and language of Bosnia-Herzegovina? Only during the urgency of the Great War did a solution emerge that covered all three nations of the region: “Croatian” for Catholic soldiers, “Serbian” for their Orthodox brethren, and “Serbo-Croatian” for Muslims (as had been the wish of Muslim politicians in the immediate prewar years).

For his part, Robin Okey (chapter 6) addresses the notorious Mlada Bosna (Young Bosnia) in the context of education and culture in Bosnia-Herzegovina. He does so through the prism of a “colonial aspect to the Austrian occupation” and of the Habsburgs’ “educational mission.” It was never a success,

and the 1908 annexation further inflamed Serbs and Bosnian Serbs. Furthermore, the appeal of an independent Serb state proved a radicalizing factor for many of the malcontents (including Gavrilo Princip). This was the background for the emergence of the loose grouping of immature, romantic, exalted, politically minded, ambitious nationalists known as *Mlada Bosna*. Okey's expert dissection of these young men's journeys, influences, and motivations—faced with the inflexibly imperialistic and binary mindset of “local” officialdom—provides an excellent understanding of the atmosphere in Bosnia in June 1914, and of its propitiousness for a major clash.

Part II (“International Blaze”) investigates the international consequences of the Sarajevo events. Šarenac (chapter 7) provides a hugely enlightening examination of the power struggles in prewar Serbia. By avoiding caricatural or partisan depictions of Serbia, he offers an all-too-rare insight into a nuanced reality. Though greater in reach, his article focuses on Serbian military intelligence and its failure to control Apis (Major Dragutin T. Dimitrijević). The dynamic Apis worked his way up gradually until he obtained the necessary influence and networks—among these the members of the infamous and secret “Black Hand”—that truly gave him the means to interfere in all aspects of political and military life. Though Šarenac admits that evidence linking Apis to the Sarajevo conspiracy is circumstantial, he argues convincingly that the plot could not have gone ahead without his knowledge (and indeed his assistance)—although his likely motives were a diplomatic scandal and embarrassment for Serbian Prime Minister Nikola Pašić, not war with Austria. The “duality of power” between civilian and military authorities had by then existed for so long that it was entrenched in Serbian political culture. For Šarenac, therefore, the Sarajevo assassinations were merely “one episode in the domestic power struggle between the Serbian government and the military.”

Lothar Höbelt (chapter 8) expertly does away with tired clichés regarding the attitude and decision making of those in power in Vienna in 1914. He holds Franz Joseph and his foreign minister Leopold von Berchtold firmly responsible for deciding to go to war, and he convincingly dismisses nationalism and domestic political considerations as significant factors. Indeed, he points out that those in the war camp were largely supranational conservative aristocrats on both sides of the Leitha. Further, as Höbelt explains, the Balkan Wars had been financially costly and diplomatically unsatisfactory for Austria-Hungary (though she had not fought). Economic considerations now overrode military ones; effectively, a war was preferable to an expensive, shaky, and fruitless peace. The paranoia of the Habsburg elites toward Serbia, paradoxically intertwined with their “Great Power arrogance,” led them to believe that Belgrade should know its place. After the assassination of the heir apparent, even Berlin's opinion mattered little once Vienna's top brass had decided to fight.

In chapter 9, T. G. Otte explores “the limits of crisis management” regarding the July Crisis. In a fascinating and dense chapter, Otte explains convincingly how the events of July 1914 differed from the earlier diplomatic crises of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He elaborates by describing the reaction to the assassination in the various European chancelleries, carefully examining and sometimes crucially reinterpreting the evidence. He emphasizes that there already existed a strong feeling that change was afoot, and that the prior diplomacy of the Concert of Europe was no longer functional. With powerful individual ambassadors unhelpful in finding peaceful solutions (alongside distracted, unstable, and vacillating country leaders), Europe was led down the path of outright war, although it must be remembered that Austria-Hungary was the only power determined to fight after Sarajevo.

The late F. R. Bridge's contribution to the volume (chapter 10) takes us rather far away from the Balkans and Vienna to look at the reaction of the British elites to the events in Sarajevo. Although an interesting piece—built around the dazzling Austro-Hungarian Ambassador to London, Albert von Mensdorff-Pouilly—it is something of an outlier, not least because of the lack of closeness between the Habsburg and British empires.

Part III (“Regional Blaze”), in contrast, looks at the regional consequences of the Sarajevo murders. Mark Cornwall opens this final third with a detailed and interesting assessment of the political situation in Croatia pre- and post-Sarajevo (chapter 11). By quoting Franz Ferdinand, according to whom Croatia was “the heartland of the Balkan turmoil,” he seeks to unravel the relationships between Croatia and Hungary, Serbia and Austria, as well as the widely differing reactions across the country

from those with very different political alliances. His salient point, however, is that despite the prevailing political turbulence, the Croat-Serb Coalition and its pragmatic alliance with Hungary did in fact hold fast throughout most of the war, while Emperor Karl even approved a parliamentary government for Croatia in 1917.

Borut Klabjan (chapter 12), for his part, delivers an insightful “grassroots” and “bottom-up” perspective through his urban case study of the multilingual, multiethnic, and multi-confessional city of Trieste. As tensions between Italians and Slovenes increased, nationalist activists—as elsewhere in the Dual Monarchy—seized their chance to denounce their “national” opponents as traitors. Nevertheless, in conclusion, Klabjan (rightly) refuses to attribute the fall of Austria-Hungary simply to the victory of the national idea. Slovenes and Italians displayed plenty of loyalty but were nevertheless targeted by the state due to entrenched prejudices, and it was these actions that caused “irreparable damage to civic cohesion.”

In chapter 13, Heiner Grunert reminds the reader of the appalling treatment meted out to the Serb citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina (“the inner enemy,” “the most problematic ethnic group”) by Vienna after the events of Sarajevo. The author traces back the breakdown in relations between authorities and Bosnian Serbs to 1913 and goes on to depict a veritable reign of terror after June 1914: suspension of civil rights, internment in camps, systematic persecution along ethno-confessional lines, razing of villages, hostage-taking, and executions. By “not distinguishing between foreign and domestic enemies,” officials delegitimized Habsburg power while simultaneously legitimizing a future Yugoslavia.


Finally, and somewhat off the beaten track, Dagmar Hájková investigates the memory of Franz Ferdinand and of Sarajevo in interwar Czechoslovakia (chapter 14). She establishes beyond doubt that Czechoslovak authorities engaged in the systematic erasing of all things Habsburg (“de-Austrianization”). Overall, however, Franz Ferdinand was remembered for his assassination rather than for anything he did in his lifetime. This illuminating article makes one hope that an entire volume will eventually be dedicated to the perception of the Habsburg monarchy and dynasty in the interwar years in Austria-Hungary’s successor states.

By eschewing the search for culprits and avoiding the Manichean worldviews that have tended to dominate recent historiography on the subject, Cornwall’s volume offers a fresh, serious, thorough, academic—yet engaging—analysis of the context that culminated in the events of Sarajevo. Crucially, the book remains almost exclusively focused on the Balkans instead of the various foreign offices of the main belligerents. The diversity, expertise, and research of the contributors (who hail from seven different countries) ensure that this is done with substance, nuance, and insight. The result is that this work has earned a place on a prominent bookshelf amidst an overwhelming library of writings on the causes of World War I.

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## Falser, Michael. *Habsburgs Going Global: The Austro-Hungarian Concession in Tientsin/Tianjin in China (1901–1917)*

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In 1901, *The Times* of London announced the “colonial debut” of Austria-Hungary following the acquisition of land in mainland China (Georg Lehner, *Die Chinapolitik Österreich-Ungarns*