

isolate Serbia: Austria-Hungary is supposed to pursue the creation of a new Balkan alliance, with Romania, Bulgaria and Greece, which would be in the Central Powers' orbit and politically directed against the interests of Serbia and Russia. Bled does not think such a plan to have been feasible because of the conflicting interests of these countries.

In 1914 the political conflict between Austria-Hungary and Serbia is total; military conflict is possible, but not inevitable. Things changed, Bled believes, with the assassination of Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914. Even though the assassination was undertaken by Young Bosnia's national revolutionaries as an act of resistance to the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, without official Serbia's involvement, the strike at the dynasty was seen in Vienna as the strike at the very heart of the Monarchy and could not go unpunished. Franz Joseph, consistently supporting a policy of peace until June 1914, now decides to declare war on Serbia. With the

opposing blocs of powers joining in, the war takes on global proportions.

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Was Franz Ferdinand the "man who might have saved Austria", as Carlo Sforza believed in 1930? Bled does not go thus far. Moreover, his concluding discussion recognises the difficulties that Franz Ferdinand would have faced had he acceded to the throne. An autocrat disinclined to making compromises, a complex personality, disliked by the Hungarians, the Poles and the Czechs too, he would have met with strong opposition inside the Monarchy. Jean-Paul Bled's biography of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne gives a convincing and nuanced portrayal of the personal and political life of Franz Joseph's ill-fated successor. With its fine balance between an individual life and the political climate in which it unfolded this book is also a worthwhile history of the Habsburg Monarchy in the last decades of its existence.

CHRISTOPHER CLARK, *THE SLEEPWALKERS – HOW EUROPE WENT TO WAR IN 1914*.
LONDON: HARPER, 2012, PP. 697.

Reviewed by Miloš Vojinović*

With the approach of the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War, the literature dealing with the greatest conflict the world had seen ever before grows rapidly. The book reviewed here is written by the Australian historian Christopher Clark, professor of German and modern European history at the University of Cambridge. His earlier books mainly deal with German history, and the two of them that stand out are a history of Prussia: *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia*, and a biography of the last German Emperor: *Kaiser Wilhelm II: A Life in Power*.

Clark's book on the origins of the First World War is based on ample source materials. Apart from the archives in London, Paris, Vienna and Berlin, he also used, with the help of assistants and translators, materials from archives and libraries in Sofia, Belgrade and Moscow. Clark's interpretation of the origins of the Great War is predicated on two assumptions which are implicitly threaded throughout the fifteen sections of the book, and which he struggles to prop up—

* MA student of History, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade

ing a selective approach to facts and easy analogies between past and present. One assumption is that it actually was the Allied powers (Triple Entente) that dictated the pace of international relations, both in the years before the war and during the July Crisis. The other is that the assassination of the Austro-Hungarian heir to the throne is an act unjustly neglected in the literature about the war. Comparing the assassination to the attack on the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001, Clark argues that this event, of great symbolic significance, rendered "old options obsolete" (p. xxvii). In the picture of relations among the great powers as gradually painted by Clark the passivity of German and Austro-Hungarian politics stands out as a dominant feature. Its purpose is to prove that the nature of decisions made in Vienna and Berlin was mostly defensive, a mere response to the actions of other, mostly aggressive, powers. At the same time, the reader is presented with arguments which are supposed to demonstrate that the Franco-Russian Alliance was a destabilising factor in international relations, and that this alliance "marked a turning point in prelude to the Great War" (p. 131). According to Clark, it was this alliance that created the trigger which was activated at the border of Austria-Hungary and Serbia in the summer of 1914. Clark refers to the "Balkan inception scenario", with France and Russia preparing an in-advance interpretation of the crisis for the moment it should erupt in the Balkans. He further argues that the realisation of Serbian and Russian objectives required war (p. 350), and that the Franco-Russian alliance and the beginning of the "Balkan inception scenario" allowed Russia to start a European war in support of its objectives (p. 293). In this way, the "Balkan inception scenario" that ties France and Russia to the destiny of the "intermittently turbulent and violent state [Serbia]" (p. 559), is what lies at the

core of Clark's explanation of the events that led Europe into the First World War.

In Clark's view, German politics was determined by the aggressive politics of the Entente. Presented facts primarily aim to show differences between the German Empire and its rivals. Clark claims that Russian public opinion was chauvinistic and that Russia is the only to blame for the start of the European arms race (p. 87). He also claims that pan-Slavism "was no more legitimate as a platform for political action than Hitler's concept of *Lebensraum*" (p. 279). If Clark uses the *Lebensraum* (living space) concept as an example of illegitimate political platform, why does he not inform his readers that it was not just Hitler's: it was created by the German geographer Friedrich Ratzel precisely in the period covered by Clark's book. The influence of the *Lebensraum* concept was very strong in Wilhelmine Germany. This can be inferred even from Clark's book where, on page 179, he quotes Kaiser Wilhelm's speaking about the growing German population and lack of food for it and about underpopulated eastern parts of France, and suggesting to the U.S. ambassador that France should move its borders to the West. The German Kaiser showed familiarity with the *Lebensraum* concept, but Clark does not conclude that; instead he seeks to convince us that the Kaiser's impulsivity essentially had no effect. It is not our intention to defend the legitimacy of pan-Slavism, nor is it to deny anti-German sentiment in the Russian press. We believe it important, however, to draw attention to Clark's tendentious selectivity. From Clark's book one can learn incomparably less about German society than about French or Russian, and the anti-German sentiment remains unexplained. In 1913, head of the German general staff, Helmuth von Moltke, had forecast a racial conflict between Slavs and Germans in the near

future. Believing that racial differences between them were insurmountable, he claimed that it was the duty of all states that carry the flag of German culture to prepare themselves for it. This information or, for that matter, any other that could add nuance to Clark's black-and-white picture did not find its way into his book; in other words, selectivity in presenting facts is its salient feature.¹ Clark's overall antipathy towards Russia, and sympathy for the Habsburgs, has also been noticed by Maria Todorova.²

If a French politician harboured anti-German sentiments, Clark expectedly portrays him in negative terms. So, Theophile Delcassé is aggressive and lacks wisdom, and Maurice Paléologue is an unstable Germanophile. As for the political views of the French ambassador in Berlin, Jules Cambon, who believed that France was to blame for the deterioration of Franco-German relations in the years preceding the war, Clark obviously agrees and has nothing to add. Aware that the topic of German militarism often features prominently in the historiography of the First World War, he does not fail to ad-

dress it. So, we can read that the militarists in Paris and St. Petersburg were in a better position to influence their governments' decisions than those in Berlin (p. 333). In pre-war Germany, according to Clark, civilian supremacy over the military authorities remained intact (p. 334). If it is true, how should one interpret the fact that in the order of precedence German chancellor Bethmann Hollweg, the highest civilian official with the rank of major, was below all colonels and generals attending official royal receptions?³ It seems appropriate to quote the words of the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister Leopold Berchtold: "Who rules in Berlin, Moltke or Bethmann Hollweg?"⁴ If civilian supremacy remained intact, how come that not a single civilian representative was present at the well-known war council of 8 December 1912.⁵ At the same time, Germany's aggressive diplomatic practice was, according to Clark, a mere response to the aggressive politics of France and Russia (p. 326).

Clark's apologia of German politics continues in his account of Anglo-German relations. He points out that problems in Anglo-German relations were often result of the British neglect of basic German interests (sic!), and claims that the new system of relations channelled and intensified hostility towards Germany (p. 159ff). British foreign secretary Edward Grey is portrayed as a Germanophile and a lonely fanatic. But, since Clark makes a very tendentiously selective use of facts in depicting the role of prominent politicians in pre-war Europe, he fails to tell us that Grey, from the beginning of his

¹ A. Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke and the Origins of the First World War* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 152, 285. This is especially important because it is Clark (*The Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia* [Allen Lane, 2006], 608, who points to an interesting detail from the history of the First World War – the first German victory over Russia was not named after the place where the battle took place, but after Tannenberg, a place some thirty kilometres away: "The name was deliberately chosen in order to represent the battle as Germany's answer to the defeat inflicted by Polish and Lithuanian armies on the knights of the Teutonic Order at the 'first' battle of Tannenberg in 1410."

² M. Todorova, "Outrages and Their Outcomes", *The Time Literary Supplement*, 4 January 2013.

³ H.-U. Wehler, *The German Empire 1871–1918* (Bloomsbury Academic, 1997), 156.

⁴ Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke*, 285–286.

⁵ H. Strachan, *The First World War*, vol. I *To Arms* (Oxford University Press, 2003), 52.

term of office in 1905, was under attack from both the public and Foreign Office staff for his alleged complaisant attitude towards Germany.⁶ At the same time, this presumed complaisance, along with the alleged Liberal neglect of the needs of the British army, was a target of harsh attacks by the Conservative opposition.⁷ It seems obvious why Clark does not present these facts: by portraying Grey as a radical loner, he wants to question the validity of the British decision to enter the war.⁸ Seeking to debunk the justification for this decision, as well as the justification for the anti-German sentiments of French and Russian diplomats, Clark seeks to challenge one of the most widely accepted conclusions of the historiography of the First World War. As Hew Strachan states, the best way to grasp the consequences of German foreign policy is through the fact that it made Great Britain, France and Russia overcome their own differences within a very short period of time. Not many years before the Entente Cordiale of 1904 and the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907, such balance of power had seemed completely unthinkable.⁹ Clark unconvincingly argues that the assertion that Germany brought isolation on itself “is not borne out by a broader analysis of the process” (p. 159). At no point does

Clark approach Great Britain’s decision to enter the war with the question: was the decision to confront the threat of having one hegemonic power ruling the continent revolutionary, or was it in accordance with the well-established traditions of British diplomacy?

The reader is told that the Entente was the black sheep of pre-war Europe; that its strategists did not realise that they were narrowing the range of options to Berlin (p. 353); and that its armament prevented Germany from implementing any policy other than the policy of force (p. 358). Clark claims that Germanophobes tended to speak in general terms, and that they would become very shy when speaking about specific German acts (p. 162). Ironically, it is Clark who can be described as very shy when he speaks about the events that cannot be so comfortably fitted into his explanatory schema. For instance, he does not speak about the Bosnian Crisis (1908) as an event that reflected political tensions in Europe. The crisis that ended with one great power (Germany) presenting another (Russia) with an ultimatum does not seem sufficiently important to Clark, and he mentions it only in order to demonstrate the aggressiveness of Serbian and Russian policies. For Clark, the Austro-Hungarian act of annexation, which in fact was the unilateral breach of an international treaty, was merely a “nominal change” from occupation to annexation (p. 34). Clark’s perspective changes when it comes to another crisis: he shows understanding for the German stance during the Morocco Crisis, because “the German viewpoint was legitimate in legal terms” (p. 159).

As in the case of Germany, Clark likewise sees Austro-Hungary as a passive participant in international relations un- luckily troubled by a problematic neighbour. The Austro-Hungarian ban on all Serbian associations in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1913 is seen as a response to

⁶ Z. S. Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy 1898–1914* (Cambridge University Press, 1970), 94 and 125.

⁷ E. H. H. Green, *The Crisis of Conservatism: The Politics, Economics and Ideology of British Conservative Party 1890–1914* (London 2012), 27.

⁸ Clark follows Niall Ferguson’s ideas presented in *The Pity of War*. Ferguson, on the other hand, says for the *Sleepwalkers*: “It is hard to believe we will ever see a better narrative of what was perhaps the biggest collective blunder in the history of international relations”.

⁹ Strachan, *First World War I*, 20.

Serbian ultra-nationalism (p. 76); and the behaviour of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the summer of 1914 as shaped by the complexity of Serbian politics (p. 96). Parts of the book which deal with Austro-Serbian relations are used as a platform for demonstrating Habsburg moral and political superiority over the Kingdom of Serbia. While mainly restricting his look into the past to the decade preceding the war in the case of practically all countries involved in the July Crisis, in the case of Serbia he goes as far back into the past as the beginning of the nineteenth century in order to prove the allegedly distinctive nature of Serbian history, finding that the idea of Great Serbia “was woven deeply into the culture and identity of the Serbs” (p. 22). Clark takes over, without quoting, Holm Sundhausen’s essentialist assumption of a distinctive “mental map of Serbia”, which, faced with the ethno-political realities in the Balkans, became a perpetual element of instability. We are told that this discrepancy between vision and reality meant that the “realisation of Serbian objectives would be a violent process” (p. 26). Avoiding any comparative effort, Clark sees Serbia’s foreign policy as an element of instability; by contrast, the Austro-Hungarian Balkan policy is seen as a key to the security of the region. To complete the picture “of unstable element”, Clark more than once, both directly and indirectly, alleges a connection between Serbian prime minister Nikola Pašić and the assassination plans (pp. 56, 407 and 467). The fact that such a connection was not proved at any point does not seem to be a limitation to him.

At one point, Clark finds himself in a predicament: how to justify Habsburg rule over the minorities in Austria-Hungary and, at the same time, to condemn the Serbian plans that were facing “complex ethnic realities”. This is where the moralising aspect of his narrative comes to light. In contrast to Serbia, a retrograde

country that treated territories gained in the Balkan Wars “as a colony” (p. 43), a country that had committed many atrocities in these wars, we see the Austro-Hungarian Empire, a country that in the memory of its subjects evoked an image of “white, broad, prosperous streets ... that stretched like rivers of order, embracing the lands with the paper white arm of administration” (p. 71), a country which amazed its visitors by the fairness of its regime, where “there was a tone of mutual respect and mutual toleration among the ethno-religious groups” (p. 76). If it was so, what could possibly prompt Hannah Arendt to say that anti-Semitism as an ideological power in the years before the First World War “reached its most articulate form in Austria”?¹⁰ Yet another author, Carl Schorske, has devoted considerable attention to anti-Semitism in Austria-Hungary.¹¹ What the minority rights could have been like if Alan Sked describes the position of one of them as follows: “Only hope available to Slovaks seeking escape from Magyarisation was emigration”?¹² If we remember the organised, and government-tolerated, attacks on Serbs in Zagreb in 1897 and in 1902, it becomes quite difficult to accept Clark’s views on the Austro-Hungarian regime. Perhaps the best assessment of the position of minorities in Austria-Hungary was given by Archduke Franz Ferdinand. When Hungarian politicians expressed the wish for Bosnia and Herzegovina to be placed under the direct control of Budapest, the Archduke remarked: “Bosnians would fight tooth and nail not

¹⁰ H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), 42.

¹¹ C. E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (Vintage Books, 1981), 116–146.

¹² A. Sked, *The Decline and Fall of Habsburg Empire 1815–1918* (Longman, 1989), 217.

to become Hungarian subjects, and oppressed like the other non-Hungarian nationalities that enjoy all the 'benefits' that Hungarian government has to give."¹³

The reader will find no mention of the fact that Serbia had universal suffrage, and no information on how and with how many MPs non-Magyar communities were represented in the Hungarian Diet. Clark is content to say that there was an unmistakable progress in the minority rights policy. Vienna brought peace and stability to Bosnia and Herzegovina, relying on "cultural and institutional conservatism, not a philosophy of colonial domination" (p. 74). The features of Austro-Hungarian rule in Bosnia and Herzegovina, such as a fivefold increase in taxes, a strong military presence, the maintenance of the Ottoman feudal system, the "divide and rule" policy pitting different ethnic groups against each other,¹⁴ lead Clark to conclude that the Austro-Hungarian government was guided by the principle of "gradualism and continuity" (p. 74). Not all historians would agree with Clark, to mention but the prominent expert on Austria-Hungary Alan Sked: "If all this did not represent imperialism, it is difficult to know what it did represent."¹⁵ Clark claims that "most inhabitants of the Habsburg Empire associated the state with the benefits of orderly government: public education, welfare, sanitation, the rule of law etc." (p. 71). The effect of the thirty years of gradualism, continuity and orderly government in Bosnia and Herzegovina was the illiterate accounting for 87 percent of the population and five times as many police stations

as schools.¹⁶ Clark makes every effort to convince his readership that there was not a single reason why the Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina should be dissatisfied with Austrian rule; apart from Serbian nationalism. To the same end, Clark fails to mention that Austria left the Ottoman feudal system intact, which was one of the main causes of the Serbs' discontent. After the First World War, an Austrian politician wrote about feudalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina: "Plainly, no one has ever stopped to consider the impression bound to be made by this on mind of a population which knows that across the Drina and the Sava rivers there is no subasha to appropriate third of a harvest every year for some aga or beg."¹⁷ Intent on showing, in spite of all the well-known facts, that anti-Austrian sentiment was unjustified, Clark claims that "by 1914, Bosnia-Herzegovina had been developed to a level comparable with the rest of the double monarchy" (sic!) (p. 75).

Clark's narrative is also a geopolitical one. The minorities in the Habsburg Monarchy and their aspiration for their own national states is treated as a disturbing historical fact, because the creation of new entities "might cause more problems than it resolved" (p. 71). Clark more than once abandons the perspective of science, he does not try to elucidate or to interpret; instead, he judges the past from the viewpoint of the present: "from perspective of today's European Union we are inclined to look more sympathetically than we used to on the vanished imperial

¹³ V. Dedijer, *Sarajevo 1914* (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1966), 220.

¹⁴ Sked, *Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire*, 245–246.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 245.

¹⁶ H. Sundhussen, *Historische Statistik Serbiens 1834–1914* (Munich: Oldenburg Verlag, 1989), 541.

¹⁷ J. M. Baernreither, *Fragments of a Political Diary* (Macmillan and Company, 1930), 27. Maria Todorova, "Outrages and Their Outcomes", also points out Clark's disregard of the importance of the agrarian question in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

patchwork of Habsburg Austria-Hungary" (p. xxvi). Moreover, Clark's perspective intertwines with the Austrian imperial perspective. This is most evident when he writes about the aggressiveness of Austrian foreign policy during the Balkan Wars. The reader is led to believe that the change in Austrian politics "looked like a moderate response to the dramatic changes" (p. 282) and that Austria had every right to weaken its neighbour because the Serbian success in the Balkan Wars meant the failure of Austria's Balkan policy (p. 281). Clark does not see irony and contradiction when he states that Austria decided to oppose Serbian rapacious and voracious politics with the idea of "the Balkans for Balkans people" (p. 282). Not for a single moment does Clark make an effort to depict Austro-Serbian relations as a process in which there were two sides, each pursuing its own goals and interests; instead, we have the picture of a prosperous and civilised state which offers good living and strives for peace, and a miscreant of Serbia: the only cause of instability and regional problems, which would soon engulf the entire continent, lay in Serbian nationalism. The Greater Serbian idea prevented Serbs, Clark claims, from living peacefully not only in prosperous Austria but also in the provinces of the Ottoman Empire which were "cosmopolitan" in character (p. 31)!

Gavrilo Princip's shots are not placed in the context of other assassination attempts on Habsburg officials, such as those in Galicia in 1908, in Zagreb in 1912 and in the Romanian-inhabited part of Hungary in 1914;¹⁸ neither does ethnically motivated political violence

in other countries, such as the assassination of the Russian governor in Helsinki in 1904,¹⁹ seem to be worthy of mention. Had Clark put Princip's act in some kind of relation with these events, their common denominator would be the policy towards minorities in the empires, growing nationalisms on the entire continent and the growing feeling that political violence was appropriate strategy – some historians have even called the period between the last quarter of the nineteenth century and 1914 the "golden age" of political assassinations.²⁰ But finding some other cause apart from Serbian nationalism does not fit Clark's goals.

Clark's biased one-sided perspective is most evident in his notion of crisis: crisis does not mean instability, increased risk or possible escalation. In spite of the fact that the Austrian ultimatum was written so as to be rejected, which Clark admits himself (p. 457), and that the Austrian ambassador in Belgrade received instructions to reject Serbia's reply regardless of its content,²¹ Clark claims that Russian politics enabled and permitted escalation of the crisis (pp. 480 and 483). From the author's specious argument it follows that what led to the war was not Austria's decision to attack Serbia, or Germany's decision to stand by Austria, but Russia's decision to stand by Serbia.

greb: SKD Prosvjeta, Gordogan, 2006), 127–211.

¹⁹ T. R. Weeks, "Managing Empire: Tsarists nationalities policy", in *The Cambridge History of Russia*, vol. II *Imperial Russia 1689–1917*, ed. D. Lieven (Cambridge 2006), 40.

²⁰ *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth Century Political Thought*, eds. G. S. Jones & G. Clayes (Cambridge 2011), 247.

²¹ F. Fellner, "Austria-Hungary", in *Decisions for War*, ed. K. Wilson (UCL Press, 1995), 15.

¹⁸ Larry Wolff, *The Idea of Galicia: History and Fantasy in Habsburg Political Culture* (Stanford University Press, 2010), 331–333; V. Čorović, *Odnosi Srbije i Austro-Ugarske u 20. veku* (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1922), 618; J. Horvat, *Pobuna omladine 1911–1914* (Za-

Clark's explanation of Austria's politics in July 1914 is based on the presupposition that the assassination rendered "old options obsolete" (p. xxvii). But a pertinent question arises: was the Austrian politics in July 1914 really new? How new the war option was if Conrad von Hotzendorf, chief of the Austrian general staff, urged attack on Serbia twenty-five times in 1913 alone?²² Hotzendorf noted in 1907 that "only aggressive" politics could bring success. That Hotzendorf was not lonely in his belligerent attitude, as Clark suggests, is evident from the instruction he had received from the Austrian foreign minister Alois Lexa von Aehrenthal: "The goal of [Austrian] Balkan policy is the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and incorporation of parts of Serbia." This same instruction states that the rest of Serbia should become Bulgarian.²³ This instruction had been created in December 1907; obviously, Austria-Hungary's top officials had contemplated destroying Serbia almost eight years before the Sarajevo assassination.

Clark does not quote this part of Hotzendorf's memoirs, but he does resort to them when they appear suitable to corroborate his picture of the peaceful nature of Austrian politics (pp. 105 and 117). Clark has every reason to ignore such passages, because Hotzendorf's testimony can reveal major gaps in his argument. If we accept Clark's claim that decision makers in Vienna were gradually provoked into giving up their aversion to extreme measures (p. 291) by the aggressiveness of Serbian public opinion during the Bosnian Crisis, by organisations such as National Defence or Black Hand, and also by Serbian politics during the Bal-

kan Wars – how come that the Austrian foreign minister had wanted to destroy Serbia in the winter of 1907? What kind of Serbia's action could have provoked Austria-Hungary in 1907, when none of the abovementioned organisations, National Defence, Black Hand or Young Bosnia, had existed? It is quite clear that Vienna had thought of destroying Serbia long before 1914, even before the Bosnian Crisis in 1908, which renders the thesis of Austria's gradual change of politics untenable. Clark does not write about the Pig War which "started" in 1906 either. The Austrian attempt to crush Serbia economically, by closing its borders to Serbia's most important export product, just because Serbia had signed an economic agreement with Bulgaria, a country which did not even share borders with Austria, could not be easily fitted into Clark's picture of Austria-Hungary as a benevolent and peaceful neighbour. This is where it becomes obvious why Clark avoids writing about the Bosnian Crisis. The episode in Austro-Serbian relations where Austria annexes Bosnia and Herzegovina and threatens to attack Serbia, and where Serbia responds with public outburst of anti-Austrian sentiment and creates National Defence for rapid mobilisation in the event of war, which could be summed up as "Austria acts and Serbia responds", not the other way around, does not seem to be appropriate for Clark.

If the assassination was not just a pretext for war, as Clark claims, why does he not quote the joyful comment made by senior officials in Austrian foreign ministry at the news of the assassination: "This is a gift from Mars."²⁴ Clark does not mention correspondence between the Austrian and German chiefs of the general staff, Conrad von Hotzendorf and

²² Strachan, *First World War*, 69.

²³ Feldmarschall Conrad, *Aus meiner Dienstzeit 1906–1918* (Vienna: Rikola Verlag, 1921), 528, 537.

²⁴ N. Stone, *Europe Transformed 1878–1918* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1999), 247.

Helmuth von Moltke, who, at the end of the Balkan Wars, expressed the opinion that a suitable *casus belli* should be found as soon as possible.²⁵ An ultimatum was not a new instrument; Austria used ultimatums during the Bosnian Crisis and the Balkan Wars, not just against Serbia, but also against Greece.²⁶ For Clark, the fact that the Kingdom of Serbia was not willing to submit its foreign policy to Austrian interests means that Austria had justifiably lost confidence in diplomatic procedures (p. 285). Pointing out that one Serbian politician wrote, back in 1844, that there could be no agreement between Serbia and Austria (p. 28), and making a cynical remark that the Austrian ultimatum was perhaps asking for the impossible – to halt the expansionism of ethnic Serbia (p. 467), Clark gives final touches to his picture of Serbia as a perpetual element of instability.

While writing about the last days of the July Crisis, Clark rounds off his panegyric to one warring party and indictment for the other. Like in other parts of *Sleepwalkers*, incomparably more attention is devoted to *hawks* – militarists and aggressive politicians – in France and Russia than in Germany and Austria-Hungary. For Clark, the most important decision in July 1914 is not Vienna's decision to draw up an ultimatum that could not be complied with,²⁷ or Berlin's decision to give

Vienna a *carte blanche*; the key event is Russian mobilisation, which is a provocation to Germany. In Clark's understanding of the concept of crisis, to resist means to cause. It is a fact, and historians are well-aware of it, that from 6 July, when Austria received a blank cheque from Germany, until 23 July, when Austria sent the ultimatum, it was Austria that dictated the tempo of international relations.²⁸ Clark, however, tries to repudiate it by claiming that the system was fast and unpredictable (p. 557). The answer to the question as to how a local, Balkan, conflict could spread to the entire continent, he finds in Russia's actions; Germany and Austria in fact wanted localisation of the conflict, not a European war, but it was made impossible by the Russian decision to defend Serbia. If we choose not to comment Clark's perception of local war as being a good thing in itself, we should not leave uncommented his claims that Austria-Hungary and Germany did everything they could to prevent a European war. American historian Graydon Tunstall, who has devoted a book to Austrian military planning prior to 1914, states that it is obvious from the documents of the Austrian high command that the Austrian military knew that a war against Serbia most likely meant a war against Russia.²⁹ When Franz Joseph was warned by one of his ministers that the ultimatum would bring about war with Russia, the Austrian emperor replied: "Certainly, Russia cannot

²⁵ A. Kramer, *Dynamics of Destruction* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 75–76.

²⁶ F. R. Bridge, "Foreign Policy of the Monarchy", in *The Last Years of Austria-Hungary. A Multi-National Experiment in Early Twentieth Century Europe*, ed. Mark Cornwall (University of Exeter Press, 2006), 29.

²⁷ The wife of the Austrian foreign minister Leopold Berchtold recalled: "...poor Leopold could not sleep on the day he wrote his ultimatum to the Serbs as he was so worried that they might accept it. Several times during the night he got up and altered

or added some clause, to reduce the risk", cit. in Sked, *Decline and Fall of Habsburg Empire*, 248.

²⁸ Strachan, *First World War*, 75.

²⁹ G. A. Tunstall, Jr., "The Habsburg Command Conspiracy: The Austrian Falsification of Historiography on the Outbreak of World War I", *Austrian History Yearbook XXVII* (1996), 181.

possibly accept this note."³⁰ Even when it became clear to Berlin that Russia would not abandon Serbia, Bethmann Hollweg just continued his earlier politics.³¹

Sleepwalkers are not a methodologically coherent book. At the famous German military council held on 8 December 1912, the Kaiser and highest-ranking officers agreed that war was inevitable and that it would be better for Germany if it came sooner than later. As this important episode was impossible to avoid completely, Clark mentions it briefly, denying its importance and claiming that the meeting had no consequences. His approach is different when it comes to the opposing bloc, including Serbia. He does not attach importance to the fact that a ruler of a great power with the most powerful and numerically strongest army had accepted that war should come in the near future, and that the same ruler gave a blank cheque to Austria less than two years after the December meeting. On the other hand, the fact that Clark sees as being of consequence for the war of 1914, and thus deserving of a place in a book about the origins of the Great War, is the statement of a Serbian politician from 1844 that agreement between Serbia and Austria is impossible. Apart from this mid-nineteenth century statement, Serbia's alleged guilt for war is corroborated by the events from the end of the twentieth century: "since Srebrenica and the siege of Sarajevo, it has become harder to think of Serbia as a mere object of great power politics", and "it is easier to conceive of Serbian nationalism as an historical force in its own right" (p. xxvi). So, he would have it that 1844 and the 1990s are more relevant and closer to 1914 than 1912. Clark's methodology is obviously

arbitrary; it is there only to prop his argument. *Sleepwalkers* do not offer a scientific inquiry that follows the evidence to see where they lead, they pick from the body of evidence to support a preconceived conclusion.

Faced with strong arguments that German aggressiveness is to blame for the creation of another bloc in Europe, Clark rejects any causal relationship between German foreign policy and the creation of alliances. He struggles to show that the alliances did not have to be shaped as they were in 1914, and that German politics did not raise fears in other countries. As for the outbreak of the war in the west of Europe, Clark, unable to use the black-and-white villain/victim pattern, as he does in the case of Serbian-Austrian relations, claims that it came as a consequence of numerous temporary changes. It is known that Alfred von Schlieffen's plan, developed from the 1890s, had envisaged a simultaneous German war against France and Russia;³² it is also known that the contemporaries had described the Anglo-Russian agreement of 1907 as a revolution in international relations.³³ If, with this in mind, we also remember that in the years before the war Great Britain, concerned for the safety of the Isles, transferred most of its naval forces to the North Sea,³⁴ and if Clark himself states that the German ambassador in London had been informed in 1912 that in the event of war between Germany and the Franco-Russian alliance Great Britain would side with German enemies (p. 329), it becomes extremely difficult to accept Clark's idea of temporary changes.

³⁰ Sked, *Decline and Fall of Habsburg Empire*, 257.

³¹ Strachan, *First World War*, 86.

³² H. Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster 1995), 204–206.

³³ W. Mulligan, *The Origins of the First World War* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 49.

³⁴ Kennedy, *British Naval Mastery*, 220–229.

The book before us offers a biased interpretation of the events that took Europe to the First World War. It offers a defence of German politics as against blunders and unjustified attitudes of leading politicians in the countries that opposed Germany and Austria-Hungary, a narrative of the Habsburgs' moral and political superiority over Serbia, that perpetual element of instability. However hard one searches through *Sleepwalkers* for even a slightest hint that the Central powers contributed to the outbreak of war in any way, the search will be a futile one. Instead, the author speaks of "obscure and convoluted events that made such carnage possible" and "complex war causality". It is precisely by means of this kind of vague and ambiguous statements that Clark evades answers to many important questions. Although he insists that he is not interested in "why" questions because they are associated with war guilt, his alternative approach is just as much connected with question of war guilt. As Todorova noted, Clark often confuses intentions with causes. At the same time, while he "assiduously pretends to avoid the why questions", Clark surreptitiously does build his causal explanation.³⁵

Clark is very often uninterested in what the necessary prerequisites for the war to happen were. His attention is going in a different direction. He holds that the contemporary system of international relations, which replaced the bipolar stability of the Cold War period, is in a state that calls for comparison with 1914. In that sense, *Sleepwalkers* has some features of a partisan political pamphlet, and the author offers his view of the nature of international relations. Clark insists that observing the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia only in terms of violation of Serbia's

sovereignty does not give the right picture. He finds it mild in comparison with the NATO ultimatum to Yugoslavia in 1999 (p. 456), and does not know what kind of comparison Edward Grey may have had in mind when he described it as "the most formidable document ever sent from one nation to another". To make it clear what he means, Clark draws a strange analogy between Serbia in 1914 and Syria in 2011: Russia's and China's opposition to intervention has made further massacres possible, and they have done it by insisting on Syrian sovereignty (p. 559). Clark's analogy between Serbia and Syria is one last call to his readers to appreciate Austria's politics. The fact that the first massacres in 1914 were committed by Austrian troops in western Serbia does not seem relevant. The reader cannot but feel greatly disappointed. The promising book of an established and well-known historian turns out to be little more than a collection of unproven assumptions, which sometimes sound as if they were produced by one of the warring parties eager to place the blame on "the other" and depict its own conduct as plain self-defence. The most dangerous aspect of Clark's book lies in the way in which his already equivocal arguments may be interpreted, as Clark's last interview blatantly shows: it was conveniently titled "Suicide bomber triggered the First World War", and Gavrilo Princip's act reached proportions comparable to Al Qaeda.³⁶ Perhaps the best description of Clark's book is given by Maria Todorova: "Christopher Clark is a gifted and informative storyteller; it is a pity that he is also a moralizing one."³⁷

³⁵ Todorova, "Outrages and Their Outcomes".

³⁶ "Selbstmordattentäter lösten Ersten Weltkrieg aus": <http://www.welt.de/geschichte/article112633581/Selbstmordattentaeter-loesten-Ersten-Weltkrieg-aus.html>

³⁷ Todorova, "Outrages and Their Outcomes".