

Summary

The Romanian-Greek political-diplomatic relations from the past century are a component of the system of the international relations from the Southeast Europe, integrated to the system at the continental level. To the both nations, the first decades of the 20th century recorded turning moments, decisive in their becoming- the Balkan crisis of 1912-1913, the first World War, the war in Minor Asia. The balance of the peace treaties of 1919-1923 was defining for the evolution of Romania and Greece in the interwar period. This balance determined the two nations and the decision factors from Bucharest and Athens to renew, in various forms, adapted to the new historical realities, the traditional links on multiple levels between the two nations. Without a direct territorial neighborhood but potential or actual threatened by other neighborhoods, common or distinct, Romania and Greece found an old solidarity and like small and medium countries, they have struggled, under the rules of the international right of those times and the own resources, to help to the maintaining the peace and the security in the region and on the continent. In this circumstances have evolved the bilateral political relations between the non-aggression and arbitration pact since March 1938 and the agreement of the Balkan Understanding, whose members have been Romania and Greece, with Bulgaria from Thessaloniki since July 1938. A decade of great efforts to counter the trends and the revisionist manifestations inside and outside of the area, to block the threats of the peace and the territorial integrity of the Balkan states. In this climate increasingly agitated after the rise of Nazism to power in Germany (January 1933), also disturbed by the appeasement manifestations of the major Western democracies towards the external actions of totalitarian states, more frequent since the middle of fourth decade, the reports between Bucharest and Athens has been faced with many challenges that have tested not only their durability, but also the cohesion of the Balkan Agreement in which Romania and Greece were allied from the beginning of her foundation (February 1934). This evolution has been analyzed in our work.

So, after Introduction.Sources and historiography in the first chapter-History,Semnification and Consequences Of The Bilateral Arbitration Pact in March 1928-, we first stopped on the signing and the content of the Romanian-Greek Covenant from Geneva, extending the approach to the presence of the non-aggression and arbitration ideas in the inter-Balkan relations at the end of the third decade of the last century.

A particular attention was given to Romania's position towards the foreign policy of Greece and "the decisive revolving" promoted by the great politician Eleftherios Venizelos, returned in front of the government in 1928's summer, turning expressed through a vivid diplomatic activity, important international agreements signed with a Great Power like Italy or neighbor countries like Yugoslavia especially the great former adversary – the kemalist Turkey- through the h reconciliation from 1930.



Equally , the intrinsic evolution of the bilateral reports of 1928-1931, with various implications, of which the debate project of building a bridge over the Danube to ensure a faster rail traffic to Thessaloniki, not only for Romania, but also for other countries, like Poland, in case the Black Sea's Straits was blocked as it happened during the first World War, was not ignored. Of course that the circumstances in which took place the last Venizelos' visit in Romania in August 1931 enjoyed the appropriate attention.

In the second chapter- Romania and Greece At The Balkan Conferences (1930-1933)- we especially stopped at the role played by the diplomacy of the both countries , but also at the Romanian and Greek publique opinion, in the preparing and the development of the first meetings at panbalcanic level, that have cleared the way to the Athens' pact since February 1934. There were analyzed the debates of the meetings where have been participated the delegates from the all member area-Romania, Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Albania- , the achievements and the failures recorded by the failure of attracting Albania in the panbalcanic political pact, under the undisguised guardianship of Fascist Italy – the opponent of such a project- and especially of Bulgaria, too anchored in its revisionist ambitions that conditioned the participation to the project by a first and clear solving according to the interests of Sofia,like the disputes with the neighboring states.

So, from this perspective were brought in discussion the works and the balance of the first Balkan conference in Athens (October 5th -12th , 1931) and at the reunion of the Council of Balkan Conference from Thessaloniki (January 31st - February 1st , 1931). Also, were presented the conditions that had preceded the development of the second Balkan Conference in Istanbul (October 20-26, 1931) like the session of the Council of Balkan Conference joint in the same metropolis on January 28th -31st , 1932.The works of the third Balkan Conference which was hosted in the capital of Romania - Bucharest (October 22nd -29th , 1932)enjoyed the same attention and also the presentation of the landmarks of the new international context- with emphasis on the diplomatic tour of Nicolae Titulescu in the autumn of 1933- where took place the debates of the fourth Balkan Conference in Thessaloniki (November 4th -11th , 1933).

In the third chapter- Governments' Diplomacy from Bucharest and Athens and The Balkan Agreement.The Athens' Treaty and The Perspectives Of Regional Colaboration(1930-1933)-, we insisted in the first place on the controversial “file” of the Bulgaria's adhesion to the idea of the regional pact, certain tabs of the file have already been mentioned in the previous chapter. There were presented the efforts of the Romanian foreign minister Nicolae Titulescu who tried to determine a positive decision of the authorities from Sofia.

Also, was made an overall evaluation of the international political situation in the Balkan Peninsula, and also on the continent, on the eve of signing the pact in Athens there were noticed significant changes in the report of forces in favor of revisionist states, with extremist tendencies.

Also, there were presented all the documents signed in the capital of (February 9th , 1934), including all the obligations assumed by the allies in the Understanding and highlighting the potential lights and shadows, virtual existing in the system of the intrazonal relations.



In the fourth chapter- Romania and Greece's Position towards The Collective Security and Great Controversies of the European International Relations (1934-1936)- the focus is on the deciphering of the projects of the French diplomacy in the domain of the continental security- eastern pact of the French foreign minister, Louis Barthou –and also on the way in which they were perceived by the states of Southeastern Europe .

Other emphases pointed the attitude of the Balkan pact towards the different events from the continental political scene like the Italo-French agreements in Rome in January 1935 or from the inside of the regional space like the republican revolt in Greece and the Bulgarian revisionist potential threat.

We haven't forgot the position of the member states of the Balkan Agreement or the position of the alliance as a whole towards some moments from the European political- diplomatic agenda from the first part of the year 1935 as the restoration of the compulsory military service in Germany, the Anglo-Franco-Italian agreement in Stresa and equally the Franco-Soviet pact, what was left from the project of the Eastern pact after the assassination of the French diplomacy chief, Louis Barthou, in Marsilia, in October 1934.

All these events and reactions made the object of the debates occasioned by the reunion of the conference of the Balkan Agreement in Bucharest between May 10th - 13th , 1935. In the second part of the same year took place some attempts of admission of Albania to the Balkan pact, stuck on the one hand by the negative attitude of the Fascist Italy and on the other hand by the indecision of the King Zogu the First, was, *de facto*, under the protection of Benito Mussolini. An other important moment in the evolution of the Romanian-Greek relationships was the beginning of the negotiations about the military conventions of the Balkan pact in the autumn of 1935.

In our analysis we didn't omit to focus on the impact which had the aggression of the fascist Italy against Ethiopia upon the states of the Balkan Agreement and the occupation of the Rhineland demilitarized zone by the Nazi Germany in March 1936 , developments which were discussed also in the session of the Permanent Council of the Balkan Agreement in Belgrade in May 1936.

In our scientific approach we stopped also at the problem of the review of the system of the Black Sea Straits, set in Lausanne (1923), problem discussed at the Conference in Montreux in the summer of 1936, especially because it was about a matter of principle, that of a review, but also very practical because all the states of the Balkan Agreement were interested in the conditions of the navigation through Bosphorus and Dardanelles , both in peacetime and in wartime. One last point analyzed in this chapter was that of finalizing negotiations concerning the military conventions of the Balkan Agreement.

In the fifth chapter- The Great Challenges Against The Balkan Agreement's Cohesion And The Romania And Greece's Attitude (1937- 1948). Since Yugoslavo-Bulgarian And Italo-Yugoslav Treaties in Anschlus- we approach problem of the first major bill of the skeleton of the Balkan pact, under represented by signing the treaty of "eternal friendship" between the governments



from Belgrade and Sofia (January 24th , 1937); was an obvious violation of the Yugoslavia commitments who didn't ask her allies before the temporary reconciliation with Bulgaria and put them the fait accompli. The problem was discussed at the session of the Permanent Council of the Balkan Agreement in Athens (January 15th -18th , 1937) where they reached to a compromise that took negative consequences for the pact's permanence.

On the other hand, we analyzed the implications and the consequences of signing the treaty between Italy and Yugoslavia (March 25th , 1937), in accordance with the general interests of the states of the Balkan Understanding but also of the special interests of Romania and Greece.

A balance of the year 1937 and the perspectives of the year 1938 were discussed in the session of the Permanent Council of Balkan pact in Ankara (February 25th -27th , 1938). The climate on the continent was not good and the ascendancy of the totalitarianism, the extremism and the nationalism of Nazi Germany was more visible. Therefore, Anschluss – the annexation of Austria- from the beginning of March 1938 was not a surprising event for the politicians and the lucid diplomats in the Balkans, but much more threatening was the reality that of the Third Reich was becoming as a direct neighbor of Yugoslavia, a member state of the Small Agreement and the Balkan Agreement , so the danger of the nazi revisionism and revanchism was very close. As the influence of Germany was growing in forms and volume in Sofia and the revisionism of Bulgaria was more present, the cohesion of the Balkan pact was becoming more and more a page of history.

It was a predictable evolution, synthetic analyzed in the last chapter, the sixth- The Agreement from Thessaloniki (July 1938) and The Beginning of the end of the Balkan Agreement. The document signed in the Aegean important port from Greece, in the name of the states of the Balkan pact, Bulgaria also represented the first important victory of the revisionism to the decision circles in Sofia who obtained from the neighbors the repeal of the military clauses of the treaty of Neuilly , so equal rights in the field of armaments. This success of the Bulgarian diplomacy would not have occurred without the convention of the conciliatory attitude of the major Western democracies – United Kingdom and France- towards the totalitarian states- Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. This behavior prefigured the tragedy of signing the agreement in Munchen (September, 1938), the first part of the disappearance of Czechoslovakia from the Europe's map consecrated the end of the Minor Understanding's existence and defined the deepening crisis inside the Balkan Agreement who survived a little while, the year 1940 marked the death of the alliance

The documentary of our scientific approach was provided by unpublished and published sources, external and internal sources and by the critical processing of the results of the research of the Romanian and foreign historians who have been dedicated their efforts to the analysis of the various aspects of this complex theme.

Most unpublished information were obtained by investigating a large of funds stored in the diplomatic Archive of the Romanian Minister of Affairs. Besides the documents regarding Romania and Greece, we investigated the funds concerning the Minor Understanding, the



Understanding and the Society of Nations and the ones concerning other states in region- Yugoslavia and Turkey- or the Major Powers- United Kingdom, France, Italy, Germany.

Some detailed information were obtained from the microfilm collection of the National Archive of Romania- Central Historical Archive, funds of France and U.S.A.¹

Also the collections of editable documents were very useful devoted to the foreign policy of some states, to the history of some bilateral relations or the problem of minority, the history of some events or known personalities from the European political scene of that period; like Nicolae Titulescu. In this category we have included also some memories, pages of correspondence or travel diaries².

We don't insist on the used work tools or the general works, published by historians or Greek historical collective³. We will persevere more on the historiography dedicated especially to our theme by the Romanian historians, Greek historians or historians from other states.

After the French Michel Lhéritier's reference study in 1933 ⁴ who partially related our subject, chronologically speaking, the first approaches of postwar Romanian historiography were more indirect. We think to the monographs dedicated to Balkan Entente by Cristian Popișteanu⁵ and Eliza Campus⁶ or to the researches of Mihail E. Ionescu on the Balkan military conventions⁷. Beyond that the both writers of the monographs used more or less scientific the diplomatic sources available in Romania of those times, their approach revealed some of the gaps of the Romanian Marxist historiography, they ignored several external sources and the contributions of the Greek historians, their works had the merit of the pioneering in the study of Balkan policy of Romania in inter-war period .

Indirect references on the evolution of the Romanian-Greek political-diplomatic reports in the fight for the defense of the security in region in the inter-war decades, we find in the same period in the works dedicated to the Danube⁸ matter or Straits file⁹. In the same category sign up also the scientific demarches of Ion Calafeteanu¹⁰, Ioan Talpes and again Eliza Campus¹². It is about the works of some well-known historians in the Communist, but who did not elaborated systematically the Romanian-Greek reports.

At the beginning of the Communist, the horizons of research are growing but intervene the methodological changes in the interpretation of information. It begins a period of reevaluations which allow new thematic openings. On the line of old concerns but in the new coordinates appear works of some known researchers on the subjects of a large level but which allow a more deep understanding of the problem of our subject. So, in the first years after December 1989, appear important analysis as those signed by Viorica Moisuc¹³, Valeriu Florin Dobrinescu¹⁴ or Emilian Bold¹⁵.

Gradually ,some military historians resume the problem of the Balkan alliances in the interwar decades. Edifying and consistent in this direction were the e: Alexndru Osca who supported also a PhD thesis in this domain, stud highlighted many unpublished informations from the military archieves. beginning of the new millennium were observed the researches of Constantin



expert in the problem of the international relation in Southeastern Europe in the interwar decades, who has approached also significant themes of the history of Romanian-Greek reports¹⁹.

For the clarification of some existing connections between the evolution of the Romanian-Greek relations and the inter-Balkan reports, were useful the studies on the links between Romania and Bulgaria due to some young historians as Maria Costea²⁰ or George Ungureanu²¹ and not less the research of Mustafa Ali Ekrem dedicated to the Romanian-Turkish reports²².

In terms of Greek historiography dedicated to our theme, the first observation is that the concerns of Greek historians are lower as a volume and problematic. An important name still that of Konstantinos Svlopoulos probably the biggest expert in foreign policy of Greece in the first half of the last century²³. Even if he didn't approach especially this subject, Thanos Veremis signed important contributions on the place and role of Greece in the system of international relations in the region and on the continent, being the most prominent connoisseur of the implication of the military in the political life of modern Greece, particular aspect of the evolution of Greek society²⁴. It is also the case of the contributions of the historian Areti Tounda-Fergati, concerned by the problems of the diplomatic history of Greece and by the minority problems in the region, influencing very much the dynamics of the international relations²⁵. From the same perspective some lights were brought by the researches on the history of the Greek-Turkish relations in that period²⁶. Of course that the recent studies on the Venizelos ' period and the role of Greece in the international policy in that time, allowed the deciphering of some aspects on the our analysis²⁷.

It was inevitably the call to the historians' contributions in the other countries interested in the problem of the international relations in the Balkan in the decade under our attention. We are thinking of the specific researches made in Bulgaria considering the informations provided from the internal archives as those of Christina Daneva-Mihova²⁸, Ilco Dimitrov²⁹, Dimităr Kosev³⁰, Kraštju Mancev³¹, Zdravka Miceva³², Sergey Roussev³³, Dimităr Sirkov³⁴, Vasil Vasilev³⁵, Sania Velkova³⁶, but especially Antonina Kuzmanova the best Romanian in Bulgaria on the domain of 20th century history³⁷.

From the contributions of the historians from other countries with direct preoccupation on our subject, we have used the studies of the famous Serbian scientist Milan Vank³⁸, the French Georges Castellan³⁹ or the Italian Alberto Basciani⁴⁰. We don't insist on the other works with more general character or approaching tagential topics found during the documentary, mentioned in the bibliography. Clearly, our scientific demarche has a good documentary base and has benefited of the precious contributions of the predecessors.

The analysis of the history of the political-diplomatic relations between Romania and Greece during a decade, since the signing of the bilateral pact of non-aggression and arbitration in March 1928 until the signing of the mutual agreement between Bulgaria and the Balkan Agreement in Thessaloniki in July 1928, highlights a special case of evolution and sometimes involution of the relations between the two small states, without direct neighborhood, in a region with



agitated past and with a present threat of the multiple dangers with origins inside and outside the area.

People with multiple historical and cultural links, with two thousandth affinities, Romanians and Greeks had also watershed moments in the history of the bilateral relations, provoked by some decisions of the decision factors or external interferences, not disinterested, but were found forever in the efforts of maintaining the identity, in the defense of regional peace and security. The decade put under our attention took various premises for the both countries: Romania went out as a winner from the big World War with the ideal of national unity accomplished, while Greece, after the euphoria of the balance of participating in war, generated by signing the treaty in Sèvres, has suffered the catastrophe of the military campaign in Minor Asia. After the signing the treaty in Lausanne (July 1923), that settled the Greece defeat, until 1928, the Bucharest was with Athens in its hard moments. So, the bilateral solidarity manifested in the decade after 1928 had solid grounds and bases with old traditions. Even if Greece didn't succeed to enter in the Minor Understanding, it was a de facto ally of Romania until February 1934, when was realized the alliance of Balkan Agreement, gathering not only the two states, but also Yugoslavia and Turkey. The created block through the pact in Athens had a rich history, Romania and Greece being protagonists in the endeavors of building a force to oppose to the intrazonal revisionism and out of the area.

After 1934, the both states reacted jointly to the challenges and the threats to the cohesion of the alliance although were not only common dangers, but also specific adversities generated by the different geopolitical situation. There were also situations when the official positions of both state didn't coincide without being broken the obligations assumed through the constitutive act of the Balkan Agreement. Is clear that behind the problem of Bulgaria's attitude, Bucharest and Athens were on the same trench. It is true that the conciliatory attitude of the Western Major Powers towards to the revisionism and expansionism of the totalitarian states forced the Balkan pact as a whole, and also the each member of it, to concessions and compromises that affected its durability. The agreement of Thessaloniki from July 1938 signed with Bulgaria in which were canceled the military clauses of the treaty from Neuilly in 1919, it also recognized the equality of rights in the field of armament to Sofia's government, was the beginning of the end of Balkan Understanding who didn't survive to the strikes received in the next period, first beginning with the agreement from Munchen at the end of September 1938.

Notes

1 See the paragraph Izvoare inedite from the Bibliography at the end of the work.

2 See the paragraph Izvoare edite from loc.cit.

3 See, for example, from the Greek historiography the work tools dedicated to Georges KOUTSOUBAKIS, Répertoire des accords internationaux conclus par la Grèce (1822-1978), Athènes, 1978 and Thanos VEREMIS, Mark DRAGOUMIS, Historical Dictionary of Greece, London, 1995; and like general works: Decebal CACLAMANOS, Greece. A Panorama, London, 1942; Grigoriou DAFNI,



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