

Hamlet – With and Without the Prince: Terrorism at the Outbreak of the First World War

Keith Wilson

Volume 27, numéro 2, winter 2007

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/jcs27_2art02

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

The University of New Brunswick

ISSN

1198-8614 (imprimé)

1715-5673 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Wilson, K. (2007). Hamlet – With and Without the Prince:: Terrorism at the Outbreak of the First World War. *Journal of Conflict Studies*, 27(2), 29–41.

Résumé de l'article

While the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914 helped to set in train a series of reactions by various governments that led to the outbreak of the First World War, the story neither begins nor ends there. From an historian's perspective, this simple 'cause and effect' formula does not do justice to what is a far more complex story. This article assesses that event's place in history by situating it within a wider context. It explores how the assassination interacted, first with the Byzantine geopolitics of the Balkans and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and then with the weltanschauung of Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany, to become a catalyst for war.

If the events of 1914 tell us anything about the nature of terrorism they first illustrate 'the law of unintended consequences.' Terrorists are not always able to control the outcome of their actions, which depends on how others react. The Archduke's assassins did not intend to start a global war by killing him. Unwittingly, they provided the Kaiser with the pretext for a war that he had sought for two years. Second, and flowing from that, it is clear that the significance of terrorist campaigns and actions cannot be understood in isolation from the political contexts in which they occur. Finally, in their desire to strike a blow against a 'foreign' authority, one can see that the motives and actions of the Archduke's attackers were analogous to those of other insurgents before and since. In short, the Archduke's assassination was a signal event in, if not the start of, a continuum in the history of modern terrorism.

Hamlet – With and Without the Prince: Terrorism at the Outbreak of the First World War

by
Keith Wilson

ABSTRACT

While the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914 helped to set in train a series of reactions by various governments that led to the outbreak of the First World War, the story neither begins nor ends there. From an historian's perspective, this simple 'cause and effect' formula does not do justice to what is a far more complex story. This article assesses that event's place in history by situating it within a wider context. It explores how the assassination interacted, first with the Byzantine geopolitics of the Balkans and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and then with the weltanschauung of Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany, to become a catalyst for war.

If the events of 1914 tell us anything about the nature of terrorism they first illustrate 'the law of unintended consequences.' Terrorists are not always able to control the outcome of their actions, which depends on how others react. The Archduke's assassins did not intend to start a global war by killing him. Unwittingly, they provided the Kaiser with the pretext for a war that he had sought for two years. Second, and flowing from that, it is clear that the significance of terrorist campaigns and actions cannot be understood in isolation from the political contexts in which they occur. Finally, in their desire to strike a blow against a 'foreign' authority, one can see that the motives and actions of the Archduke's attackers were analogous to those of other insurgents before and since. In short, the Archduke's assassination was a signal event in, if not the start of, a continuum in the history of modern terrorism.

INTRODUCTION

The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914 is often regarded as the event that triggered the First World War. But from an historian's perspective, this simple 'cause and effect' formula does not do justice to what is a far more complex story. While the assassination certainly helped to set in train a series of reactions by various governments that led to the outbreak of the war, the story neither begins nor ends there. In order to assess that event's

place in history, it is essential to situate it within a wider context. This article attempts to do so by exploring how the assassination interacted, first with the Byzantine geopolitics of the Balkans and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and then with the *weltanschauung* of Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany, to become a catalyst for war.

The Austro-Hungarian Response

In October 1908, the Austro-Hungarian Empire enlarged itself by annexing from the Ottoman Empire the provinces of Bosnia and Hercegovina, which had been administered from Vienna and occupied by Austro-Hungarian forces since the Congress of Berlin of 1878. Four years later, a few months before the outbreak of the first Balkan War of October 1912, Count Berchtold, the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister, acknowledged the international repercussions of the action taken by his predecessor, Count Aehrenthal:

Let us be under no illusions that our behaviour during the annexation of Bosnia and Hercegovina not only started off the League of Balkan states but inevitably made the Chancelleries of all the Great Powers suspicious of the Monarchy and so created a totally new understanding among them as regards their attitude towards our eastern policy.¹

Berchtold might have added that, as regards *internal* affairs, the annexation gave a huge boost to the numbers and activities of secret political societies which, as Vladimir Dedijer demonstrated in his book *The Road to Sarajevo*, had been a feature of this part of the Balkans for many years. For example, immediately after the annexation a Lieutenant-Colonel Dragutin Dmitrievich (known as Apis) founded the secret Serbian nationalist organization *Ujedinjenje ili Smrt* (Union or Death). Bogdan Zerajic, having founded the secret society *Sloboda* (Freedom) in 1904 in Bosnia, fled to Serbia in October 1908, where he trained for an anticipated armed struggle against Austria-Hungary. He told a Serbian officer, "We must liberate ourselves or die," and attempted unsuccessfully to murder the Emperor Franz Josef at Mostar in Bosnia on 3 June 1910. Twelve days later he made an (unsuccessful) attempt on the life of General Marijan Varesanin (Governor of Bosnia and Hercegovina) before committing suicide. Apis went on to become Chief of the Intelligence Department of the Serbian General Staff and by June 1914 was heavily involved with a group called the Black Hand. Zerajic became an idol for those who, in emulation of his career, went on to perpetrate successfully the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand.² The fact that fellow Slavs in Bulgaria had gained their independence from the Ottomans at the very same time as the Austro-Hungarian Empire had annexed Bosnia and Hercegovina only compounded the political ferment in the region.

The motives of those who conspired to assassinate Franz Ferdinand are quite clear. They wished to strike a blow against the authority and reputation of

the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which they regarded, quite correctly from their point of view, as an occupying power. The fact that the annexation had been internationally sanctioned 30 years before it had taken place was irrelevant so far as this group of college students was concerned. They wished to raise the profile of the independence of the southern Slavs generally and of those in Bosnia and Hercegovina in particular. There is nothing to indicate that they 'thought through' the implications of a successful assassination to the extent of drawing up and arranging in order of desirability a list of possible responses on the part of the authorities in Vienna. For one thing, they fully expected to die, either in the attempt or in the immediate aftermath. In this context, all publicity was good publicity. As Gavrilo Princip put it, quoting the 'fallen falcon' Zerajic: "He who wants to live, has to die; He who is ready to die, will live forever."³

The cause of Gavrilo Princip and his associates was advanced by Franz Ferdinand's assassination, but only because of the reactions to it by the governments in Vienna and Berlin. Turning first to Austria-Hungary, on 20 July 1914 Count Berchtold sent a confidential despatch to the Imperial and Royal ambassadors in Berlin, Rome, Paris, London, St. Petersburg, and Constantinople. The ambassador in St. Petersburg was instructed to make the following 'verbal elucidation' when handing over a copy of the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum to the Serbian government:

The Imperial and Royal Government feels no ill-will or grudge against Serbia; as lately as 1912 the Imperial and Royal Government by its loyal and territorially disinterested attitude gave Serbia a chance to become nearly twice the size it was before. . . All the Imperial and Royal Government asks, is to preserve its territory from the insurrectional miasma spreading from across the neighbouring kingdom and to put a stop to the indulgent toleration, with which the Royal Serbian Government has hitherto treated the efforts, which by word, script and deed were in Serbia directed against the integrity of the Monarchy. The assassination of the Archduke-heir to the throne naturally exhausted the patience of the Imperial and Royal Government with regard to Serbian plotting. . . .⁴

With the exception of what was said in the final sentence about the exhaustion of the patience of the Imperial and Royal Government, hardly any of the above was true. Vienna had not welcomed the doubling in size of Serbia as a result of the Balkan War of October-November 1912. Indeed on the eve of that war, at a Crown Council held on 16 October, Berchtold had described his policy as the protection of the *status quo* as far as possible.⁵ Subsequently, Vienna had made serious and sustained efforts to limit Serbian expansion, in particular by the creation of Albania, which was designed to deprive the enlarged Serbian state of access to the Adriatic. These efforts were accompanied by threats to take military action against Serbia. Such threats were made in February and April 1913 and

again in June and July. In October 1913, without consulting Berlin, Vienna issued an ultimatum to Serbia to vacate certain areas on the Albanian frontier. Only Serbian compliance on this occasion prevented the outbreak of what at the very least would have been a third Balkan war.⁶ Berchtold's instructions of November 1913, given to Count Czernin on the eve of the latter's departure on what was to prove a fruitless mission to Bucharest, read:

The solution of the South Slav issue, subject to the limitations of human wisdom and in face of the tenacity and confidence with which Serbia is pursuing the idea of a Greater Serbia, can only be by force. It will either almost completely destroy the present state of Serbia or shake Austria-Hungary to its foundations.⁷

What was true in Vienna immediately after the assassination was that there was a range of views as to how to react to the event. This was followed by considerable confusion about Austro-Hungarian war aims and how they might be achieved. In the evening of 29 June, Berchtold resisted pressure from the Chief of the Austro-Hungarian General Staff, Conrad von Hötzendorff, for an immediate mobilization against Serbia. According to Conrad, Berchtold stated, "that the outward occasion was lacking and that public opinion must first be prepared"; Berchtold professed to be inhibited by the possibility of an outbreak of revolution in Bohemia.⁸ On the following day, however, Berchtold met the prime minister of Hungary, Count Stephan Tisza, and disclosed an "intention to use the atrocity in Sarajevo as a motive for revenge against Serbia."⁹ Tisza, for his part, believed such a move would be "a disastrous mistake" and wrote immediately to the Emperor Franz Josef to this effect. He took the opportunity to deliver a *reprise* of a policy that he had advanced in a memorandum of March 1914, which embodied what he still regarded as a more appropriate policy – "a comprehensive, forward-looking, *politique de longue main*."¹⁰ The essence of this plan was to aim at reconciliations between Romania and Bulgaria, and Bulgaria and Greece. In the long run, he argued, there could be "a natural expansion of Bulgaria at the expense of [the then isolated] Serbia," to which the other Balkan states would not object. At the start of July 1914, Tisza advised that "a diplomatic constellation must first be created which makes the power relationship less unfavourable for us." If Germany would not help to effect the open addition of Romania to the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy, then Austria-Hungary would have to "guarantee Bulgaria at least for the Triple Alliance." Tisza ended his letter to Franz Josef by expressing the hope that he would be able to place these views before Kaiser Wilhelm II when the latter arrived in Vienna for the funeral of the Archduke.¹¹

When the Kaiser changed his mind about attending the funeral, Berchtold sent his *chef de cabinet*, Count Hoyos, to Berlin. As Berchtold knew, Hoyos had told the German publicist Victor Naumann on 1 July that he regarded a solution to the Serbian question as urgently necessary and that it was very important to

Austria-Hungary “to reckon with the certainty that Germany will cover our rear.”¹² In this author’s opinion, Berchtold’s motive for sending Hoyos to Berlin was to obtain just such an assurance from Germany, for use in combating and overcoming the opposition which he now expected – at least from the formidable figure of Tisza – to the aggressive move upon which he had decided.¹³ While in Berlin Hoyos told Arthur Zimmermann, the German under secretary of state, that “a complete partition of Serbia was under consideration” in Vienna. Upon his return to Vienna on 7 July, Hoyos was reprimanded by both Tisza and Berchtold in the presence of the German ambassador, von Tschirschky, for having made such a statement.¹⁴ One gets the impression, however, from what transpired the same day at the Council of Ministers for Common Affairs, that Berchtold’s criticism was largely designed to conceal the fact that Hoyos had gone too far in revealing what Berchtold’s game actually was.

At the Council of Ministers Tisza made it clear that in his view it was “not absolutely necessary to begin a war at the present moment.” He thought that having obtained, in the course of the Hoyos visit, German assent to Bulgaria’s joining the Triple Alliance, “a promising perspective for successful diplomatic action in the Balkans opens out.” With Bulgaria and perhaps Turkey ultimately on the side of the Triple Alliance, Romania and Serbia would be outbalanced and the former persuaded to return to the Austro-Hungarian fold. Berchtold, on the other hand, thought this neither a radical nor a quick enough solution to the problem posed by the propaganda for a Greater Serbia and argued for the immediate “exertion of main force” against Serbia. This, he maintained, was more likely (than what Tisza had proposed) to get Romania to return to the fold of the Triple Alliance. When the meeting moved on to discuss what might be the aims and objectives of a war against Serbia, all initially agreed with Tisza that “by a war we could reduce the size of Serbia, but we could not completely annihilate it.” Tisza’s opposite number, Count Stürgkh, the prime minister of Austria, suggested the removal of the Karageorgevich dynasty, giving the Serbian crown to “a European prince,” and that what he called “the reduced kingdom” be placed “in a dependent position towards the [Austro-Hungarian] Monarchy, at least from a military point of view.” Berchtold remained adamant. He was convinced “that Roumania cannot be won back as long as Serbian agitation continues, because agitation for Greater Roumania follows the Serbian and will not meet with opposition until Roumania feels isolated by the *annihilation of Serbia*. . .”¹⁵

On the following day Tisza supplied Franz Josef with what he described as a “golden mean.” He could not support, he said, “the solution of a war at any price,” and went on to indicate that he would resign in such a case – a resignation which, given the constitutional structure of the Dual Monarchy, would have paralyzed all decision-making. But Serbia should be given “the opportunity of avoiding conflict by means of a severe humiliation,” as acceptance of Austria-Hungary’s “just demands” would be. Anticipating a Serbian rejection of such demands, Tisza wrote:

We ought, at the proper time and in the appropriate form, to make an express declaration, affirming that we do not intend to destroy Serbia and even less to annex that country. After we have won such a war, Serbia should lose, in my opinion, in favour of Greece, Albania and Bulgaria, the territories it acquired in the last Balkan war. As for us, we should content ourselves with asking for the rectification of certain important points in our strategic border . . .¹⁶

Tisza adhered to this position at further Crown Council meetings held on 14 and 19 July. At the latter he insisted, in the face of Berchtold's reservations, that a resolution be passed unanimously to the effect that, "as soon as the war begins, the Monarchy declares to the foreign Powers that no war for conquest is intended, nor is the annexation of [Serbia] contemplated. Of course the strategically necessary corrections of the frontier lines, or the reduction of Serbia's territory to the advantage of other states or the unavoidable temporary occupation of Serbian territory is not precluded by this resolution."¹⁷

Despite the unanimity, this was not necessarily all that those who voted for the resolution envisaged. It is of some significance in this respect that none of this was confided by Berchtold either to the Germans or the Italians. In a private letter to Berchtold on 21 July, the Austro-Hungarian ambassador in Berlin, Szögyeny, stressed that von Jagow, the German foreign minister, had clearly given him to understand "that for the sake of vital interests, the German Government should be informed at all times as to 'where our path was leading to' and especially whether we intended, in the last resort, a partition of Serbia, which Count Hoyos gave a hint of in his conversation with the Chancellor."¹⁸ Berchtold did not reply. As to what Austro-Hungarian war aims really were Berlin remained as much in the dark as were many of Berchtold's colleagues.

Germany Reacts

The reaction in Berlin to the assassination of Franz Ferdinand was in large measure determined by Kaiser Wilhelm II. Certainly it was spearheaded by him. Learning on 2 July that von Tschirschky was taking every opportunity in Vienna "to advise quietly but very impressively against too hasty steps," the Kaiser made it clear to all around him that von Tschirschky should drop that "nonsense," and expounded the diametrically opposite view, that "The Serbs must be disposed of, and *that right soon*."¹⁹ So, the Kaiser set the *tone* at the beginning of July 1914.

The *content* had been set as far back as November 1912. At that time, the Kaiser's attitude was that Germany was obliged to support Austria-Hungary militarily only if the latter was attacked, *and* "only if Austria has not provoked Russia into attacking."²⁰ On 7 November 1912, he instructed the German foreign minister, Kiderlen-Wachter, that there was no danger to Austria's existence or prestige if Serbia obtained a port on the Adriatic and that if Austria chose to resist that, it was a matter solely for her and not for her alliance partner.²¹ Two days

later he telegraphed to Kiderlen: "Have spoken in detail to the Reich Chancellor [Bethmann-Hollweg] along the lines of my instruction to you and have emphasised that *under no circumstances* will I *march against Paris and Moscow* on account of Albania and Durazzo."²² Over the next two weeks, however, which included a visit to Berlin by the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and the Chief of the Austro-Hungarian General Staff, von Schemua, the Kaiser's outlook changed dramatically. On 21 November, his Austrian guests were assured that their monarchy "could fully count on Germany's support in all circumstances."²³ If for reasons of her prestige Austria-Hungary could not tolerate Serbian access to the sea, she should move forcefully against Serbia. German support would be forthcoming even if Austria-Hungary's action resulted in a war against Russia, France, and Britain.²⁴ These new sentiments were embodied in Kiderlen's speech before the Bundesrath Committee for Foreign Affairs on 28 November²⁵ and in Bethmann-Hollweg's speech in the Reichstag on 2 December. These two speeches caused the British foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey, and his close cabinet colleague, Lord Haldane, who were afraid that if there was no British response the Russians might retreat into a new *dreikaiserbund*, to seek a meeting with the new German ambassador, Prince Lichnowsky. They told him that should a war break out in Europe the limits of British non-intervention would be reached if the war involved France.²⁶

It was on 5 December, on reading Lichnowsky's report of his 3 December interview with Haldane, that Wilhelm II began to refer to "the final struggle between the Slavs and the Teutons,"²⁷ and to "the struggle of the Teutons against the Slav flood."²⁸ The same day, in a memorandum for Kiderlen, he borrowed the immortal words of the Bard: "*Es geht um sein oder nicht sein Deutschlands.*" (The question for Germany is to be or not to be.)²⁹ On 8 December, concluding that Lichnowsky's report had removed all "the veils of uncertainty" by revealing that the Anglo-Saxons would side with the Gauls and Slavs against the Teutons, he summoned to Potsdam the majority of his military and naval advisers with a view to establishing this revelation as the basis of future German policy.³⁰ To his friend, the entrepreneur Albert Ballin, Wilhelm II wrote in the following week:

If we are forced to take up arms it will be to help *Austria*, not only to defend ourselves against Russia but against the Slavs in general and to remain *Germans*. There is about to be a *racial struggle* between the Teutons and the Slavs who have become uppish. A *racial struggle* which we shall not be spared, because it is the future of the Habsburg monarchy and the *existence* of our country which are at stake. (That was the essence of Bethmann's spirited speech.) It is therefore *a question of the existence* of the Teutons on the European continent.³¹

In October 1912, he had welcomed the Balkan states' declaration of war on the Ottoman Empire as an "historical necessity (*Völkerwanderung* in reverse),"

and had gone on to hail their victories of 22-24 October.³² Over the next four weeks, and certainly by 21 November, he had come to view these events in a different and darker light. He now had adopted a thoroughly hostile interpretation and projection of their significance and ramifications, in so far as the future position of the German Empire in Europe was concerned. In the New Year, Bethmann-Hollweg was ordered to prepare a new army bill which on 13 October 1912 (a week before the outbreak of the Balkan War) the German General Staff had deemed unnecessary. Introducing the bill into the Reichstag in March 1913 the Chancellor made it clear that he thought a “world catastrophe” was approaching and that it would develop into a “struggle for existence for Germany” out of “a European conflagration which will line up Slavs against Teutons.” On 7 April 1913, he stressed that the balance of power in Europe had recently changed to the disadvantage of Germany and Austria-Hungary, and that there had been an increase in Pan-Slav trends in Russia and the Balkans.³³

The most definitive statement of the new German outlook and the policy of encouraging Austria-Hungary to come to terms, somehow or other, with Serbia came from Kaiser Wilhelm II at an interview with Count Berchtold at the German Embassy in Vienna on 26 October 1913. According to Berchtold:

The Emperor eloquently expressed the idea that it was not at present a question of passing phenomena, such as could be created and shaped by diplomatic work, but a process of world-history, which should be ranked in the category of the Migrations of the Nations – in this case a powerful advance of the Slav world . . . the war between East and West is in the long run inevitable, and if then Austria-Hungary were exposed on her flank to the invasion of a respectable military power, this might be fatal for the issue of the struggle between the nations. . . . The Slavs were not born to rule, but to serve; this must be brought home to them. . . . With Serbia there can for Austria-Hungary be no other relationship than that of the dependence of the lesser upon the greater. . . . [The Monarchy] should attract Serbia by everything that they need there – that is, (1) money . . . (2) military training, commercial advantages. On the other hand, it must be put before Serbia that she should place her troops (which have shown in war that they can do something) at the disposal of Austria-Hungary and thereby create the necessary guarantee that no surprises are to be feared on the southern frontier of the Monarchy. . . . Should they refuse this, then force must be applied; for ‘if H.M. the Emperor Francis Joseph demands something, then the Serbian Government *must* yield: if she does not, then Belgrade will be bombarded and occupied until H.M.’s will is carried out. And of this you may be sure, that I stand behind you and am ready to draw the sabre if ever your action makes it necessary.’³⁴

The policy of Kaiser Wilhelm II, which envisaged Slavonic Serbia, after a bombardment and occupation of Belgrade, placing its army at the disposal of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in order to assist the latter in a German/Teutonic war against Slavonic Russia, was a clear indication of the madness of the man. To say that it was regarded in Vienna as somewhat impractical would be the grossest understatement.³⁵ One underlying assumption was brought out most fully in Tschirschky's report of the same interview. As Wilhelm II put it, according to the ambassador, "It could be assumed with certainty that for the next six years Russia would be incapable of military action."³⁶ This assumption was still present in July 1914. Indeed, at the Kaiser's final personal encounter with Franz Ferdinand, on 16 and 17 June, it had been as alive and well as the Archduke himself. On that occasion Wilhelm II asserted, his own patience with Austria-Hungary perhaps approaching the vanishing point and his disposition toward Serbia showing a preference for the stick over the carrot, that it was vital for Austria-Hungary to take energetic steps against Serbia. He argued that Russia was not ready for war and was unlikely to oppose an Austrian action.³⁷

The motive in Berlin for reacting in the way the German government did to the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, and for issuing the notorious 'blank cheque' in the course of Hoyos's visit, was to encourage Austria-Hungary to 'clear the decks' on her southern frontier. This would ensure that her forces would not have to be divided, which would improve the chances of a Teutonic victory by Germany and Austria-Hungary over Slavonic Russia in a war at some point before 1918/1919, by which time Russian military reforms were expected to be complete.

Motives in Vienna for deciding on a war against Serbia were more mixed. For Stürgkh, relying heavily on the outlook of General Potiorek, the governor of Bosnia and Hercegovina, such an action was necessary in order to retain those south Slav provinces within the multi-national Austro-Hungarian Empire.³⁸ For Tizsa, the intention was to put the clock back to October 1912, in reducing Serbia to the size and shape she had been before the First Balkan War. For Berchtold, the intention was to eliminate Serbia completely from the map of the Balkan region. For Conrad, as had emerged from talks with the German military attaché, Count Kagenech, in January and February 1914, the matter was of the same 'Hamletian' proportions that it had been for Kaiser Wilhelm II since late November 1912: "a matter of 'to be or not to be.' If we win Germany and Austria-Hungary will remain in charge [of European affairs]; if not the survival of the Germanic races will be at stake. The Slav peril will come."³⁹

The contemporary Russian view of this *mélange* of motives has much to commend it. As Prince Trubetzkoy, the Director of the Near Eastern Department of the Russian Foreign Office, put it to the Italian ambassador on 29 July 1914:

Austrian assurances regarding annexation of Serbian territory were worth little because the results of the Austrian policy would be to iso-

late and bring Montenegro under its dominance, to place Albania under its protection, to reward Bulgaria with Serbian Macedonia, and to make Roumania an appendage of the Triple Alliance. The Austrian plan was to secure the supremacism of Germanism in the Balkans at the expense of Slavism. Faced with such a prospect Russia, which from a remote past had sacrificed its blood and run the most serious risks in behalf of its kinsmen and its co-religionists, had now to oppose with arms attempts to change the status quo in the Balkans.⁴⁰

Given this projection of the results of Austro-Hungarian action, it is quite understandable that St. Petersburg concluded that it must respond in kind. In the circumstances of July 1914, it was not possible for Russia simply to look on or to wait, as Tsar Nicholas II had indicated that he was quite prepared to do in the spring of 1913, awaiting the death of Franz Josef and the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire that was fully expected to ensue.⁴¹

Both Vienna and Berlin got what they wanted – war against Serbia and Russia respectively – but not what they expected. Vienna's response brought about the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Berlin's response brought about the end of the Second Reich. Only the assassins – the terrorists (or the freedom-fighters, if you prefer) – whose vision was incompatible with the outlook of the authorities in Vienna, achieved their ultimate objective. And this only in the long-term and as a result of the tragic decisions made in capital cities of European states other than Serbia. As Professor Robert Kann has demonstrated, not the least of the ironies here is that, while alive, Franz Ferdinand had been a force for peace. In this respect he differed from the Emperor Franz Josef, who took Berchtold's side against Tisza, and from the Imperial and Royal Joint Minister for Finances, Ritter von Bilinski, who attended the Councils of Ministers in July 1914, and who at a previous Council meeting on 2 May 1913, well in advance of the 'atrocities' of 28 June 1914, had maintained:

1. There is no ground for postponing mobilisation [against Montenegro].
2. War must be waged in such a way that it is also directed against Serbia and that Serbia cease to exist as an independent state.
3. The Serbian people must be organised as an equal component of the Monarchy. . . .⁴²

CONCLUSION

If the events of 1914 tell us anything about the nature of terrorism, they first illustrate 'the law of unintended consequences.' Terrorists are not always able to control the outcome of their actions. The outcome depends on how others react. The Archduke's assassins did not *intend* to start a global war by killing

him. Unwittingly, they provided the Kaiser with the pretext for a war that he had sought for two years. Second, and flowing from that, it is clear that the significance of terrorist campaigns and actions cannot be understood in isolation from the political contexts in which they occur. Finally, in their desire to strike a blow against a 'foreign' authority, one can see that the motives and actions of the Archduke's attackers were analogous to those of other insurgents before and since, from the group who attempted to kill the Viceroy of India, Lord Hardinge, in December 1912 to the Iraqi resistance to the US-led invasion and occupation in the twenty-first century. In short, the Archduke's assassination was a signal event in, if not the start of, a continuum in the history of modern terrorism.

Keith Wilson is Professor of International Politics at the University of Leeds.

Endnotes

1. Fritz Fischer, *War of Illusions, German Policies from 1911 to 1914* (London: Norton, 1975), p. 150.
2. Vladimir Dedijer, *The Road to Sarajevo* (London: Viking Press, 1967), pp. 177, 236-37, 249-50, 313-14, 327, 334, 339, and 371.
3. Ibid. p. 334.
4. Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, *My Indian Years 1910-1916* (London: John Murray, 1948), pp. 79-84.
5. *The Guardian*, 29 October 2005.
6. I. Geiss, ed., *July 1914: Selected Documents* (London: Barsford, 1967), no. 38, p. 148.
7. L. Bittner, A. Pribram, H. Srbik, and H. Uebersberger, eds., *Österreich-Ungarns Assenpolitik von der Bosnischen Krise 1908 bis zum Kriegsausbruch 1914* (Vienna, 1930), iv, no. 4118. Henceforth cited as *OUA*.
8. Ernst Chritian Helmreich, *The Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars 1912-1913* (Harvard, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938).
9. *OUA* vii, no. 9032.
10. Geiss, *July 1914*, no. 1, pp. 63-64.
11. Tisza to Francis Joseph, 1 July 1914, in Count Stephan Tisza, *Prime Minister of Hungary – Letters 1914-1916*, trans. Carvel de Bussy (New York, 1991), pp. 1-2.
12. Memorandum by Tisza, "The Foreign Situation," 15 March 1914, printed in S.B.Fay, "Documents: Papers of Count Tisza 1914-1918," *American Historical Review* 29 (1923-1924), pp. 306-09.
13. Ibid. All quotes in this paragraph are from this source.
14. Geiss, *July 1914*, no. 3, p. 66.
15. See F. Fellner, "Die 'Mission Hoyos,'" in Wilhelm Alf, ed., *Deutschlands Sonderung von Europe 1862-1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1984), pp. 283-316; and 'Austria-Hungary,' in Keith M. Wilson, ed., *Decisions for War, 1914* (London: UCL Press, 1995), pp. 1-25. See also Samuel R. Williamson, *Austria-Hungary and the Origins of the First World War* (London: Macmillan, 1991); S. Wank, "Desperate Counsel in Vienna in July 1914: Berthold Molden's unpublished memorandum," *Central European History* 26, no. 3 (1993), pp. 281-310; John Leslie, "The Antecedents of Austria-Hungary's War Aims – policies and policy-makers in

- Vienna and Budapest before and during 1914,” in *Archiv und Forschung* (Munich, 1993), pp. 307-94.
16. Geiss, *July 1914*, no. 10, pp. 87-88.
 17. *Ibid.*, no. 9, pp. 80-87, my italics.
 18. de Bussy, *Letters 1914-1916*, pp. 3-6. Whether Tisza was referring to Serbian gains in the First or Second Balkan War is not entirely clear from this.
 19. Geiss, *July 1914*, nos. 20 and 35, pp. 113 and 139-42.
 20. Syögyeny to Berchtold, 21 July 1914, *OUA* viii, no. 10448; and see also nos. 10398, 10445, 10909, and 11025.
 21. Geiss, *July 1914*, no. 2, pp. 64-65, Wilhelm II's italics. The importance and impact of the Kaiser's marginalia were recognized, as soon as they came to light after the war, by his former confidant and adviser, Prince Philipp zu Eulenburg-Hertefeld, also a former ambassador to Vienna; they were, in the words of the nephew of a former Imperial Chancellor, von Bülow, “so compromisingly belligerent that even the Social Democrat [representative on a Foreign Office commission to examine notes exchanged between Berlin and Munich] thought it necessary to keep them secret.” On this see John C.G. Röhl, *1914: Delusion or Design? The testimony of two German diplomats* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1973), pp. 68-69, 124-28, and 130-32.
 22. J. Lepsius, A. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, and F. Thimme, eds., *Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette 1871-1914* (Berlin, 1922-27), xxxiii, no. 12349. Hereafter cited as *DGP*.
 23. *Ibid.*, no. 12339.
 24. *Ibid.*, no. 12348.
 25. Report by Schemua, in E.C. Helmreich, “An unpublished report on Austro-German military conversations of November 1912,” *Journal of Modern History* 5 (1933), pp. 197-207.
 26. Reports by Franz Ferdinand, 22 November 1912, *OUA* iv, nos. 4559 and 4571. E. Jackh, *Kiderlen-Wachter, der Staatsmann und Mensch* (Stuttgart, 1924), pp. ii and 193-98.
 27. K.M. Wilson, “The British démarche of 3 and 4 December 1912,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 62, no. 4 (1984), pp. 552-59; also in Wilson, *Empire and Continent: Studies in British Foreign Policy From the 1880s to the First World War* (London: Mansell Publishing, 1987), pp. 141-48. Minute by Wilhelm II on Lichnowsky to Bethmann-Hollweg, 3 December 1912, *DGP* xxxix, no. 15612.
 28. Wilhelm II to Eisendecher, 12 December 1912, cited in Fischer, *War of Illusions*, p. 165.
 29. *DGP* xxxix no. 15613.
 30. John C.G. Röhl, *The Kaiser and his Court* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 173-74; see also Röhl, “Germany,” in Wilson, ed., *Decisions for War, 1914*, pp. 27-54.
 31. Wilhelm II to Ballin, 15 December 1912, cited in Fischer, *War of Illusions*, pp. 190-91, Wilhelm II's italics.
 32. Röhl, *The Kaiser and his Court*, p. 167.
 33. Fischer, *War of Illusions*, pp. 187 and 197.
 34. Report by Berchtold, 28 October 1913, Appendix I in R.W. Seton-Watson, “Wilhelm II's Balkan Policy,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 7, no. 19 (1928), pp. 24-27; also in *OUA* vii, no. 8934; and see Fischer, *War of Illusions*, pp. 221-25.
 35. E.C. Helmreich, “The Conflict between Germany and Austria over Balkan Policy 1913-1914,” in D.C. McKay, ed., *Essays in the History of Modern Europe* (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1936), pp. 130-48.
 36. Tschirschky to Bethmann-Hollweg, 28 October 1913, cited in Fischer, *War of Illusions*, p. 225.
 37. *DGP* xxxix, no. 15736.

38. Geiss, *July 1914*, no. 7, pp. 83-84.
39. Cited in Fischer, *War of Illusions*, p. 395.
40. Cited in B.E. Schmitt, "The Italian Documents for July 1914," *Journal of Modern History* 37 (1965), p. 472.
41. Buchanan to Grey, 31 March 1914, in G.P. Gooch and H.W.V. Temperley, eds., *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1926-38), x(ii), no. 536, pp. 778-79.
42. *OUA* vi, no. 6870. See R. A. Kann, "Emperor Francis Joseph and the Outbreak of World War I – a reflection on Dr. Heinrich Kanner's Notes as a source," in Kann, ed., *Dynasty, Politics and Culture* (New York: Social Science Monographs, 1991), pp. 301-02; also *Ibid.*, "Archduke Franz Ferdinand and Count Berchtold during his term as Foreign Minister, 1912-1914," pp.105-48.