

THE ORIGIN OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR ON THE ENGLISH MAGAZINES

TEXT 1:

The origins of the First World War

“Asking why great power peace was maintained for over four decades enables us to re-assess what might be called the 'old reliables' of the origins of the First World War.

Public opinion was of minor importance as a determinant of policy during the July crisis and generally served to restrain governments from adopting aggressive policies. Economic considerations also favoured the maintenance of peace, while imperial rivalries outside Europe never threatened to lead to a general European war. The influence of the military in manipulating their governments into war has been much exaggerated. The crucial decisions from October 2013 were taken by civilian ministers, who had previously favoured peace, but were now willing to risk war in the pursuit of more assertive policies. The arms race had an important impact on German thinking, heightening fears of encirclement. Allies generally restrained each other, but by the eve of the July crisis the alliances had become much more rigid, while Russia would no longer be restrained by London and Paris. The great powers departed from the behaviour which had sustained peace because that peace now seemed to threaten their great power status and even their existence.

For first time in over four decades, at least for the small number of decision-makers in Vienna, St Petersburg, and Berlin, war was preferable to continuing losses. The system was in a severe crisis because these three powers felt they were losing and the defeat could only be prevented by more assertiveness and even war. It was a desperate miscalculation as those same three powers ended up losing the war.”

Mulligan, William, “The origins of the First World War”, in *History Review*, 2011, No. 69, 12-17.

TEXT 2:

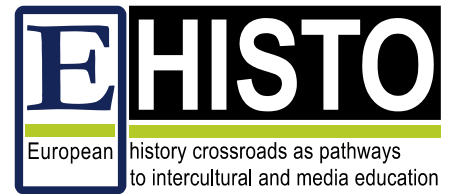
The shot that sparked the First World War

“Austria, which had once dismissed the Serbs as “rascally boys” stealing apples from the Habsburg orchard, adopted an increasingly militant view of the Balkan situation. The hawks spoke with ever louder voices, and the leading Austrian dove, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, would perish in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914.

Equally important was Russia’s deepening support for Serbia, now the dominant Slavic power of the Balkan region. Russian policy-makers spoke speculatively of a future quarrel between Austria and Serbia in which Russia would be obliged to intervene. This trend was reinforced from Paris. As prime minister and minister of foreign affairs, and then as president of the Republic, Raymond Poincaré extended the remit of the Franco-Russian Alliance, assuring the Russians of French support if Russia felt obliged to aid Serbia by waging war on Austria-Hungary.

Should this eventuality arise, a continental war was highly likely, not just because Germany’s treaty commitments to Vienna would be triggered by a Russian mobilisation, but also because German military planning foresaw parallel mobilisations against both France and Russia.

British policy-makers viewed these developments with ambivalence. Foreign Secretary Edward Grey recognised the danger inherent in the Balkan inception scenario, but was too committed to the policy of the entente to stand aside when it became a reality in the summer of 1914. The remoteness of the Balkan theatre and the fact that neither Russia nor France had been



threatened with war by the Central Powers made it difficult at first to persuade the cabinet and public that British intervention was warranted. Only by shifting the focus of the discussion westwards to the issue of Belgian neutrality and Britain's 'moral' commitment to France was Grey able to make a case for committing Britain to the continental war on 4 August 1914".

Clark, Christopher, "The shot that sparked the First World War" in: *BBC History Magazine*, 2012, No. 11, 18-23