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A Second European Peace: The Second Concert in the New Free Press's Coverage of European Relations during the Belle Époque

Introduction: The New Free Press, the Second Concert, and its Historiography

By the middle part of the 19th century the Concert of Europe had become a dead letter in European international relations. By this time, that one of the international regime's key member states – France – constituted itself on a purportedly revolutionary and nationalist basis no longer prohibited other member states from freely forging permanent treaties and alliances with it. In doing so the Concert's member states recognized as legitimate governments constituted on such a basis, rather than that of dynastic right, thus nullifying the international regime's political, social, and cultural *raison d'être*. Meanwhile, the Crimean War abolished two of the international regime's three foundational principles: the inviolability of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its member states and the recourse to consultative mechanisms, i.e., congresses and conferences, rather than violence for the resolution of conflicts between them.

While all the Concert's member states had participated in the incremental attenuation of the international regime over the course of its existence, only by the middle of the century was its effective abrogation undeniable. What followed was a period of violent conflicts between the erstwhile international regime's members. Indeed, whereas not a single major war had occurred among the Concert's members during its thirty-eight year existence (1815-1853), the next twenty-five years saw six major wars between them.¹ The territorial ramifications of these wars obliterated the last vestige of the Concert's remaining foundational tenet, that of preserving existing state borders. At the same time, they irrevocably transformed the territorial landscape from the configuration extant at the time of the Concert's founding, thereby contributing to the dissolution of the European balance of power, a political end facilitated by the Concert but not necessarily equivalent with it.²

With the absence of a comprehensive international regime dedicated to collective security and in a context of rapid changes to the power dynamics on the continent, the danger of a general European war was acute. In order to forestall this threat, and in the aftermath of several of the major

¹ Namely: the Crimean War, the Austro-Sardinian War, the Second Schleswig War, the Austro-Prussian War, the Franco-Prussian War, and the Russo-Turkish War.

² As the industrial dimensions of the *Gründerzeit* period in the Prussian Rhineland made clear, even to those at the time, state assets other than territory alone were relevant to the European balance of power, and as such the Concert and its foundational principles could not in themselves preserve that balance. Indeed, as discussed below, the principles of the Concert and the principle of the balance of power could even be antithetical.

wars that erupted in the wake of the Concert's *de facto* nullification, the abolished regime's erstwhile members repeatedly convened pan-continental peace congresses and conferences. However, while these congresses and conferences enlarged the membership of the European Concert, a term still in use but existing in name only, none of them reestablished the international regime and corollary lasting peace inaugurated at Vienna in 1815.³ Thus, one might have had little expectation for any substantively different outcome as Europe convened in 1878 for yet another peace congress to mediate the consequences of yet another major war between the defunct Concert's members.

As in the previous five major conflicts, the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 violated all the Concert's foundational principles, upset the continental balance of power, and risked general war. However, unlike the previous peace congresses and conferences, after the Congress of Berlin there was a prolonged, thirty-three-year period (1878-1911) without a major war between the Concert's member states. *Prima facie* this would seem to indicate that the Congress of Berlin, intentionally or not, had systemic effects that the earlier congresses and conferences lacked. That is, it reestablished an international regime, which, while it discarded the earlier Concert's commitment to enforcing dynastic right as the sole legitimate basis of state authority, retained and reinstated the prior Concert's three foundational principles: the inviolability of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its member states, the preservation of existing state borders, and the recourse to consultative mechanisms, namely congresses and conferences, rather than war for the resolution of conflicts between member states.

An exploration of the broad existence or non-existence of such a 'Second Concert' being inaugurated by the Treaty of Berlin, either in the minds of those personally responsible for European international relations or among the wider public, across the European continent during the *Belle Époque* as a whole is beyond the scope of what the following discussion can hope to achieve. What the ensuing analysis does seek to explore is whether such a concept existed in the thinking of one of the Second Concert's key member states, i.e., that of Austria-Hungary, specifically among the liberally and constitutionally oriented and internationally conscious public of Cisleithanian Vienna. The basis of this investigation is the journal that unambiguously spoke for this geographic and ideological space during this period, the New Free Press (*Neue Freie Presse*, NFP).

It is important to acknowledge the shortcomings of such a source base. In the first place, newspapers do not and cannot uncover majority public opinion *per se* in that editors and journalists

³ The Congress of Paris in 1856 and London Conference of 1867 extended membership in the Concert to the Ottoman Empire and Kingdom of Italy, respectively.

are self-conscious elites who deliberately seek to shape public opinion rather than reflect it. Conversely, editors and journalists may maintain close, even intimate relations with elected officials, ministers, bureaucrats, and other state elites.⁴ However, externally or internally imposed censorship, in conjunction with the desire to tailor a narrative to suite the contingent political ends of the journal, means that newspapers are always at best imperfect avenues to understanding the actual motives, goals, hopes, fears, and assumptions of the state, its institutions, and the people who staff them. Despite these shortcomings, the NFP is nevertheless well-suited to an investigation as to whether a Second Concert existed in the Habsburg perception of European international relations during the *Belle Époque*. Indeed, if one can expect to find anywhere in the Austro-Hungarian political cosmos a concern for the rules, norms, and principles of a Second Concert international regime, it would be among the liberal-constitutionalist supporters of rule of law and *Rechtsstaat* for whom and to whom the NFP spoke.

The model and periodization of a Second Concert draws on a Habsburg and Ottoman anglophone historiography that frequently frames the 1878 Congress of Berlin as exceptional among the post-First-Concert congresses and conferences due to its longevity and the extent of its geopolitical consequences. Likewise, this literature often both asserts that the Berlin Congress was exceptional in the degree to which European relations became systemic after its adjournment and regularly notes a special relationship between the Vienna and Berlin Congresses.⁵ Where the current discussion diverges from this historiography is in its hypothesis that, at least for the journalists and editors of the NFP, the Congress of Berlin did not simply buttress a dissolving but surviving Concert.

⁴ This was especially true of the NFP and the Austrian politicians of the Constitutional Party and many of its liberal-oriented successors, as well as the NFP and many liberal-minded state elites in Cisleithania. For a discussion of the NFP and its relationship to liberal Austrian politicians and state officials, see: Jonathan Kwan, *Liberalism and the Habsburg Monarchy, 1861-1895*, (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

⁵ For example: AJP Taylor notes the Congress of Berlin's geopolitical significance and the longevity of its effects: A.J.P. Taylor, "Chapter Twelve: Liberal Failure: German Ascendancy in Austria 1867-79" in *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809-1918: A History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary*, (London: H. Hamilton, 1952); in his analysis of the causes of the First World War Christopher Clark asserts that the period after the Congress of Berlin was characterized, at least during the Bismarck era, and indeed for some time after, by comprehensive, pan-continental European relations: Christopher Clark, "The Polarization of Europe, 1887-1907," in *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2012); in her examination of Ottoman Macedonia at the turn of the 20th century İpek Yosmaoğlu asserts that, more than being a conference that sought a simple *ad hoc* peace treaty, the Congress of Berlin explicitly aimed to shore up the disintegrating European Concert founded in Vienna in 1815: İpek Yosmaoğlu, "The Ottoman Empire, the Balkans, and the Great Powers on the Road to Mürzsteg" & "Conclusion," in *Blood Ties: Religion, Violence, and the Politics of Nationhood in Ottoman Macedonia, 1878-1908*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014); Isa Blumi's exploration of the adverse and unintended consequences of a-legal Christian-European encroachment into the Ottoman Balkans notes a special relationship between the Vienna and Berlin Congresses: Isa Blumi, "Introduction," in *Reinstating the Ottomans: Alternative Balkan Modernities, 1800-1912*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

Moreover, it presumes that in NFP thinking the Berlin Congress contrasts from earlier congresses and conferences not merely by the scale of the conflict it resolved and the coincidental relative durability of its subsequent agreement. It also supposes that the NFP's comprehensive approach to European relations was not just a reflection of a single actor, i.e., that the NFP was merely channeling Bismarck and his agenda. Rather, this discussion argues that the Berlin Congress inaugurated for the NFP a recognizably distinct international regime that both framed a catholic approach to European relations and set as its foundational principles the same three tenants as the international regime that had guided European relations between the Napoleonic and Crimean Wars.

This discussion also draws on an English historiography of the Concert of Europe itself, especially the work of Eric D. Weitz and Jennifer Jackson Preece.⁶ These authors posit a model and periodization in which the Berlin Congress, in conjunction with the Berlin Conference convened six years later, introduced an intermediary 'Berlin System' era in European relations that drew on, but was distinct from, a preceding 'Vienna System' age. According to this narrative, this process of evolution culminated with the realization of the 'Paris System' epoch. Weitz and Preece argue that the essential difference between the Viennese and Parisian Systems was that while former was predicated on sovereign civic national states the latter was predicated on sovereign ethno-national communities. They also assert that the Treaty of Berlin played a transitional role in this process by introducing for the first time a systematic, formal recognition of ethno-national populations, both by specifically and explicitly naming national communities whose security signatories were bound to guarantee and by categorizing them in ethnic terms. Such arguments are seriously undermined by the fact that most of the Berlin Treaty articles these authors cite do not contain explicit reference to specific linguistic or religious communities, nor employ ethnic, religious, or national communal categorizations or language, or simply do not say what Weitz and Preece claim they do.⁷ Their

⁶ Eric D. Weitz, "From the Vienna to the Paris System: International Politics and the Entangled Histories of Human Rights, Forced Deportations, and Civilizing Missions," *The American Historical Review* Vol. 113, no. 5 (Dec., 2008): 1313-1343; Jennifer Jackson Preece, "Minority Rights in Europe: From Westphalia to Helsinki," *Review of International Studies* Vol. 23, no. 1 (Jan., 1997): 75-92.

⁷ In a footnote on pg. 1320, Weitz notes Berlin Treaty articles 4, 5, 12, 27, 30, 35, 39, 43, 44, and 61, and in the body of his article he asserts that article 44 was "renown" for its protections for Jews in Romania. Article 44 makes no specific refence to Jews, nor are Jews mentioned anywhere in the Treaty of Berlin. Rather, article 44 employs general language guaranteeing individual freedom of worship *per se*. The language of article 44 is virtually identical to articles 5, 27, and 35, which address individual freedom of worship in the newly sovereign states of Montenegro and Serbia, as well as that of newly autonomous Bulgaria. By guaranteeing individual freedom of worship these articles offer individual civic national rather than communal ethnic national protections and as such are predicated on individual citizenship in a sovereign state rather than on collective membership in an ethnic, linguistic or religious community. While articles 12, 30, and 39 mention Muslims in their provisions, these provisions do not act on a formal Muslim communal entity. Rather, Muslims are treated as individuals. Article 43 merely recognizes the independence of Romania. Preece notes Berlin Treaty articles 4, 27, 34, and 44. How article 27 is problematic for

arguments are also weakened by these authors' general exaggeration of the degree to which the Berlin Treaty recognized ethnic national communities in addition to, and separate from, sovereign states.⁸ Yet, while these arguments concerning a 'Berlin System' may be flawed, they are nevertheless useful for the current discussion in that they propose that the Congress (and Conference) of Berlin stand out as especially significant, not only among post-Vienna congresses and conferences in particular, but in modern European international relations in general. In doing so, they further highlight the extent to which the penumbra of a Second Concert model exists in Habsburg, Ottoman, and European Concert historiography.

The Second Concert in the NFP's Conception of European Relations

The NFP attitude toward a Concert approach to Habsburg foreign policy articulated in a 25 January 1871 article is typical of NFP thinking about the international regime in the period before the Berlin Congress. This article discusses the recent publication of a report on the deliberations and policy recommendations of the Austrian and Hungarian delegations to the joint government. These discussions concerned the recently concluded Franco-Prussian war, and in them the NFP notes thinly veiled Hungarian disappointment over the outcome of the war and frustration at the Monarchy's impotence to prevent it. However, the NFP also notes that despite Hungarian resignation to the Monarchy's forced neutrality and recognition of the German Empire, their delegation continued to pursue alternatives to establishing especially close ties with the new state. Rather than forging such bilateral relations and otherwise maintaining what it characterized as Austro-Hungarian isolationism, the Hungarian delegation recommended cultivating relations with all European powers, insisting of a pan-continental approach to Habsburg foreign policy „daß die Politik, ebenso die Möglichkeit eines

Preece's argument is addressed above. Article 34 merely recognizes the independence of Serbia, though it indirectly relates to article 39, but how article 39 is problematic for Preece's argument is addressed above. Preece cites article 44 but discusses it in terms of protections for foreign citizens and clarifies neither how article 44 differs from similar articles, how its protections for foreigners relates to minority rights, nor how its protections were innovative. She also asserts that article 6 is "noteworthy since it ensured that the interests of all national groups – Turkish, Romanian, Greek and others – would be taken into consideration when drafting electoral regulations and the 'Organic Law of the Principality.'" However, article 6 does not define these groups nationally, nor even mentions Romanians or Greeks. Instead, the force of this article applies only to sovereign states, namely Russia and Turkey specifically and the other signatories generally. Weitz, "From the Vienna to the Paris System," 1317-1321; Preece, "Minority Rights in Europe," 79-81.

⁸ The only articles in the Treaty of Berlin that support Preece's and Weitz's argument are articles 4, which Preece references only indirectly, and 61, which Preece does not reference at all. Only here do we find language that recognizes communal ethnolinguistic-national entities as such and articles whose force applies to these populations as communities. "Treaty between Great Britain, Germany, Austria, France, Italy, Russia, and Turkey for the Settlement of Affairs in the East: Signed at Berlin, July 13, 1878," *The American Journal of International Law* Vol. 2, no. 4, Supplement: Official Documents (Oct., 1908): 401-424, Cambridge University Press.

europäischen Concertes, als auch die eigenen Interessen und die Würde der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie energisch sicherzustellen im Stande ist.”⁹

Incredulous at the suggestion, the NFP responded to the Hungarian delegation’s suggestion with the disdain toward the Concert idea that was characteristic of the NFP at this time: „Die Möglichkeit eines europäischen Concertes! Also die Politik des Herumtastens an allen Höfen — eine Politik, welche ja eben wegen des Abganges jedes positiven Rückhaltes, jeder festen Beziehung zu den Mächten schon die Isolirung selber wäre, diese Politik wird dem Reichskanzler empfohlen?!”¹⁰ Instead of pinning the Monarchy’s future on dubious hopes of a Concert that had in the NFP’s view become a dead letter, and like the Hungarians having come to terms with German unification, the NFP embraced what it claimed was the position of the Habsburg Chancellor, the Constitutional Party, the Austrian delegation, and of Austro-Germans broadly. That is, the NFP favored accepting Bismarck’s invitation to form a special relationship between the Monarchy and Germany. As for a European Concert, the NFP deferred to the opinion of the Habsburg Chancellor, Count Friedrich Ferdinand von Beust. The Chancellor, who had himself recently overcome his Francophilia and loathing for Bismarck sufficiently as to accept the latter’s offer of friendship, had made his view of a European Concert well known: „Graf Beust hat im Laufe der jüngsten Monate die Erfahrung gemacht, daß ein europäisches Concert heute weder in energischer noch in sanfter Weise sicherzustellen ist — es gibt ja nach seinem Ausspruche kein Europa mehr — er wird also durch das Pensum, ‚die Möglichkeit eines europäischen Concertes energisch sicherzustellen‘ höchstens eine retrospektive Befriedigung, aber kaum einen Ansporn für die Zukunft gewinnen.”¹¹ It was clear to the NFP and to Beust that, by the time of the Franco-Prussian War, the erstwhile Concert of Europe had become a defunct international regime. Given this, the NFP framed the European condition as one in which bilateral alliances between reliable partners, rather than a comprehensive approach to continental relations as whole, was the most prudent and dependable means of defense and survival for the Habsburg state.

⁹ “Ungarn und das Rothbuch,” *Neue Freie Presse*, Wien, 25/01/1871, 2. [that such a policy is able to vigorously ensure the possibility of a European concert as well as the interests and dignity of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy itself].

¹⁰ “Ungarn und das Rothbuch,” *Neue Freie Presse*, Wien, 25/01/1871, 2. [The possibility of a European concert! So the policy of fumbling around at all the courts (of Europe) - a policy, which precisely due to the loss of any positive support or any strong relationship with (any of the other great) powers, would really be isolation itself, this policy is recommended to the Chancellor?!].

¹¹ “Ungarn und das Rothbuch,” *Neue Freie Presse*, Wien, 25/01/1871, 2. [In the course of the past few months, Graf Beust has come to know through experience that today a European concert cannot be ensured in either a forceful or gentle manner - after all, according to his words, Europe no longer exists – thus he who through considerable labor may “vigorously ensure the possibility of a European concert,” at most may gain a retrospective satisfaction, but hardly win any incentive for the future].

Just under a decade later, and in the aftermath of the Berlin Congress and Treaty, the NFP reversed its position. In a 11 November 1880 article the NFP provided an analysis of a recent speech by British Prime Minister William Gladstone in which Gladstone appeared to affirm the British Empire's friendship with the Porte and its respect for Ottoman territorial integrity and sovereignty. The NFP, however, remained skeptical, arguing that in reality „Gladstone's innerster Gedanke war es, die Vernichtung der Türkei zu beschleunigen. Er wollte zuerst vermittelst der Flotten-Demonstration die Autorität des Sultans bei den Albanesen zerstören, dann die Herausgabe von Epirus und Thessalien an die Hellenen erzwingen, endlich den Rest des europäischen Osmanenthums durch gebieterisches Beharren auf der Durchführung der Reformen zu Tode drangsaliren.“¹² In the NFP's view, far from being a faithful physician, Gladstone was like a murderous surgeon who eyed Turkey as his next victim-patient: „Diese Conception war auf kurze Frist berechnet, wie etwa eine rasche Aufeinanderfolge chirurgischer Schnitte, und in Anbetracht des stürmischen Temperamentes, mit dem Gladstone seine Berechnungen macht, entbehrte sie einer gewissen Schlaueit nicht, vorausgesetzt, daß Europa sich diese Art der Durchführung des Berliner Vertrages gefallen lassen mochte.“¹³

Yet, the NFP asserted, Europe would not allow the British doctor to practice his homicidal craft, aided though he was, in the NFP's view, in his designs by a Russian assistant. The NFP argued that it was the intervention of a European Concert that ultimately dashed Gladstone's designs for Turkey-in-Europe and thus saved the Ottoman Empire:

Aber der englische Chirurg mit dem moskowitzischen Heilgehilfen an der Seite vergaß, daß an dem Krankenbette im Oriente auch etliche Pathologen stehen, welche an eine langsamere Therapie gewöhnt sind. Er zückte in Einemfort das Messer, wollte es bald in Albanien, bald in Thessalien ansetzen, aber man hielt ihm den Arm fest, und er mußte schließlich sich bescheiden, sofern er nicht das ganze Consilium von Aerzten, europäisches Concert genannt, sprengen oder gar gegen sich selbst aufbringen wollte. Und so lebt denn die Türkei heute noch, während der ungestüme Operateur seine Lancetten und Messer einpackt, erklärend, es sei nicht sein Beruf, allein von ihnen Gebrauch zu machen, da seine Collegen ein

¹² “Gladstone's Rückzug,” *Neue Freie Presse*, Wien, 11/11/1880, 2. [Gladstone's innermost thought was to accelerate the annihilation of Turkey. He wanted first by means of a naval demonstration to destroy the Sultan's authority with the Albanians, then to force the surrender of Epirus and Thessaly to the Hellenes, and finally, through domineering insistence on the implementation of reforms, to bully the rest of Ottoman Europe to death].

¹³ “Gladstone's Rückzug,” *Neue Freie Presse*, Wien, 11/11/1880, 2. [This conception was calculated on a short-term basis, such as a rapid succession of surgical cuts, and considering the stormy temperament with which Gladstone makes his calculations, this plan did not lack a certain cleverness, provided that Europe would accept this way of implementing the Berlin Treaty].

langsamerer Verfahren vorzögen... Die Hauptsache bleibt doch, daß Herr Gladstone feierlich erklärt, er verzichte auf eine Separat-Action gegen die Türkei, womit denn bis auf Weiteres die Gefahr beseitigt erscheint, daß um Montenegros oder Griechenlands willen die Ruhe Europas gestört werden könnte. Und dessen kann man allerorten froh sein, nicht zum wenigsten dort, wo, wie in Deutschland, Frankreich und Oesterreich-Ungarn, das Friedensbedürfniß alle Kreise der Bevölkerung beseelt.¹⁴

The NFP's interpretation of what it saw as Gladstone's desired policy toward the Ottoman state and the Concert's prevention of this policy represents a paradigm shift from the continental geopolitical conditions imagined by the NFP just ten years before. Then, the NFP had viewed the Concert of Europe as existing in name only and as being unworthy of serious consideration as a framework for international relations. Now, the Concert appeared dynamic and capable not only of restraining member states by its own authority, but even being capable of by itself preserving member states whose very existence would have extinguished but for the international regime. Moreover, in its account the NFP asserted that it was in the name of enforcing the letter and spirit of the Treaty of Berlin that the Concert had acted, and as such it was from this source that the Concert derived its authority. As the NFP made clear, the spirit and letter of the Treaty of Berlin entailed the integrity of Porte's territory and sovereignty, the preservation of existing Ottoman borders, and the obligation of Britain to seek peaceful and comprehensive consultative mechanisms rather than violence for the realization of its policy designs.

This belief in a catholic approach to European relations, within an international regime based on the same three principles that had guided the earlier Concert of Europe, and the belief that the Berlin Congress had inaugurated this regime, was not an isolated perspective in the NFP during the immediate aftermath of the Berlin Congress. To cite just one other example: on 28 October 1881 the NFP published a lengthy analysis of a Red Book report on various Ottoman border disputes that had remained unresolved since the Treaty of Berlin. In this analysis, the NFP devoted considerable space

¹⁴ "Gladstone's Rückzug," *Neue Freie Presse*, Wien, 11/11/1880, 2. [But the English surgeon with the Moscow medical assistant at his side forgot that there are also several pathologists at the sickbed in the Orient who are used to slower therapy. He pulled out his knife and at once wanted to apply it, now in Albania, now in Thessaly, but his arm was held back firmly, and finally he was forced to humble himself, lest he explode the entire conference of doctors, called the Concert of Europe, or bring their collective rage down upon himself. And so Turkey still lives today, while the impetuous surgeon packs his lancets and knives, declaring that it is not his job to use them alone, because his colleagues prefer a slower procedure... The main thing is that Mr. Gladstone solemnly declares that he renounces a separate action against Turkey, with which, for the time being, the danger appears to be eliminated that for the sake of Montenegro or Greece the calm of Europe could be disturbed. And one can be glad of this everywhere, not least where, as in Germany, France and Austria-Hungary, the need for peace animates all circles of the population].

to a speech given the year before by the late Habsburg foreign minister, Baron Heinrich Karl von Haymerle, whose views the NFP endorsed. This is especially noteworthy as not only does Haymerle reflect the attitude of the NFP, but for a time he was a significant actor in Habsburg foreign policy making itself. While Haymerle's remarks are replete with language that presumes the Berlin Treaty foundations of the Second Concert, that forcefully advocates for operating within the limits of the international regime, and which encourages the Dual Monarchy to play an active role in that regime, three excerpts will here suffice to illustrate his sentiments:

Unsere Ziele können nur gemeinsam sein: die Lösung der schwebenden Fragen auf Grundlage des Berliner Friedens im Sinne des Fortschrittes und der Humanität, die Erhaltung des europäischen Friedens gegenüber allen Wechselfällen der orientalischen Krise, die unverrückte Aufrechthaltung der europäischen Machtverhältnisse. Wenn uns diese Zwecke gemeinsam sind, so kann ein Ideenaustausch über das „Wie“ selbst bei auftauchenden Meinungsdivergenzen auf die Dauer nicht trennend wirken... Auch wir glauben, daß mit der Lösung der montenegrinischen Grenzfrage die anderen noch unausgeführten Punkte des Berliner Vertrages nicht abgethan wären. Er bleibt die Aufgabe der europäischen Mächte, mit aller Ausdauer auf die successive Verwirklichung derselben hinzuarbeiten. Nicht bloß unsere Vertragstreue als Signatarmacht, auch die speciellen Interessen unserer Monarchie weisen uns darauf hin...

Auch wir legen das größte Gewicht auf die Erhaltung des europäischen Concertes: aber die Perspective auf Zwangsmaßregeln scheint uns diesen Zweck nicht zu fördern. Das europäische Concert begründet überhaupt nur eine diplomatische Einheit. Die Vermeidung kriegerischer Verwicklungen ist sein hauptsächlichlicher Zweck. Es erfüllt seinen Beruf nicht, wenn es, statt der Welt das Gefühl der Sicherheit zu geben, auf Gewaltanwendung sinnt, welche für Verkehr und Handel dieselben Folgen wie der Kriegszustand hätte und zu einem solchen zu führen geeignet wäre...

Wir wünschen das europäische Concert; wir würden dasselbe durch die Beschließung von Coërcitiv-Maßregeln gefährdet sehen... Wir beharren daher auf der Forderung der ungeschmälerten Ausführung des Berliner Vertrages, glauben jedoch, daß das Vorgehen der Mächte, die Natur, sowie die Zeitfolge ihrer Schritte, bestimmt sein müsse von der dreifachen Rücksicht auf das allgemeine Ruhebedürfniß des Welttheiles, auf die Gefahren, welche die

gewaltsame Zertrümmerung der Türkei mit sich brächte, und endlich auf die reellen Kräfte derjenigen, zu deren Unterstützung die Action der Mächte bestimmt ist.¹⁵

While the First Concert persisted to some degree as a force in European relations for thirty-eight years, just over a decade after its inauguration its member states had already begun challenging the international regime's purpose and principles, thereby initiating the erosion of its authority.¹⁶ The case was no different with the Second Concert, as the NFP understood at the time. The first in this series of events that incrementally undermined the Second Concert's principles and weakened its authority was, as had been the case with the First Concert, a result of British policy in the eastern Mediterranean, i.e., Britain's intervention in Egypt in 1882. A 13 September 1882 article in the NFP evaluating an official communique from the Austro-Hungarian state to Prussian newspapers typifies the NFP's reaction to this assault on the Second Concert.

The focus both of the communique itself and of the NFP's ruminations on it was the consequences Britain's *de facto* seizure of Egypt would have for that aspect of the Treaty of Berlin that concerned the Monarchy most directly, namely the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁷ The

¹⁵ "Das Rothbuch," *Neue Freie Presse*, Wien, 28/10/1881, 1-5. [Our goals can only be common: the solution of the pending questions on the basis of the Berlin peace in the sense of progress and humanity, the maintenance of the European peace against all vicissitudes of the oriental crisis, the unwavering maintenance of the European balance of power. If these aims are common to us, an exchange of ideas about the 'how,' even in the event of differences of opinion, cannot by itself separate us permanently... We also believe that the solution to the Montenegrin border question would not have settled the other as yet unexplored points of the Berlin Treaty. It remains the task of the European powers to work diligently towards the successful realization of the same. Not just our contractual loyalty as a signatory, the special interests of our monarchy also point this out to us...; We also place the greatest emphasis on the preservation of the European concert: but the perspective on coercive measures does not seem to us to support this goal (of preserving the European concert). The European concert only constitutes a diplomatic unit. Avoiding warlike entanglements is its main purpose. It does not fulfill its calling if, instead of giving the world a sense of security, it tends to the use of force, which would have the same consequences for traffic and trade as the state of war and would be likely to lead to such an outcome; We wish the European concert; we would see the same endangered by the adoption of coercive measures... We therefore insist on the demand for the undiminished execution of the Berlin Treaty. We believe, however, that the action of the powers, their nature, as well as the timing of their steps, must be determined by the threefold consideration of the general needs of rest in the world, on the dangers which the violent destruction of Turkey would bring, and finally on the real forces of those for whose support the action of the powers is intended]. Note: in the context of his speech Haymerle's rejection of coercion is not a rejection of coercion *per se*. Haymerle accepts the use of non-violent diplomacy to coerce Concert member states away from the use of violence. What he disavows is the coercive domination of the Concert by any one of its member states, or any attempt by a Concert member state to employ the Concert coercively toward its own, parochial ends.

¹⁶ In 1827 Britain, and to a lesser degree the Russian Empire, undermined the international regime with their intervention in the nationalist Greek War of Independence, an act that violated the essential purpose of the Concert. However, it should be noted that all the First Concert's member states contributed to its gradual effective abrogation over the course of its existence.

¹⁷ The Treaty of Berlin had authorized the Austro-Hungarian military to occupy the Ottoman provinces of Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Novi Pazar, and to administer the former two while leaving the latter under direct Ottoman administration. However, both Bosnia and Herzegovina remained *de jure* under Ottoman sovereignty. While Franz Josef considered Bosnia and Herzegovina effectively annexed to the Habsburg state by the act of occupation, over the next thirty years he continually strove to obtain international recognition of a formal annexation of the provinces,

communique argued to the Prussian people that, in the event of a conference or congress to negotiate the Egyptian crisis, the German Empire should support the Monarchy in its request to add the formal annexation of the provinces to the convention's agenda.

The Habsburg emperor-king and much of his foreign ministry's desire for such formal annexation was an open secret to the NFP, or as its editor described it „daß auch Oesterreich-Ungarn einen Wunschzettel zu präsentircn habe, ist zwar vielfach angedeutet worden.“¹⁸ However, the NFP was uneasy at the prospect of such an action. Indeed, it characterized British actions and Habsburg designs as nothing less than opportunism: „Es ist nicht zu verwundern, wenn angesichts der egyptischen Verwicklung und der Ohnmacht, welche die Türkei der englischen Action gegenüber offenbart, auf allen Seiten, wo man noch eine alte Rechnung mit der Pforte zu begleichen hat oder eine neue zu eröffnen wünscht, geheime Wünsche verschämt zu Tage treten.“¹⁹ More alarming for the NFP than what it saw as dishonorable British or Habsburg intentions were the adverse systematic implications that the annexation of Bosnia would have for the Second Concert: „Aber wenn auch der deutsche Reichskanzler sehr geneigt sei, den Beschwerden der eng verbündeten Macht abzuhelfen, so würde doch das mühsam zu Stande gebrachte Friedenswerk des Berliner Congresses leicht ganz in Frage gestellt werden, wenn man den Wünschen Oesterreichs nachgäbe, die Regelung der bosnischen Frage schon jetzt auf die Tagesordnung zu bringen, denn es genüge nicht, daß die Pforte auf ihre Souveränitätsrechte Verzicht leiste; das Oesterreich ertheilte Mandat sei ein integrierender Bestandtheil des Berliner Vertrages, der durch einhellige Zustimmung der Congreßmächte abgeändert werden müßte.“²⁰

The NFP was quick to remind its readers that German support alone would be inadequate to justify the annexation, nor even would the Ottoman Sultan's acquiesce by itself be sufficient to legitimize such an act. Rather, the principles of the Second Concert and the stipulations of the Treaty

demonstrated, for example, by a secret provision in the second League of the Three Emperors that would allow Austria-Hungary to annex Bosnia and Herzegovina at whatever time the Monarchy deemed appropriate. Official law and international formalities were a serious concern not just to the NFP, but to the emperor-king as well.

¹⁸ “Ausland,” *Neue Freie Presse*, Wien, 13/09/1882, 4. [The fact that Austria-Hungary also has a wish list has been hinted at many times].

¹⁹ “Ausland,” *Neue Freie Presse*, Wien, 13/09/1882, 4. [It is not surprising, in light of the Egyptian crisis and the impotence that Turkey reveals to English action, when on all sides, in which one still has an unsettled bill with the Porte or desires to open a new one with it, secret desires shamefully come to light].

²⁰ “Ausland,” *Neue Freie Presse*, Wien, 13/09/1882, 4. [But even if the German Chancellor were very inclined to remedy the complaints of a closely allied power (i.e., Austria-Hungary) the arduously accomplished peace work of the entire Berlin Congress would easily come into question if one gave in to Austria's wishes, namely, to put the settlement of the Bosnian question on the agenda now, for it is not enough that the Porte renounce its sovereignty; rather, the mandate granted to Austria (to occupy Bosnia) was an integral part of the Berlin Treaty, which can only be changed by unanimous consent of all the Congress powers].

of Berlin required the unanimous approval of all Concert member states. The NFP also went on to express its doubt that such unanimous support would be forthcoming and voiced its general hostility to any acts or proposals that would undermine or challenge the *status quo* of the Berlin Treaty or of the Second Concert. To the NFP, the Concert may have been assailed, but it remained active.

What is especially noteworthy of the NFP's assessment of the Egyptian crisis is that the Berlin Treaty makes no reference to Egypt. As Egypt lies outside the Balkans, it was beyond the purview of the Berlin Congress's formal bailiwick. That the Monarchy sought redress for demands stemming from Britain's actions in Egypt through the instrument of the Berlin Treaty and via the mechanisms of the Second Concert (even as it undermined them), and that the NFP grounded its arguments against Monarchy's designs on the same bases, illustrates how both the NFP and the Monarchy understood that the Berlin Treaty was greater than the sum of its parts.

The Treaty was more than a series of narrow agreements designed *ad hoc* to resolve a handful of conflicts strictly within the confines of the Balkans. Rather, the Monarchy's and NFP's positions implicitly admitted that the Berlin Treaty inaugurated a comprehensive, pan-continental, perhaps even to some extent global, international regime among its member states. The NFP had denounced British and Habsburg disregard for the Berlin Treaty and their machinations against the sovereignty and territory of a fellow Concert member state. It had demonstrated commitment to the *status quo* of the Concert international regime. It had insisted on unanimous consent for amendments to that regime. In doing so the NFP reified the existence and principles of this international regime. As the NFP's arguments make clear, these principles were the inviolability of member state territory and sovereignty, the preservation of existing borders, and conflict resolution through universal consultative mechanisms rather than unilateral acts of violence or conquest.

Fifteen years after the Egyptian crisis another catastrophe, i.e., the Hamidian Massacres, again threatened the Second Concert's foundational tenants and challenged its strength. The NFP addressed the general European response to this crisis, and that of the Monarchy in particular, in a 19 November 1895 article that is characteristic of the NFP's stance throughout the affair. The journal's assessment of these responses demonstrates that neither this crisis nor the intervening years since the Egypt affair had diminished the NFP's belief in the Second Concert, its principles, or its continued relevance to a systematic Habsburg approach to European relations:

...es bekannt geworden, daß keine Macht im Orient isolirt, sondern jede nur im Einvernehmen mit den übrigen Mächten zu handeln gesonnen ist, haben die Meldungen über die Unruhen in Kleinasien viel von ihrem erschreckenden Eindrucke eingebüßt, und überall lebt im Vertrauen auf die Einigkeit Europas... die bereitwillige Annahme des Vorschlages

beweist, daß nirgends die Absicht besteht, die Verwirrung im türkischen Reiche zur Erlangung von Sondervortheilen auszunützen. Sowol England wie Rußland haben die ihnen von dem Wiener Cabinet dargebotene Gelegenheit, ihre Uninteressirtheit zu bekunden, mit Freuden ergriffen und rückhaltlos dem Gedanken zugestimmt, Europa zu einer Action zu vereinigen, welche darauf berechnet ist, zugleich die Integrität der Türkei und die Herstellung der Ordnung im osmanisehen Reiche unter europäischen Schutz zu nehmen... sieht man auf Oesterreich-Ungarns Anregung England und Rußland sich willig in das europäische Concert einfügen... ohne daß bei alledem die Integrität der Türkei in Frage gestellt wird. Das europäische Concert!... Nun ist es plötzlich wieder da, das alte europäische Concert, und zwar gerade auf dem Punkte findet es sich zusammen, der von jeher als der für den Frieden Europas gefährlichste gegolten hat; Rußland und England, die an den Entwicklungen im Orient meist interessirten Mächte, verzichten darauf, Solopartien zu spielen, und folgen willig der Führung Oesterreich-Ungarns, da es sich darum handelt, der Türkei eine Stütze zu gewähren gegen die innere Gefahr, von der sie bedroht ist. Ist dies unter den gegen wärtigen Umständen nicht ein beruhigendes Schauspiel?... Alle Mächte ohne Ausnahme zeigen damit, daß sie friedfertig sind und nicht auf günstige Gelegenheiten lauern, um ihre Lander-Interessen auf Kosten der Anderen durchzusetzen... Oesterreich-Ungarn ist durch den Dreibund nicht gehindert, im Orient eine europäische Cooperation zu veranlassen, welche in dem speciellen Falle das europäische Allianzsystem außer Geltung setzt... so ist es unmöglich, sich des Eindruckes zu erwehren, daß diese Einigung Europas nicht etwa ein bloßes Schlagwort, sondern daß sie eine auch für die Zukunft vielverheißende Parole von sehr concretem Inhalte ist. Nichts hat man sich noch langer Geschichtserfahrung so trennend zwischen den Mächten gedacht, wie die orientalische Frage, auch wenn dieselbe zeitweilig ruhte, und in der That war auch die Scheidung Europas in Dreibund und Zweibund im letzten Grunde auf die Orient-Politik zurückzuführen... Und nun... sämtliche Mächte stellen, indem sie sich einigen, die Integrität der Türkei in den Vordergrund... Es ist eine große Friedensbürgschast vorhanden, und diese drückt sich darin aus, daß wieder ein europäisches Concert existirt, welches den allgemeinen Frieden vor orientalischen Gefahren sichern will.²¹

²¹ "Wien, 18. November," *Neue Freie Presse*, Wien, 19/11/1895, 1. [...it has become known that no power (acting) in the Orient is isolated, but that everyone is only able to act in agreement with the other powers, thus the reports of the unrest in Asia Minor have lost much of their frightening impressions, and people everywhere trust in the unity of Europe... the willing acceptance of the proposal (from the Monarchy to the European powers to strictly act in concert) proves that there is no intention anywhere to exploit the confusion in the Turkish Empire in order to obtain special advantages (for one power alone)... Both England and Russia have joyfully seized the opportunity presented

Aside from the points mentioned above concerning the NFP's assessment of the Egyptian crisis, which apply equally to the NFP's evaluation of the international response to the Hamidian Massacres, several aspects of the latter bear special attention. The first is the NFP's assertion that the Second Concert was most vital in those European affairs where the danger of a general European war was greatest, namely those touching on the Eastern Question in the Balkans. Indeed, in its analysis the NFP claims that the Eastern Question itself was the essential cause for Europe's increasingly pronounced divorce into two antagonistic camps, at that time consisting of the Triple Alliance and the Franco-Russian Alliance. However, the NFP claimed that it was precisely when negotiating with this causal force that the Second Concert superseded the emerging alliance blocks both in importance and in vigor. Thus, the NFP argued that the Concert was not merely an answer to Balkan crises, or Balkan politics broadly, but constituted a comprehensive approach to European politics as a systematic whole. If the Concert could operate as a dynamic institution in resolving conflicts in even the most highly fraught areas of European politics, then surely it could succeed in resolving less explosive and complex issues elsewhere. In the context of the Hamidian Massacres crisis, one therefore encounters in NFP reportage a belief in the existence of a Second Concert and confidence in this Concert's ability to enforce its fundamental principles.

On 18 July 1903 the NFP published an article celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Treaty of Berlin and inauguration of the Second Concert. In the article the NFP admitted that over the course of its existence crises and conflicts had incrementally attenuated the force of the Treaty, and as such the force of the Second Concert. „Die Jahre sind an diesem Aktenstücke nicht spurlos

to them by the cabinet in Vienna to demonstrate their disinterestedness and unreservedly agree to the idea of uniting Europe into an action that is calculated to simultaneously take the integrity of Turkey and the establishment of order in the Ottoman Empire under European protection... one can see England and Russia willingly accept Austria's suggestion to insert themselves into the European concert... without in any way questioning Turkey's integrity. The European concert!... Now it is suddenly back again, the old European concert, and it is precisely on the point, which has always been considered the most dangerous for the peace of Europe, that it finds itself united; Russia and England, the powers most interested in the developments in the Orient, refrain from playing solo games and willingly follow the leadership of Austria-Hungary, since it is a matter of giving Turkey a support against the internal danger from which it is threatened. Isn't this a calming spectacle under the present circumstances?... All the powers without exception show that they are peaceful and do not lurk for favorable opportunities to assert their territorial interests at the expense of others... Austria-Hungary is not prevented by the Triple Alliance from initiating a European cooperation in the Orient, which in special cases supersedes the European alliance system... it is impossible to avoid the impression that this unification of Europe is not a mere catchphrase, but that it is a very promising slogan of very concrete content for the future. Nothing was conceived in long historical experiences as a basis for separation between the powers as much as the oriental question, even if this question at times lay dormant. And, in fact, the division of Europe into the Triple and two Dual Alliances was ultimately due to Oriental politics... And now... by collective agreement, all the powers put the integrity of Turkey in the foreground... There is a large peace guarantor (i.e., the Concert), and this is expressed in the fact that there is again a European concert that aims to secure general peace from oriental dangers].

vorübergegangen; es ist hie und da durchlöchert,” the NFP confessed, and „manche Bestimmung des Berliner Vertrages demgemäß durch den unaufhaltsamen Gang der Ereignisse gegenstandslos geworden.”²² Nevertheless, the NFP argued, „gehört es immer noch zu den bedeutungsvollsten konstitutiven Tatsachen, gehört es zu den wichtigsten Urkunden des heutigen Völkerrechtes. Wie viele Enttäuschungen der Berliner Vertrag auch verursacht haben mag, im wesentlichen hat er doch die in ihn gesetzten Hoffnungen weit übertroffen... das Fundament, das vor fünfundzwanzig Jahren gelegt worden, hat seine Haltbarkeit erwiesen.”²³

And yet just half a decade later the NFP abandoned the Berlin Treaty, and along with it the Second Concert. The occasion that inspired the NFP’s reversal in thinking was the Monarchy’s unilateral annexation of Bosnia, the proximate cause of which had been the Young Turk revolution. That only two months had elapsed between the revolution and Bosnia’s annexation had left the NFP little time to discuss the merits of annexation before it was an accomplished fact, thus forcing the NFP into a position in which it could only decide how to react to a *fait accompli*.

The NFP’s reactions were myriad, though few NFP writers protested, and most celebrated, the annexation. Some NFP writers attempted to preserve the Berlin Treaty, and thereby the Concert, through rhetorical acrobatics, explaining how unilateral annexation was actually consistent with the letter of the Berlin Treaty and the spirit of its principles.²⁴ Others argued that, whatever anyone may have superficially declared at the Berlin Congress, or indeed since then (to include the NFP itself), everyone had always understood that that the Habsburg occupation of Bosnia was nothing other than the formal annexation of the territory.²⁵ Still others blamed other Concert member states for having abrogated the Berlin Treaty long ago.²⁶ By far the most common apology for the annexation was that the Monarchy’s costly, extensive, and successful ‘culture work’ of civilizing in the province had

²² “Wien, 17. Juli,” *Neue Freie Presse*, Wien, 18/07/1903, 1. [The years have left their mark on this file; it is punctured here and there... some provisions of the Berlin Treaty have become irrelevant due to the unstoppable course of events].

²³ “Wien, 17. Juli,” *Neue Freie Presse*, Wien, 18/07/1903, 1. [It is still one of the most significant constitutive facts (of European political life), it is one of the most important documents of international law today. However many disappointments the Berlin Treaty may have caused, it has largely exceeded the hopes placed in it... the foundation that was laid twenty-five years ago has shown its durability].

²⁴ For a typical example of this reasoning see the NFP editorial: Dr. Friedrich Tezner, “Apologetische Bemerkungen zur Annexion der Okkupationsländer,” *Neue Freie Presse*, Wien, 08/10/1908, 3-4. Especially noteworthy is Tezner’s argument that when there is a split between effective and formal sovereignty, the former can only legitimately replace the latter gradually over time. As such, while unilateral annexation may have violated the Treaty of Berlin 25 years before, it no longer did so, as over the intervening period the Monarchy had annexed Bosnia through the longevity of its occupancy.

²⁵ Virtually every NFP writer asserted this, but for an especially brazen example see: “Wien, 7. Oktober,” *Neue Freie Presse*, Wien, 08/10/1908, 1&2.

²⁶ For a characteristic sample of such argumentation see: “Die Delegationsdebatte über die Annexion,” *Neue Freie Presse*, Wien, 08/10/1908, 3&4.

earned Austria-Hungary the right to annex it, sometimes employing language that amounted to legitimacy by right of conquest.²⁷ Yet, however much the NFP might have sought to justify the unilateral annexation of Bosnia, as its own reaction to the Egyptian crisis more than quarter-century before makes clear, the journal understood very well that unilateral annexation was an unambiguous abrogation of the Treaty of Berlin, and as such, of the Second Concert.

Conclusion: Return to the *Status Quo Ante* and the Danger of General War

In “The Well-Defended Domains” Aimee Genell argues that while its contemporaries habitually cast it as a backward and insular power with whom treaties and agreements were not worth the paper on which they were written, in reality for most of the *Belle Époque* the Ottoman state was quite the opposite. The Porte, she explains, not only engaged in international congresses and conferences to a degree disproportionate to its resources, at least compared to other Concert members, but that it tended to display a commitment to international regimes and international law that surpassed other Concert member states. This was not due to any special moral superiority of Ottoman officials or of the Ottoman state. Rather, more than any other Concert member the Ottoman Empire understood that its military weakness and diplomatic isolation meant its surest defense lay in pens and paper rather than bullets and artillery. In other words, its best chance of survival was in the preservation of the Concert and its foundational principles.²⁸

In his discussion of the Habsburg state’s relationship with the Concert, Paul Schroeder does not suggest that the Monarchy demonstrated such an exceptional commitment to international regimes or international law. However, he does assert that the Habsburg state was no less aware than the Ottoman of the special precariousness of its position. Schroeder’s analysis also reveals two other realities relevant for the current discussion. The first is the extent to which the principle of balance of power and the principles of the Concert were not identical and could even be at cross purposes. The second is the extent to which this was actually the case with Austria-Hungary and its relationship to other Concert member states in the early 20th century. Schroeder describes a hemmed-in Austria-Hungary whose relative military decline and geopolitical isolation had rendered respect for its territorial integrity and sovereignty, and the preservation of its borders, an impediment to the maintenance of the balance of power among the other, expanding members of the Concert. Thus, the

²⁷ For an archetypal example of this justification see: “Wien, 12. Oktober,” *Neue Freie Presse*, Wien, 13/10/1908, 1&2.

²⁸ Aimee M. Genell, “The Well-Defended Domains: Eurocentric International Law and the Making of the Ottoman Office of Legal Counsel,” *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* vol. 3, no. 2 (November 2016): 255-275.

pressure for, and danger of, partition progressively escalated and increasingly drove the Monarchy ever closer to a suicidal act of desperation.²⁹

This is not to say that the Habsburg state, or the Ottoman for that matter, were ‘Sick Men’ inescapably destined for the dustbin of history (Genell and Schroeder explicitly deny this). Rather, it is meant to demonstrate that during the *Belle Époque* the existential risk to the Habsburg state was comparatively greater than to any other in the Concert, save the Ottoman, and that most internationally aware Habsburg citizens understood this. Once we acknowledge this reality, the NFP’s renunciation of the Treaty of Berlin, and thereby the Concert, becomes perplexing. Indeed, this is especially the case given the NFP’s liberal-constitutionalist political constituency. By 1908 the Monarchy could depend neither on unilateral force of arms nor on a preponderance of allies, but only on the rules, norms, and principles of an international regime to ensure its survival and to pursue its interests as an independent actor on the European stage. Likewise, by 1908 Austro-German liberals could rely neither on the police powers of the state nor on the force of mass political mobilization, but only on constitutionalism and the rule of law to pursue their interests on the Cisleithanian stage. In short, if any institution in Austria-Hungary should have understood the costs and dangers of returning to the atomized or partisan power block *status quo ante* condition of 1853-1878, it was the NFP.

One question that remains for further research is whether a Second Concert existed in the in the minds of those who actually determined Habsburg foreign policy, or among European policy makers broadly. Beust’s and Haymerle’s language indicate a possibility for the former, while events indicate the possibility of the latter. Indeed, the annexation of Bosnia was the first act after the inauguration of the Treaty of Berlin to incontrovertibly violate all the fundamental tenants of that Treaty and of the Concert. What followed were a series of increasingly frequent and ever more flagrant and consequential violations, namely the Italian invasion of Libya, which finally broke what until then had been thirty-three years of uninterrupted peace between Concert member states, the two Balkan Wars, and the July Crisis. If the Second Concert existed in European thinking broadly, then Austria-Hungary’s abrogation of the international regime contributed, to a degree as yet unappreciated, to the systematic breakdown in European relations that made these wars possible.

²⁹ Paul W. Schroeder, “World War I as Galloping Gertie: A Reply to Joachim Remak,” *The Journal of Modern History* vol. 44, no. 3 (Sep. 1972): 319-345.