

Serbian/Yugoslav-Romanian Relations and Interactions in the 20th Century

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The Decline of Common Security. Yugoslavia and Romania 1936–1941

Abstract: In this paper on the collapse of the common security system that Yugoslavia and Romania built from 1920 to 1941, we assume that historiography has provided enough elements for a general overview of this issue. Nevertheless, through a comparative approach, we can see how and by what means, governments and military leaders were really guided in strategic and tactical decisions. National historiographies often exhibit a tendency to misinterpret the policies and personalities of other countries. Global circumstances, misjudgments and wrong decisions by decision-makers can at times be overlooked. However, such decisions brought Europe back into the war. Emphasizing these errors provides valuable insight into how strategic failures enabled the proponents of the so-called „new order.”

Keywords: Yugoslavia, Romania, Yugoslav Army, Romanian Army, Little Entente, Balkan Pact

A few introductory remarks that should set the framework for understanding the context of the security policy of the Kingdom of SCS (Yugoslavia) and Romania.

After the chain of peace treaties that sanctioned the victory in the First World War (Versailles, Trianon, Saint Germain, Neuilly or Sevres) had been established, all defeated countries immediately began to challenge and question it. Soon, the victorious powers themselves joined them out of special interests. Germany and Hungary were particularly engaged in proving the „unfairness” of the treaties, Austria less so. For example, German Prime Minister (Chancellor), the Socialist Philipp Scheidemann, referred to the treaty as the imprisonment of the German people. He accused the Allies „of trying to enslave the Germans, to force them to work behind barbed wire and prison bars.”¹

¹ Donald Kagan, *On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace*, (New York, London, Sydney: Anchor Books, 1996), 289.

The victors, among them the Kingdom of SCS, by virtue of Serbia's legacy, as well as the enlarged Romania, were almost immediately confronted with the challenge of safeguarding their gains against the revision of disgruntled, defeated states. The victorious powers of Western Europe had the same concern. There was no tsarist Russia as a guarantor of peace, and the USA, together with Great Britain already at the end of 1919 abstained from the most important clause (1) of the Treaty of Versailles that stipulated automatic alliance in protection of peace against military revision. After Germany's unilateral withdrawal from the clause on military limitations in 1933 and the Rhine Crisis of 1936, which can be considered a turning point in the further degradation of the peace treaties and the most important one – the Treaty of Versailles. The League of Nations in which political idealists had placed their hopes showed all its weaknesses after 1935.²

Another milestone contributed to the loss of peace was namely, the Locarno Conference of 1925 that guaranteed only the borders established in the West, but left the eastern borders an open question. In addition, in that very year France itself began to reduce its military potential, on which the authority of the treaty, after all rested.³

Germany itself began to actively prepare for the revision as early as 1920. Minister Gustav Stresemann built a plan to solve political issues through economic policy. Later, in the 1930s, the Minister of Economy, Dietrich, assessed the plan as a primary and perhaps the most important task. In that doctrine, the southeast was defined according to old traditions as a decisive area of interest for Germany. Many obstacles stood in the way of economic and political penetration. The principal influence of that of Western powers, primarily France, which had its main stronghold in the Little Entente from the early 1920s. This alliance was designed as a barrier to revisionism in the Danube region. On the other hand, Germany had a competitor in Italian interests as well. Italy, the victorious power, in its effort to undermine Yugoslavia, positioned itself as the patron of Hungary, Bulgaria and Albania. German efforts were aimed at destabilizing the Little Entente, primarily by isolating Czechoslovakia from Romania and Yugoslavia. After the economic crisis, space opened up for her to suspend their

² Nicole Jordan, *The Popular Front and Central Europe. The Dilemmas of French Impotence 1918–1940*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Martin S. Alexander, *The Republic in Danger: General Maurice Gamelin and the Politics of French Defence, 1933–1940*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Anthony Adamthwaite, *Grandeur and Misery. France's bid for power in Europe 1914–1940*, (London, New York, Sydney: Arnold, 1995); Jean Doise, Maurice Vaisse, *Diplomatie et outil militaire. Politique étrangère de la France 1871-2015*, Nouvelle édition, (Paris: Seuil, 2015); Piotr Wandycz, „The Little Entente, Sixty Years Later”, *The Slavonic and East European Review* 59/1991; Piotr Wandycz, *The Twilight of French Eastern Alliances, 1926–1936*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); Eliza Campus, *The Little Entente and the Balkan Alliance*, (București: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1978).

³ Миле Бјелајац, *Дипломаџија и војска: Србија и Југославија 1901–1999*, (Београд: Медија центар Одбрана, Академија за дипломатију и безбедност, 2010).

cooperation with Western economies through the clearing exchange. As Italy had done earlier, Germany supported disintegrative forces within the targeted states. It also supported those political forces that, since the mid-1930s, had shown a few introductory remarks that should set the framework for understanding the context of the security policy of the Kingdom of SHS (Yugoslavia) and Romania. Business ties and understanding with Germany. The system of collective security was weakened, and was replaced by a system of bilateral agreements with German favor.⁴

In numerous economic and political accounts in Germany, the presence of other European countries and the United States of America in the markets of Southeast Europe was declared „illegal“. These countries were designated as „foreign powers outside of the region“ (*die raumfremden Mächte*). With the strengthening of Germany, its pressures and blackmail became more ruthless.⁵

The military cooperation of the Kingdom of SHS (Yugoslavia) with the Kingdom of Romania, after disagreements over the delimitation in Banat in 1919, took the same path it had had since 1913 and during the First World War. The two countries stood on equal footing during two attempts of the Habsburgs restoration in Hungary and later on, following Hungarian trends in the revision of the Trianon Peace Treaty. On the other hand, cooperation was dictated by the preservation of the gains of the Second Balkan and First World Wars at the expense of Bulgaria.⁶ Good-neighborly relations were also sealed by the marriage of King Alexander I to the Romanian princess Maria, daughter of King Ferdinand, in 1922.⁷

On June 7, 1921, the Kingdom of SHS and Romania concluded a definitive alliance against Hungary and Bulgaria, should these two powers attempt a violent change of territory to the detriment of the contracting countries (Art. 1). This defensive alliance resulted (art. 2) in a bilateral military convention on January 23, 1922, which specified the form of military cooperation against Hungary and Bulgaria.⁸

⁴ Milan D. Ristović, *Nemački „Novi poredak“ i Jugoistočna Evropa 1940/1941–1944/45. Planovi o budućnosti i praksa*, (Beograd: Vojnoizdavački i novinski centar, 1991), 11, 13.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶ Андреј Митровић, *Разграничење Југославије са Мађарском и Румунијом 1919–1920: прилози проучавању југословенске политике на Конференцији мира у Паризу*, (Нови Сад, Београд: Прометеј, Радио-телевизија Србије, 2019); Milan Vanku, *Mala Antanta 1920–1938*, (Užice: 1969); Desanka Todorović, *Jugoslavija i balkanske države 1918–1923*, (Beograd: Narodna knjiga, 1979); Mile Bjelajac, *Vojska Kraljevine SHS 1918–1921*, (Beograd: Narodna knjiga, 1988); Vuk Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Mađarska 1918–1933*, (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1971); Vuk Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Mađarska 1934–1941*, (Beograd, Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1980); Vuk Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Francuska između dva rata (Da li je Jugoslavija bila francuski satelit?)*, (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1985); Čedomir Popov, *Od Versaja do Danciga*, (Beograd: Nolit, 1976).

⁷ Aleksandar Đ. Marinković, *Ženidba kralja Aleksandra Karađorđevića*, (Beograd: Vajat, 2004).

⁸ Bogdan Krizman, *Vanjska politika jugoslavenske države 1918–1941, Diplomatsko-historijski pregled*, (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1975), 156–157.

There was also a bilateral agreement between Romania and Czechoslovakia, but only in terms of containing Hungary. When the first tripartite military convention of the Little Entente states was signed on September 14, 1923, it provided for action only against Hungary. The part from the bilateral convention of the Kingdom of SHS and Romania with regard to Hungary was also taken over. Article 15 of this convention determined that upon signing this agreement, the validity of previous bilateral agreements ceases. However, during the definitive military convention of the Little Entente on May 11, 1931, a special bilateral convention was signed between the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and Romania, under the same date, only against Bulgaria. This confirmed and strengthened the earlier agreement of June 7, 1921. In the summer of 1940, the military leadership of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia maintained that this convention against Bulgaria was still valid, but with the remark that it was not of much practical importance, „because military cooperation between of our Kingdom and Romania against Bulgaria were specified in much more detail in the tripartite military convention of the Balkan Agreement of November 6, 1936 and in the fourth military convention of the Balkan Agreement of March 10, 1937.” Nevertheless, it was emphasized in this report, that the previous bilateral convention with Romania, would have no importance in case of termination of military obligation between the countries of the Balkan Agreement. Incidentally, the political treaty of the two kingdoms dated June 7, 1921, was still valid as it was extended on February 20, 1939.⁹

It should be added that Czechoslovakia had an agreement with France and the USSR in the system of security agreements, and that Romania had an agreement with Poland from 1934, and counted on the help from the USSR. Yugoslavia had a friendship treaty with France from 1927 (which evidently included a secret military convention).¹⁰

After the occupation of Czechoslovakia, the Minister of the Army and Navy of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, General Milutin Nedic, in his order (Pov. Đ. No. 2299) of June 7, 1939, assessed that the tripartite convention of the Little Entente of May 11, 1931 did not exist anymore after the disappearance of Czechoslovakia as an independent state. Other members of the government did not agree, warning this was too rigid a position because regardless of the exit of one member, the other two remained. The solution in the analysis submitted to the head of the state (Prince Paul), regardless of the legal point of view that would be accepted as correct, claimed: „it seems to us that we would have to solve this issue by being guided only by our interests and keeping in mind our political intentions, both towards Hungary and towards Romania. Looking at the matter

⁹ Arhiv Jugoslavije [Archives of Yugoslavia] (AJ), Fond 74, Dvor Kraljevine Jugoslavije, rol. 14, 827–830, Jugoslovenski Generalštab Knezu Pavlu, 12. jun 1940.

¹⁰ B. Krizman, *Vanjska politika jugoslavenske države 1918–1941...*, 161–164; Mile Bjelajac, *Vojska Kraljevine SHS/Jugoslavije 1922–1935*, (Beograd: INIS, 1994), 231; Vuk Vinaver, *Jugoslovensko-francuski odnosi...*

from this point of view, it seems to us that it would not be in our interest, in regards to the military obligations against Hungary, between our Kingdom and Romania, to cancel them now. The Romanians could understand, if we took a stand that convention is not valid any more, as a change in our policy towards both Romania and Hungary. Then, if the military convention between Romania and our Kingdom against Hungary, ceased to exist, both militarily and politically, it would undoubtedly strengthen Hungarian's position in many ways. We certainly have no interest in strengthening Hungary's position, until we have arranged our relations with it, either together with Romania, or separately." In the same report, it is pointed out that at a given moment it would not be opportune to go to a new convention, as proposed by the Minister of Defense, at a time when Yugoslavia was trying to get closer to Hungary.

The conclusion was:

„Accordingly, it seems to us that for now it would be best for us if our and Romanian military experts, as requested by the Romanian General Staff, specify our military obligations against Hungary in a special protocol, taking care not to expand our obligations in the convention of May 11, 1931, which is already quite extensive".¹¹

It should be noted, as stated in this study, „that the principle of military cooperation between our Kingdom and Romania against Hungary was included in the quadruple military convention of the Balkan Agreement of March 10, 1937, in the event that Bulgaria and Hungary attacked one of the countries of the Balkan Agreement." In this convention, the procedure was not precisely defined, unlike the military cooperation between the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and Greece in the event of an attack by Albania where sectors and military forces were precisely defined.¹²

Even before the final occupation of Czechoslovakia, in February 1939, the Romanian General Staff had a pessimistic assessment that the political and strategic situation in Southeast Europe had worsened. It was estimated that Germany was trying to reach the borders of the USSR „through Poland or even through us ... strong tensions between us and the USSR could be foreseen if Romania is proven to enter the German sphere of influence in any form."¹³

Yugoslavia's allies, Czechoslovakia and Romania, had armies of varying quality and strength. The evaluation of their quality by the Yugoslav General Staff, and then by the Minister of War, could have an impact on the (international) political orientation of Yugoslav statesmen, both in the period up to 1935 and later.

¹¹ AJ, Fond 74, rol. 14, 828.

¹² AJ, Fond 74, rol. 14, 830. At the end of this report is the date June 12th 1939, Belgrade. As it is in the Prince Paul's collection, that he had taken with him in refuge, he knew about for sure at the time.

¹³ Mihail Eugen Campan, „Romania's General Staff National Defence Strategy over 1918–1939", *Revue Internationale D'Histoire Militaire, Edition Roumanie*, 77/1992, 109–120.

In addition to the flattering marks for training and equipment, which were given to it by French officers, the Czech army gained more and more respect among the former Serbian officers. In contrast to the first post-war years when it was very critically assessed, at the beginning of 1935 it was perceived as a modern and efficient army. Evaluating the maneuvers of the Czech army (September 19–23, 1934), the Yugoslav military envoy underlined the use of modern means on a broad basis, „powerful motorization and powerful means of communication.”¹⁴

Unlike the Czechoslovak army, the state of the Romanian army did not inspire confidence in the Allies. Although with the largest formation in terms of human resources, the Romanian army suffered the consequences of weak economic and financial resources with a more pronounced division within the officer corps (old Romanian and former Austro-Hungarian, nationally diverse) and the troops. Therefore, the Romanian army was more similar to the Yugoslav army.¹⁵

In March 1934, amid a series of escalating European crises, the Romanian King Carol tried to get the necessary weapons and equipment from France through personal involvement. Since Romania was unable to pay for these claims, the issue of rearmament remained open during the following years. Bad impressions of the state of the Romanian army were conveyed to the French military attaché in Belgrade, General Lepetit by General Petar Aračić upon his return from the meeting of the chiefs of staff of the Little Entente in Bucharest in March 1934: „The Romanian army is truly falling apart: the training is mediocre, the arsenals are empty and at the same time one can doubt whether there is even the necessary material for mobilization. We can also ask whether Romania is able to keep its promises to put a certain number of divisions at our disposal. The treasury has dried up (Á sec) and they are not able to pay for the material ordered abroad, 24 batteries are ordered in Czechoslovakia and 150 aircraft in Poland. When that material is ready, those powers would refuse to deliver it until the matter is settled.” General Lepetit noticed that Aračić was very disappointed and very worried.¹⁶

The Spanish Civil War, along with Italy’s earlier aggression against Ethiopia in 1935 and the Rhineland crisis, served as testing grounds for new military technologies and doctrines. All three events foreshadowed the impending European and global conflict. All this caused concern, alarm among Yugoslav military and political top brass.

However, concerns were driven not only by inadequate equipment and incomplete military reforms, but also by the evident weakness of France, the main guarantor of the Treaty of Versailles and the principal ally of Yugoslavia and several other Eastern allies. The Yugoslav Army pushed hard to

¹⁴ M. Bjelajac, *Vojska Kraljevine SHS/Jugoslavije 1922–1935...*, 219.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 217, 220.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 219–220.

obtain additional loans for the rearmament and completion of the military industrial complex. Things get worse after Munich crisis and fall of Czechoslovakia in March 1939. The Allies, Great Britain and France could not deliver enough materials since they need them, too.¹⁷ So, Yugoslavia had to turn to her arch enemies Italy and Germany. Yugoslavia traded its raw materials, especially copper, lead and molybdenum, hemp and food, for airplanes, engines, tanks, guns, anti-aircraft guns etc.¹⁸

The Yugoslav army had more potential, but its equipment was a weak point. The economically weak country could not acquire everything necessary to equip the planned formation of almost 30 infantry and two cavalry divisions.

There was a lack not only of means of transport, of motorization, but also of roads and railways. Although they were built quickly, the mobilization and transportation to the concentration area took more than twice as long as in Italy. Comparing the forces of the air force and the fleet made no sense. Without large emergency loans, it was difficult to equip and support the army. The highest hopes were placed in the development of the military-industrial complex and heavy industry. Notable results were indeed achieved there. A lot was done before the war, but then the internal national disunity started to worry. Morale was affected by the decline in credibility of the great allies France and Britain.¹⁹

The situation only got more complicated after the collapse of Czechoslovakia and the start of the Second World War. This provoked Romania's and Yugoslavia's fears for the near future, both because of their own military unpreparedness, but, even more, because of the weakness of their western allies, France and Great Britain, and the uncertain attitude of the USSR. Everyone began to look for a way to avoid being drawn into the conflict with as few losses as possible. The West, in the first place Great Britain, started the policy of appeasement. After an active policy of reviving cooperation with the Eastern allies, including the USSR, from 1932 to 1935, France followed the same path, which was best illustrated by its attitude in the Rhine crisis of 1936. This was followed by Munich in 1938. Czechoslovakia and Romania hoped in vain that

¹⁷ Mile Bjelajac, „Vojska Kraljevine Jugoslavije 1918–1941”, *Vojnoistorijski glasnik*, 1-2/1993, 112–148.

¹⁸ Далибор Денда, *Шлем и шајкача, Војни фактор и југословенско-немачки односи (1918–1941)*, (Нови Сад: Матица Српска, 2019); Далибор Денда, *Аушо јединице у војсци Краљевине Југославије*, (Београд: Медија центар Одбрана, 2021); Mile Bjelajac, „The Influence of Spanish Civil War on Military Thought in Yugoslavia”, *Jugoslavenski dobrovoljci u odbrani Španske Republike*, *Tematski zbornik radova*, ur. Olga Manojlović Pintar, (Belgrade: INIS, 2024), 97–98.

¹⁹ Milan Stojadinović, *Ni rat ni pakt*, (Rijeka: Otokar Keršovani, 1970), 423–431, 499–501; Милан Стојадиновић: *Политика у време глобалних ломова*, ур. Миша Ђурковић, (Београд: Завод за уџбенике, 2013), 29–43; Миле Бјелајац, „Југословенско искуство са мултиетничком армијом са посебним освртом на Босну и Херцеговину”, *Војно-историјски гласник*, 2/2008, 70–93; Душица Бојић, *Сећања породице и мемоари генерала Љубомира Марића, (1878–1960)*, Друго допуњено издање, (Београд: Историјски музеј Србије, 2017), 218–220.

France would not give up its position in the Danube region. After the departure of Minister Titulescu, Romania began to lean toward neutrality.²⁰

It is interesting that the Romanian General Staff concluded before the outbreak of the Second World War that Romania was „alone and without any political and material support from any foreign power.” They also assessed that Romania is in a fatal position of strategic encirclement. Military planners then took the stand that they would have to defend all borders. “A decision was made by Higher Council of the Army on 15 November 1939 to fortify the borders in the Eastern Carpathians and in the Danube area, and to ensure the necessary forces for other fronts and to prove that attempts were made to achieve a circular strategic defense apt to stave off any attack for as long as it was possible.”²¹

Under the government of Milan Stojadinović, Yugoslavia followed the British policy, trying to take advantage of economic cooperation with Italy and Germany and to improve its own position towards its powerful western neighbor. A race against time had begun to finalize plans for establishing a military-industrial complex and modernizing the army as a means of deterrence. The Anschluss of Austria in 1938 brought Germany to Yugoslavia's doorstep, and the occupation of Albania by Italy in 1939 brought another enemy to the sensitive southern flank.²²

Czechoslovakia played an important role in supplying Yugoslavia and Romania with weapons, but also in providing loans. Romania and Yugoslavia were exporters of raw materials and agricultural products, but also an important source of oil (Romania) for all three countries. Yugoslavia, due to its geographical position and good relations with Greece, having a free zone in the port of Thessaloniki, was of the great importance for supplying Romania, Czechoslovakia, and even Poland in a case of war. Members of Little Entente agreed on immediate necessity for unification of weapons and calibers for the sake of easier mutual supply. From 1936, after the Rhine crisis and Italy's attack on Ethiopia in 1935, war plans for a major war began to be considered.

After the defeat of Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia agreed to step up the activities of the Balkan Alliance and resolve the issue of Bulgaria. There was willingness to make smaller compensations to Bulgaria if it stood by the Balkan Agreement. In February 1940, a conference of member countries of the Balkan Alliance was held in Belgrade. Romanian Minister Gafencu made it known to other members that he would ask for guarantees from Germany and conclude a friendship pact with the USSR if the Alliance did not guarantee Romania's borders with Hungary and Bulgaria.²³

²⁰ Здењек Сладек, *Мала Анџанија 1918–1938: њене љивредне, љолиџичке и војне ком- љоненџе*, (Београд: Службени гласник, 2019), 287.

²¹ М. Е. Сампан, „Romania's General Staff National Defence Strategy...”, 109–120.

²² М. Bjelajac, „Vojska Kraljevine Jugoslavije 1918–1941”, 112–128.

²³ Џивко Аврамовски, *Balkanska Antanta (1934–1940)*, (Београд: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1986)

Thus, the Little Entente as a tripartite pact was reduced to an earlier bilateral agreement between Romania and Yugoslavia. The Balkan Alliance soon experienced a similar fate. On one side, Turkey and Greece had common interests and a tendency to cooperate with Great Britain, and the exposed Yugoslavia and Romania were looking to somehow align themselves with German interests. Yugoslavia sought, naively, to secure itself through bilateral agreements with Bulgaria, Italy and finally with Hungary on eternal friendship (1940). She also counted on economic cooperation with Germany as a factor that would save her from war. Romania faced even greater temptations due to old territorial aspirations on the part of Hungary and Bulgaria. Germany soon stood behind both countries, replacing the former Italian patronage.²⁴

After the collapse of France, German threats and actions intensified. Threats were repeated to Yugoslavia in July 1940, and on August 4, German contingents moved from Hungary to Romania. Mussolini invaded Greece on October 28, 1940. The entire system of collective security collapsed and each country saved itself as it could. Nothing remained of the plans for a neutral Balkans or the plans for a new Thessaloniki front which the British rejected on September 14, 1939. Nevertheless, it must be said that, despite everything, both Yugoslavia and Romania helped, publicly and secretly, their former allies. Romania thus provoked anger in Germany when, at the end of September 1939, it enabled the transfer (transit) of Polish gold and part of the army on the way to France. Like Yugoslavia and Greece, Romania had declared neutrality at the outset of the war. The German-Soviet Pact, which secretly gave the Soviets a free hand in Bessarabia, made Romania's hopes of February 1940 unrealistic.²⁵

Yugoslavia wholeheartedly assisted Greece with weapons and material during its defense against Italy. It also refused all Axis's requests for the transport of materials to Albania through its territory, even at the cost of stopping military deliveries from Germany and Italy. Greece managed not only to defend itself and secure Thessaloniki for its allies, but in 1941 it managed to push the Italians deeper into Albania. When Germany came into possession of the documents of the French General Staff in 1940, it could realize that the Yugoslav policy of neutrality was false. So was Greek. These facts were disclosed before the Italian aggression in 1940, and after March 27, 1941, before the attack on Yugoslavia, and they were used for propaganda preparation for the war.²⁶

²⁴ *Aprilski rat 1941: zbornik dokumenata*, knj. 1, ur. Dušan Gvozdenović, (Beograd: Vojnoistorijski institut, 1969), 436; Martin S. Alexander, *The Republic in Danger...*

²⁵ Olivier Delorme, *La Grèce et les Balkans, Du V siècle à nos jours*, II, (Paris: Folio, Gallimard, 2013), 1032–1033; *Aprilski rat 1941...*, 436; Martin S. Alexander, *The Republic in Danger...*

²⁶ Миле Бјелајац, „Лажна неутралност: Југословенска помоћ западним савезницима и Грчкој (1939–1941)”, *Војноисторијски гласник*, 1/2020, 109–135.

Summary

History of the joint efforts by Yugoslavia and Romania to preserve gains of the 1918 victory and peace, and how they finally failed to do so, reflects all the trials that interwar Europe was going through. Anticipating the tendencies of Germany and the defeated countries, the Kingdom of SCS (Yugoslavia) and Romania opted for greater military cooperation within the framework of the Little Entente. Later, they expand cooperation within the Balkan Pact. Yugoslavia's allies, Czechoslovakia and Romania, had armies of varying quality and strength. The evaluation of their quality by the Yugoslav Minister of War, could have an impact on the (international) political orientation of Yugoslav statesmen, both in the period up to 1935 and later. Unlike the Czechoslovak army, perceived as a modern and efficient one, the state of the Romanian army did not inspire confidence in the Allies. Although with the largest formation in terms of human resources, the Romanian army suffered the consequences of weak economic and financial resources and division within the officer corps. Yugoslav Army suffered from the same causes. Since 1938, the security drama intensified. With the loss of Czechoslovakia in 1939 and its military-industrial complex, the issue of arms supply opened up for Romania and Yugoslavia. The Allies, Great Britain and France could not deliver enough materials since they need them, too. After the German occupation of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslav Minister of the Army on June 7, 1939, assessed that the tripartite convention of the Little Entente of May 11, 1931 did not exist anymore after the disappearance of Czechoslovakia as an independent state. Other members of the government did not agree, warning this was too rigid a position because regardless of the exit of one member, the other two remain. After the defeat of Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia agreed to step up the activities of the Balkan Alliance and resolve the issue of Bulgaria. There was willingness to make smaller compensations to Bulgaria if it stood by the Balkan Agreement. In February 1940, a conference of member countries of the Balkan Alliance was held in Belgrade. Romanian Minister Gafencu made it known to other members that he would ask for guarantees from Germany and conclude a friendship pact with the USSR if the Alliance did not guarantee Romania's borders with Hungary and Bulgaria. The collapse of France in June 1940 was a new blow to the security system to which Romania and Yugoslavia belonged. Both countries eventually fell under German domination, only with different consequences.

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