

Nemanja M. POPOVIĆ\*, nemanjanewwave@gmail.com

## THE PRINCIPALITY OF MONTENEGRO – POLITICAL CHALLENGES FROM THE CRIMEAN WAR TO THE DEATH OF PRINCE DANILO

**ABSTRACT:** *This paper analyzes the key political challenges faced by the Principality of Montenegro from the Crimean War (1853–1856) to the death of Prince Danilo Petrović Njegoš in 1860. Special attention is given to Montenegro's complex position vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire, its efforts toward international recognition, the role of the great powers—Russia, France, Austria, and Britain—in shaping Montenegrin foreign policy, and its relations with the Principality of Serbia in the context of the broader Serb question. The study also examines internal factors that influenced Prince Danilo's decisions, including limited economic resources. The paper argues that, despite significant diplomatic and military obstacles—including the Battle of Grahovo in 1858—Montenegro succeeded in solidifying its status as a distinct political entity, though still lacking formal international recognition. The death of Prince Danilo marked the end of a phase in the struggle for Montenegrin statehood and the liberation of the Serb people, opening a new chapter under the leadership of Prince Nikola.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Prince Danilo, Montenegro, Serbia, Ottoman Empire, France, Russia, Great Britain, Crimean War (1853-1856), Treaty of Paris (1856), Battle of Grahovac (1858)*

The Russian Empire sought formal recognition of its right to protect and intervene on behalf of Orthodox Christians within the Ottoman Empire, modeled after the rights the High Porte had already granted France in regard to the protection of Christian holy sites in Palestine. The Sultan, however, was unwilling to make such concessions to St. Petersburg. In response, Russian troops entered Wallachia and Moldavia in July 1853, aiming to pressure

---

\* The author is a doctoral candidate at the Faculty of Philosophy – University of Belgrade.

the Ottoman Empire.<sup>1</sup> In October of the same year, the Ottomans declared war on Russia.<sup>2</sup>

Russian and Ottoman forces first clashed along the Danube, leading to a six-month period of low-intensity warfare. A pivotal moment came when the Russian navy decisively defeated the Ottoman fleet in the Battle of Sinope, a port city on the northern Turkish coast. This demonstration of Russian naval dominance in the Black Sea alarmed Britain and France, both of whom feared Russian expansion into the Mediterranean. Consequently, in 1854, they joined the war on the side of the Ottoman Empire (Sardinia would follow in 1855). Major combat operations soon shifted to the Crimean Peninsula.<sup>3</sup>

Tsar Nicholas I Romanov assessed that a widespread uprising in the Balkans could, if not resolve the Eastern Question, at least strategically ease Russia's position in the conflict with Turkey. Motivated by this perception, the Tsar dispatched special envoys to Serbia and Montenegro. To Montenegro, he sent a familiar figure—J.P. Kovalevsky. Although Kovalevsky officially came to deliver humanitarian aid for the victims of Montenegro's recent war against Ottoman forces under Omar Pasha Latas, his primary mission was to assess the feasibility of organizing an uprising in the Balkans.<sup>4</sup>

Kovalevsky believed an uprising would be impossible unless Bosnia and Herzegovina were severed from the rest of Ottoman territory. This, in turn, required coordinated military action between the two Serb principalities—Montenegro and Serbia. According to his plan, Montenegrin forces, assisted by Herzegovinian rebels, were to invade and capture Gacko, while Serbian troops would simultaneously march to meet them after taking Novi Pazar. Such a maneuver would effectively isolate Bosnia and Herzegovina, whose Serb population would then be expected to rise up, creating a base for a wider anti-Ottoman revolt across the Balkan Peninsula.<sup>5</sup>

Although Austria did not formally participate in the war, it supported the containment of Russia in alignment with other major powers. Vienna exerted pressure on Montenegro to refrain from any military actions in Herzegovina, warning that such steps would provoke not only the Ottomans, but also Britain and France. Additionally, Austrian officials reminded Prince Danilo that Serbia, at that time, was neither ready nor willing to take any action against the Ottoman Empire. Austria even issued a ban on the export of military supplies to Montenegro.

<sup>1</sup> С. Павловић, *Историја Балкана 1804–1945*, СЛЮ, Београд, 2004. 78–79.

<sup>2</sup> Р. Кегг, *The Crimean War*, McMillan, 2000. 17.

<sup>3</sup> С. Павловић, *op. cit.* 78–79.

<sup>4</sup> Б. Павићевић, *Данило Петровић Његош - књаз црногорски и брдски 1851–1860*, Књижевне новине, Београд, 1990. 182–184.

<sup>5</sup> Same

These developments gradually disheartened Prince Danilo, and even the Russian Chancellor, Karl Nesselrode, began to recognize the impracticality of instigating a coordinated Balkan uprising. Austria also moved directly against Kovalevsky, accusing him of inciting the Montenegrins and steering them toward war with the Ottomans. In Vienna, discontent with the Russian envoy's activities grew, particularly due to fears that his influence might embolden the Montenegrins to seek territorial expansion.

While in Kotor, Kovalevsky came into contact with the Austrian authorities attempting to persuade them to permit Montenegro to procure arms. His request was firmly denied. Soon afterward, Kovalevsky departed for Dubrovnik, from where he sent a letter to Prince Danilo stating that the Austrian government had "slandered him in every possible way." The Russian envoy added, "With a heart full of sorrow, I leave this land; I leave you, whom I sincerely love; I leave dear Montenegro, so close to my heart." It is presumed that Austrian pressure ultimately forced Kovalevsky's departure.<sup>6</sup>

Under the pressure of the European powers, it was difficult for St. Petersburg to take any serious steps toward instigating an uprising in the Balkans. The last Russian attempt consisted of dispatching General Salos. His mission in Belgrade proved unsuccessful. Following this, Salos traveled to Cetinje, where he was received by the Montenegrin Prince. After Salos explained the aim of his mission, Prince Danilo replied, "It is too late, General." It is evident that Austrian pressure on Prince Danilo had borne fruit. Furthermore, the increasingly severe issue of famine placed Montenegro in a very difficult position.<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, allied warships entered the Black Sea and blockaded the Russian fleet of battleships stationed at the Crimean port of Sevastopol. Due to the threat that the Austrian Empire might also engage militarily on the side of the anti-Russian alliance, Russia was compelled in the summer of 1854 to withdraw its troops from Moldavia and Wallachia. In the autumn of that same year, allied forces landed in Crimea, inflicted several defeats on the Russian army, and laid siege to Sevastopol. Amidst the ongoing hostilities, Tsar Nicholas I died in January 1855 and was succeeded by his son, Alexander II. Sevastopol fell in August of that year.<sup>8</sup>

The war was officially concluded with the Treaty of Paris, signed in March 1856. Under the terms of the treaty, the Russian Empire was obliged to renounce its claims toward the Ottoman Empire, to accept the neutralization of the Black Sea, which required the dismantling of its Black Sea fleet

<sup>6</sup> Same, 198.

<sup>7</sup> Same, 200–201.

<sup>8</sup> Б. Ј. Иванов, В. М. Караев, Е. И. Куксина, А. С. Орешников, О. В. Сухарева, *Кратка историја Русије- од најстаријих времена до краја XX века*, Логос, Београд, 2009, 110.

and military bases, and to recognize the Franco-British protectorate over Moldavia, Wallachia, and Serbia.<sup>9</sup>

During his contacts with Russian representatives in Vienna prior to the Paris Peace Congress, Prince Danilo proposed that a memorandum be sent to the delegates of the Great Powers, requesting formal recognition of Montenegro. The Russian side believed that such a move would only complicate the situation in Paris without yielding any substantive benefit for Montenegro, emphasizing that this might actually harm Montenegrin independence, “since it already exists *de facto*, although it has not been formally recognized.”<sup>10</sup>

Prince Danilo’s proposal to personally attend the Paris Congress—or to send a representative—also failed to receive Russia’s approval. In a letter addressed to Tsar Alexander II, Danilo outlined the following points:

1. Turkey and Montenegro were in a state of constant war, partly due to disputed territory that neither Turkish nor Montenegrin subjects could freely cultivate, but which was essential for Montenegro’s survival.
2. Since Montenegro was surrounded on all sides, unable to secure “even the smallest trading port,” it requested the coastal town of Spič be granted to the Montenegrin state.
3. A precise delineation of the state border between Turkey and Montenegro should be established, as it had been with Austria, and the following regions of Herzegovina should be ceded to Montenegro: the Onogošt Captaincy, Piva, and Drobnjak.<sup>11</sup>

It is clear that after its defeat in the Crimean War, Russia found itself in a difficult position and was in no condition to advocate actively for the Montenegrin question at the Congress without further complicating its already weakened international standing.

At the Paris Congress itself, Montenegro’s international legal status remained unchanged. As an ally of Britain and France in the Crimean War, and having improved relations with Austria, the Ottoman Empire persistently maintained the position that Montenegro was one of its provinces. On March 14, 1856, the Turkish envoy Ali Pasha declared at the Congress that the Ottoman Empire regarded Montenegro as an integral part of its territory—without any of the Great Powers voicing an objection to this claim.<sup>12</sup>

Recognizing the precarious position of Russia, as well as Austria’s increasingly reserved attitude toward Montenegro, Prince Danilo resolved to

<sup>9</sup> Same

<sup>10</sup> Д. Вуксан, *Књаз Данило Петровић Његош, друга година владе (1853)*, Записи – књ. IX, Цетиње, 1931. 12.

<sup>11</sup> Same, 251.

<sup>12</sup> В. Ђоровић, *Историја Срба*, Leo commerce, Београд, 2017, 667.

orient his foreign policy more decisively toward Napoleon III and France. Following the Crimean War, France had emerged as the preeminent power in Europe, and the Montenegrin prince was well aware that, without the backing of a major power, he would be unable to realize his political aspirations.

In seeking the protection of the French Emperor, Prince Danilo emphasized that “the Montenegrin people are guilty of nothing, except for having consistently defended their independence and their faith,” while being surrounded on all sides by enemies determined to destroy the cult of freedom that the Montenegrins had established. Elaborating on this idea, the prince added: “In order to subjugate us, they have occupied the Serb lands, seized the Serb coast—what remains to us are only rocks and our hearts, which shall never falter.”<sup>13</sup> In this way, the Montenegrin prince underscored the problem his people faced due to their confinement to a rugged and unfavorable terrain without access to the sea, as well as the resulting economic deprivation stemming from such geographic limitations.

In the second half of 1856, Prince Danilo’s aide-de-camp, Danilo Vuković, traveled to Paris. His objective was to promote before the French court the idea of international recognition of the Principality of Montenegro, along with the expansion of its borders to include access to the sea, which would also entail a delineation of the frontier with the Ottoman Empire. Vuković was warmly received in France. He was granted audiences with both the Emperor and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Nevertheless, it was suggested to him that France could not support the aspirations for international recognition of independence. Instead, Montenegro was advised to negotiate with the Ottoman Empire for the recognition of the Sultan’s suzerainty, and to seek territorial expansion within that framework.<sup>14</sup>

Prince Danilo thought he could influence the goodwill of the French Emperor through his personal presence, and thus decided to visit Paris himself. In addition to this motivation, his wife, Princess Darinka, had a significant influence on his decision in this matter. Princess Darinka, to whom the prince was deeply devoted and indulgent, was particularly captivated by the glamour of the Parisian court, and the prospect of an audience with Napoleon III greatly appealed to her personal vanity.

The princely couple arrived in the French capital on March 7, 1857. Although Prince Danilo was received warmly by Napoleon III, his expectations that his personal presence might expedite the resolution of the Montenegrin question soon proved illusory. In several meetings with the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, during which Montenegro’s demands—as outlined in the

<sup>13</sup> Б. Павићевић, *op. cit.* 252.

<sup>14</sup> Р. Распоповић, О дипломатији Црне Горе након промјене облика владавине у земљи 1852. године, *Историјски записи*, 1-2/2012, 16–17.

memorandum to the Great Powers—were reiterated, Prince Danilo was presented with detailed explanations as to why these demands could not be fulfilled. A delineation of borders with the Ottoman Empire would not be supported by Britain, as it might be interpreted as de facto recognition of Montenegrin independence. Austria opposed any Montenegrin access to the sea, while the Ottoman Empire conditioned any territorial expansion on Montenegro's formal recognition of the Sultan's suzerainty.<sup>15</sup>

Following such signals from France, it became clear to the Prince that the Montenegrin question entailed a far greater degree of complexity, requiring a prolonged and delicate diplomatic effort—something his inherently combative disposition was not particularly suited for.<sup>16</sup> The Prince began to consider the possibility of recognizing nominal Ottoman suzerainty in exchange for territorial expansion toward Herzegovina and the Sanjak of Scutari, as well as access to a coastal outlet.

Russia viewed Danilo's pivot toward France and his contemplation of recognizing Ottoman suzerainty with disapproval. The dissatisfaction in St. Petersburg reached the point where serious consideration was given to supporting the Montenegrin opposition with the aim of deposing him. The leader of this opposition movement was Đorđije Petrović, President of the Governing Senate, who held a deeply critical stance toward the Prince's departure from the traditional policy of reliance on Russia.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to Petrović, among the individuals who maintained contact with the Russian consul in Dubrovnik, P. N. Stremoukhov, during the Prince's absence, was Senator Luka Radonjić. Reportedly, Petrović and Radonjić, together with Milorad Medaković, planned to orchestrate a coup in Montenegro with logistical support from Stremoukhov. Vojvoda Mirko, who had already harbored suspicions toward these individuals for some time, used the alleged correspondence between Stremoukhov and Radonjić as the principal evidence of a conspiracy.<sup>18</sup> The authenticity of these letters was never definitively established, making it entirely plausible that the incident was a fabricated strategy aimed at neutralizing political opponents opposed to the shift in the Prince's foreign policy. Vojvoda Mirko initiated an investigation in preparation for a political trial, while the alleged conspirators fled to Austria.

In May 1857, Prince Danilo dispatched Senator Ivo Radonjić on a mission to Belgrade. Officially, the senator was tasked with accompanying the son of Novica Cerović, who was departing for studies in the Serbian cap-

<sup>15</sup> Same, 20.

<sup>16</sup> Р. Јовановић, *Црна Гора и велике силе*, Историјски институт СР Црне Горе, Титоград, 1983, 34.

<sup>17</sup> Б. Павићевић, *op. cit.* 284–285.

<sup>18</sup> Same

ital. However, according to the Russian consul in Belgrade, M. Milošević, Radonjić's principal objective was to request from the Serbian government the reinstatement of an annual subsidy of 1,000 gold coins, which had been discontinued in 1853. Milošević further reported that Radonjić was also instructed to seek advice from Serbian officials regarding how Montenegro should navigate its newly strained relations with Russia.<sup>19</sup>

Prince Alexander of Serbia generally supported Montenegro's reorientation towards France. Statesmen Garašanin and Marinović advised that Montenegro should follow the guidance of French diplomacy.<sup>20</sup> However, the State Council, which maintained a more Russophile stance, expressed disapproval of Montenegro's new position toward Russia, characterizing it as ungrateful. Consequently, the Council refused to approve the renewal of the requested subsidy. This mission convinced Prince Danilo that an "anti-Russian" approach could not garner broad support among the Serbian populace. It also became evident that Serbia was still not prepared to engage in a joint military confrontation against the Turks.<sup>21</sup>

In the autumn of 1857, the so-called "Tenka Conspiracy" unfolded in the Principality of Serbia. This conspiracy marked the culmination of tensions between the Austrian-aligned policies of Prince Alexander Karađorđević and the Russophile faction within Serbia. The State Council opposed the prince's policies, and these strained relations resulted in a plot to overthrow the prince. The main conspirator was Stefan Stefanović Tenka, president of the Council, who acted in coordination with Miloš Obrenović. Some conspirators reportedly even considered the assassination of Prince Alexander as a potential solution. The conspiracy concluded with the arrest of the plotters.<sup>22</sup>

In reference to these events occurring in both Serbian principalities, Prince Alexander wrote a letter to Prince Danilo, stating: "Truly, every Serb must be deeply grieved that the condemnable deeds of the accursed Vukašin and Vuk are beginning to be revived both in Montenegro and in Serbia — the only lands where it seems that the Serb cause holds promise for the future." Further in the letter, Prince Alexander expressed his gratitude for the fact that Prince Danilo had ordered the church prayers in "fraternal Montenegro", in thanksgiving for Alexander's deliverance.<sup>23</sup>

Meanwhile, France and Russia had begun to mend their relations and align their interests. France sought to ensure Russian neutrality in the event

<sup>19</sup> Same, 292.

<sup>20</sup> P. Јовановић, *Црна Гора и велике силе*, 58.

<sup>21</sup> Б. Павићевић, *op. cit.* 292–293.

<sup>22</sup> С. Јовановић, *Уставобранитељи и њихова влада 1838–1858*, Београд, 1933. 247-262.

<sup>23</sup> *Односи Србије и Црне Горе у XIX веку*, Василије Крестић (ур.), *Зборник за историју, језик и књижевност српског народа*, Београд, 1987. 164–165.

of a conflict with Austria. To this end, the French emperor took Russian interests concerning the Eastern Question into account. As a result, Russia began to emerge from its previous international isolation more swiftly than expected. The beginning of this new political orientation was symbolized by the direct meeting between Napoleon III and Alexander II in Stuttgart, in September 1857.<sup>24</sup>

During this period, unrest once again arose among the Serbs in Herzegovina due to the oppressive conditions under Ottoman rule. Within the agrarian system of the Ottoman Empire, equality for the Christian population was unattainable. Christians were required to give one-third of their agricultural yield to landowners and a tithe to tax farmers. Abuses by local authorities in Herzegovina also persisted. In a petition addressed to the Russian consul in Dubrovnik, Hieromonk Prokopije Čokorilo wrote: "Herzegovina is placed under such a yoke of tyranny that the people no longer recognize themselves as a people."<sup>25</sup>

By late 1857, the revolt against Ottoman authority in Herzegovina had grown into an increasingly organized insurrection, led by Luka Vukalović. Montenegro assumed an active role in supporting the uprising.<sup>26</sup> The town of Grahovo became the central hub from which most of the insurrection's activities were coordinated. On behalf of the Montenegrin Prince and Senate, two prominent military leaders, Vojvoda Petar Vukotić and Vojvoda Ivo Radonjić, were stationed there.<sup>27</sup>

The Ottoman authorities in Mostar began to formally accuse Montenegro of instigating the situation in Herzegovina. Indeed, Prince Danilo supported the rebels by supplying arms and dispatching armed detachments into Herzegovina. This uprising of the Herzegovinian Serbs would have been unimaginable without the military and moral backing from Cetinje. At the same time, Austria was also displeased by these developments near its southern borders, particularly concerned that its own Serbian subjects might be inspired by the actions of their ethnic brethren under Ottoman rule.

In an effort to defeat the insurgents, Ottoman troops stationed in Trebinje intensified their attacks. With a force of approximately 1,000 men, Luka Vukalović was unable to withstand this pressure, especially as reinforcements from Mostar were also arriving. In light of these circumstances, Vukalović urgently appealed to Prince Danilo for assistance. Upon receiving

<sup>24</sup> Б. Павићевић, *op. cit.* 289.

<sup>25</sup> Same, 299.

<sup>26</sup> В. Ђоровић, *Лука Вукаловић и херцеговачки устаници од 1852. до 1862.* Српска краљевска академија, Београд, 1923. 33.

<sup>27</sup> А. Лаиновић, *Побједа на Граховцу 1858. године у списима савременика*, Историјски институт Црне Горе, Цетиње, 1958, 17.

the request, the Prince dispatched Vojvoda Ivo Radonjić with a detachment to the region of Zupci. According to Austrian sources, this Montenegrin contingent numbered around 4,000 men.<sup>28</sup>

The first significant clash between the Herzegovinian and Montenegrin forces and the Ottomans occurred in late February 1858. In his report to the Prince, Radonjić noted that they attacked Ottoman positions in the villages of Bogojevo and Grab near Trebinje, forcing Salih Pasha to retreat into the town. Throughout February, Luka Vukalović remained active, launching attacks in the direction of Sutorina. In the battle near the village of Drače, the Serbian forces suffered approximately 130 casualties, both killed and wounded. Due to the heavy snowfall that followed, major military operations were temporarily suspended, as they “waited for the mountains to turn green again.”<sup>29</sup>

In the aftermath of these developments, French diplomacy suggested to Prince Danilo that he issue an order to Montenegrin forces to refrain from incursions into Herzegovina, in the interest of preserving peace. Although the Prince formally complied, the Ottomans remained skeptical of this commitment. The Montenegrin side likewise distrusted Ottoman intentions, particularly as the Ottomans began amassing troops—both regular forces and irregular Bashi-bazouks—along the border with Montenegro. It was not long before new clashes erupted in the area around Lake Skadar, during which the Montenegrins succeeded in capturing several Ottoman boats.

In the meantime, Prince Danilo began to realize that his policy toward the Ottomans could not succeed without the restoration of strong relations with Russia. The renewal of ties with the Russian Empire was closely linked to the visit of the renowned writer Ljubomir Nenadović, who stayed in the Montenegrin capital in early 1858. While his visit was initially related to the Prince’s desire to establish a printing press in Cetinje, Nenadović also sought to restore the traditional connections between Montenegro and St. Petersburg. After his stay in Cetinje, Nenadović, accompanied by the Prince’s adjutant Vlahović, traveled to Dubrovnik to meet with the Russian consul in order to reestablish Montenegro’s reliance on Russia.<sup>30</sup>

Following this, Prince Danilo personally sent a letter to the Russian Emperor Alexander II and Foreign Minister Gorchakov, placing full blame for the cooling of relations between the two courts on the political émigré community. He concluded the letter by expressing his unequivocal willingness to remain, “as before, devoted and loyal to Russia.” Upon arriving in Belgrade in late March, Nenadović informed the Prince about the political

<sup>28</sup> В. Торовић, *Лука Вукаловић и херцеговачки устаници од 1852. до 1862*, 48.

<sup>29</sup> Б. Павићевић, *op. cit.* 312–313.

<sup>30</sup> Same, 325.

situation in the Principality of Serbia, including the ongoing dynastic and factional conflicts. He reported that Toma Vučić had assumed leadership of the Serbian government, with Ilija Garašanin appointed as Minister of the Interior. On this occasion, Nenadović told the Prince that Serbia was still not in a position to offer serious resistance to the Ottoman Empire: “For the time being, they are not even willing to speak out, let alone act in a way that might oppose the Turks,” he concluded.<sup>31</sup>

As for the unfolding crisis in Herzegovina, the Russian government’s efforts to mobilize the Great Powers by urging the Ottomans to implement the Hatt-ı Hümayun of 1856—which guaranteed legal equality for Christians and Muslims in the Ottoman Empire—proved futile. Russia firmly rejected Ottoman attempts to blame Montenegro for the unrest, instead pointing to unresolved agrarian issues as the root cause of the turmoil in Herzegovina. This position sent a clear signal from St. Petersburg indicating its intention to reassert its traditional patronage over the small Serb principality.<sup>32</sup>

On the other hand, after a series of failed attempts to pacify Herzegovina and Montenegro, the Ottoman Porte decided to launch a new and more serious military campaign. Toward the end of April 1858, the Ottomans deployed a force of approximately 10,000 troops from Trebinje toward Grahovo under the command of Hussein Pasha. Opposing them were 5,500 Montenegrins and 3,500 Herzegovinians under the command of Vojvoda Mirko. In an effort to cut off the Ottoman retreat, Serb forces moved toward Korjenici and Trebinje, effectively encircling the Ottoman army.<sup>33</sup>

Following an unsuccessful attempt by the Ottomans to break through, a fierce Serbian assault ensued, forcing the Ottoman troops into a panicked retreat. The Montenegrins drove them back toward Klobuk, while the Herzegovinians pursued them in the direction of Trebinje. This victory came at a significant cost to the Montenegrin-Herzegovinian side, with approximately 2,000 killed and wounded, while Ottoman losses reportedly exceeded 4,000. Some sources even suggest that Hussein Pasha’s entire corps was annihilated.<sup>34</sup>

The Montenegrin victory at Grahovo resonated throughout the European continent. The Russian chargé d’affaires in Vienna reported to Gorchakov that “the Montenegrins have inscribed a new chapter in their history with their blood at Grahovo.” The Western European press widely circulated news of the battle, while among Serb publications, *Новине србске* from

<sup>31</sup> Same, 329–330.

<sup>32</sup> Д. Микавица, Г. Васин, Н. Нинковић, *Срби у Црној Гори 1496–1918*, Институт за српску културу, Никшић, 2017, 187.

<sup>33</sup> Same, 188.

<sup>34</sup> Same

Belgrade and *Србски дневник* from Novi Sad were especially prominent in their coverage.<sup>35</sup>

This victory at Grahovo was met with great enthusiasm across the Serb world. The chivalric image of Montenegro was significantly elevated among Serbs everywhere. After a long period of anticipation for such a success of Serb arms, the people embraced the outcome of the Battle of Grahovac with deep inspiration and national pride. Particularly among the Serbs of Vojvodina, a strong cult surrounding the battle—and of Montenegro as an indomitable Serbian land committed to national liberation—took root. Stevan Kačanski composed a dithyramb titled *Grahovo Laz* in honor of the battle, with poetic additions by Laza Kostić.<sup>36</sup> Likewise, Gliša Zuban from Smederevo published a poem, *The Battle of Grahovo*, which he sent as a gift to Prince Danilo, believing it would resonate not only with the Montenegrin people but with all of Serbdom.<sup>37</sup>

Vladimir Jakšić, a scholar and professor at the Lyceum in Belgrade, congratulated Prince Danilo on his “victory over the Serb enemy,” expressing a wish that “the hand of the Almighty may continue to guide you in your patriotic endeavors for the salvation and glory of the Serb people.” Jakšić further remarked that the Prince’s sacrifice had already begun “to nourish the hungry Serb soul,” and that under the aegis of Orthodox Russia, the West had begun to awaken from its indifference and take an interest in the future of the Serb people.<sup>38</sup>

The Herzegovinians had hoped that Prince Danilo would seize the opportunity to carry out a deeper liberation campaign into their territory; however, he was compelled to abandon such plans and instead pursue a diplomatic resolution to the conflict. France and Russia exerted pressure on the Ottoman Empire, which ultimately agreed to suspend military operations. European diplomacy took upon itself the task of regulating Ottoman-Montenegrin relations, which included the negotiation of peace and the demarcation of borders. To induce the Ottoman Porte to enter negotiations, France staged a demonstration of naval force in the Adriatic, underscoring its commitment to this matter.<sup>39</sup>

The Ottoman Empire approached the issue of demarcation from the standpoint of maintaining its nominal sovereignty over Montenegro and preserving the territorial status as of 1853. In contrast, Russia and France insist-

<sup>35</sup> Б. Павићевић, *op. cit.* 346.

<sup>36</sup> В. Ђоровић, *Лука Вукаловић и херцеговачки устаници од 1852. до 1862*, 47.

<sup>37</sup> Б. Павићевић, *op. cit.* 346.

<sup>38</sup> К. Тодоровић, *Односи Србије и Црне Горе (1815–1860)*, Универзитет у Београду Филозофски Факултет, 2017. 33.

<sup>39</sup> Д. Микавица, Г. Васин, Н. Нинковић, *op. cit.* 188.

ed on recognizing the borders as they stood in 1856, without any reference to the Sultan's sovereignty. The process of border delimitation stretched from the diplomatic conference in Constantinople in October–November 1858—where a preliminary agreement was reached—through field verification the following year, and culminated in a formal border protocol in 1860.<sup>40</sup>

Montenegro was officially granted territories it had long held *de facto*, including Grahovo, Uskoci, Rudine, part of Drobniak, the Nikšić district, and parts of Vasojevići and Kuči. This outcome strengthened Montenegrin influence in Herzegovina and the Lim River valley, laying the groundwork for further territorial expansion in those regions. Although this process did not result in a significant territorial enlargement for Montenegro, nor was its independence formally recognized in legal international terms, it nonetheless represented a *de facto* acknowledgment of Montenegro's distinct political subjectivity—an important step toward full international recognition.<sup>41</sup>

Despite the ongoing demarcation process, full peace between the Montenegrins and Ottomans was never firmly established. Clashes continued in the vicinity of Podgorica and Kolašin. An attack on Kolašin by Miljan Vukov and Novica Cerović in late July 1858 resulted in the town's destruction, with heavy casualties on both sides. Unrest in Herzegovina persisted into the following year, signaling the likelihood of renewed conflict in pursuit of national aspirations. In all such cases, Prince Danilo placed the blame on the Ottomans, thereby creating more favorable conditions for achieving his objectives through diplomacy.<sup>42</sup>

In the meantime, the internal situation in Serbia had become increasingly untenable. All segments of society were calling for the convening of a national assembly to resolve the political crisis, which had been exacerbated by the deteriorating relationship between the Prince and the State Council. In November 1858, Russian diplomatic representatives in both Belgrade and Constantinople openly supported the convening of such an assembly, with the aim of restoring the Obrenović dynasty to power. In Belgrade, a "Law on the National Assembly" was first adopted; however, the Ottoman Porte responded by issuing a telegram demanding the assembly's dissolution, asserting that Serbia had no right to convene it.<sup>43</sup>

The Ottoman Empire, naturally, sought to protect its own interests, as talk of the return of the Obrenović family—widely perceived as pro-Rus-

<sup>40</sup> Same

<sup>41</sup> Р. Љушић, *Српска државност у XIX века*, Српска књижевна задруга, Београд, 2008. 387–390

<sup>42</sup> Same, 189.

<sup>43</sup> Д. Леовац, *Србија и Русија за време друге владавине кнеза Михаила (1860–1868)*, Службени гласник, Београд, 2015. 32–33.

sian—had become increasingly widespread. The Porte therefore opposed the removal of Prince Aleksandar Karadorđević. On the other hand, the Russian Empire considered the Ottoman objection to be a blatant interference in Serbia's internal affairs, in which the High Porte had no rightful role. France aligned itself with Russia's position, and both governments submitted a joint note to the Ottoman authorities, defending this viewpoint.<sup>44</sup>

Despite internal disagreements regarding the structure of the state, supporters of the Obrenović dynasty and liberal factions managed to form an alliance shortly before the Saint Andrew's Assembly with the aim of deposing Prince Aleksandar. The Prince's retreat into the Belgrade fortress played into the hands of his opponents, who interpreted his appeal for protection from the Ottoman pasha as an act of betrayal, ultimately leading to his removal from power. Exploiting the moment, the Assembly passed a resolution on 23 December 1858 to depose Prince Aleksandar Karadorđević and restore Miloš Obrenović to the throne.

Even Prince Danilo expressed criticism of the Serbian government in late 1858, accusing it of lacking patriotic sentiment and being more driven by egoism and personal ambition. Danilo likely expected a more vigorous response from Prince Aleksandar, especially in light of the emerging "Italian question"—as the alliance between Piedmontese Prime Minister Camillo Cavour and Napoleon III prepared for a confrontation with the Austrian Empire. Their objective was to annex ethnically Italian territories under Habsburg rule to Piedmont, creating a unified Italian state. It is plausible that Prince Danilo, inspired by this example, believed that a more decisive response could yield progress on the Serb national question as well. As such, he viewed Aleksandar's passivity with skepticism and correctly anticipated his rapid fall from power.<sup>45</sup>

Prince Miloš Obrenović, accompanied by his son Prince Mihailo, arrived in Belgrade on 25 January 1859.<sup>46</sup> Official support from St. Petersburg followed shortly thereafter: in early March, Prince Miloš was awarded the Order of the White Eagle by Emperor Alexander II. On that occasion, the Serbian prince told the Russian consul in Belgrade that he had always remained loyal to the Russian Emperor—in good times and in adversity, in his homeland and in exile—and that these sentiments remained unchanged for the rest of his life. The Russians advised the newly reinstated prince to pursue a cautious policy regarding internal reform and to guard against foreign interference in the internal affairs of the Principality of Serbia by hostile powers.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> Same

<sup>45</sup> Ч. Попов, *Грађанска Европа (1770–1914)*, II, Београд, 2010. 314–315.

<sup>46</sup> В. Ђоровић, *Историја Срба*, 673.

<sup>47</sup> Д. Леовац, *op. cit.* 37.

At the end of the aforementioned month, Prince Danilo addressed a letter to Prince Miloš on the occasion of his restoration to the Serbian throne. In this letter, the Montenegrin prince wrote: "My heart, and the hearts of all Montenegrins, leapt with joy upon hearing the news from Serbia, for in Your Highness's return we perceived the hand of God, which shall show every Serb the path that must be taken to reach his goal. Yet circumstances prevented me from joining my voice with those of the Serbs there and sharing in their joy. Even if belated, a sincere greeting always holds value. Therefore, may Your Highness accept this greeting as a sign of my genuine affection, along with my wish that you may live long, to the glory of Serbia and the pride of all Serbdom."<sup>48</sup>

The question of Serbia's internal reorganization soon took a backseat to larger events unfolding in Europe in 1859. That year saw the unification of the Romanian principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia into a single state. Simultaneously, the "Italian question" erupted into open conflict, as the Kingdom of Sardinia and France launched a war against Austria with the aim of unifying Italian lands under Piedmontese leadership. This development was followed closely in Serbian political circles, where there was considerable sympathy for the Italian cause. Austria's potential defeat was widely seen as something that could indirectly benefit the Serbian national question.<sup>49</sup>

In April 1859, Petar Vukotić and Ivo Radonjić were dispatched as envoys of Prince Danilo to Belgrade to coordinate with Prince Miloš on the positions that Serbia and Montenegro should adopt with respect to the Franco-Austrian war. Danilo believed that the conflict could present an opportunity to raise the Serbian question, potentially sparking a general uprising in parallel with a major European war. The French government also encouraged such thinking, viewing unrest in the Balkans as a possible strategic advantage against Austria.<sup>50</sup>

Prior to this, Prince Mihailo, with the consent of Prince Miloš, had undertaken a diplomatic tour of Vienna, Paris, and London in an effort to gauge what Serbia could expect from the unfolding Italian conflict. The Russian envoy in Vienna, Balabin, admitted that he could not predict whether the war would extend to the Ottoman Empire and thus revive the Eastern Question. He therefore advised Serbia to prioritize preserving its current gains.<sup>51</sup>

In Paris, during a conversation with Napoleon III, Mihailo learned that France's immediate priority was the Italian, not the Eastern, Question.

<sup>48</sup> *Односи Србије и Црне Горе у XIX веку*, 181–182.

<sup>49</sup> В. Ђоровић, *Историја Срба*, 673

<sup>50</sup> Р. Јовановић, *Политички односи Црне Горе и Србије 1860-1878*, Обод, Цетиње, 1977, 31–32.

<sup>51</sup> Д. Леовац, *op. cit.* 38-41.

In London, he met with British officials and Hungarian émigré Lajos Kossuth. The British were particularly concerned about the possibility of a Balkan Christian uprising against Ottoman rule, and sought to prevent such instability. On the other hand, Hungarian efforts to encourage Serbian participation in a joint Hungarian–Serbian uprising in the southern Habsburg lands offered little concrete benefit to the Serbs. Moreover, for Serbia to find itself at war simultaneously with both Austria and the Ottoman Empire would have been disastrous. This precarious situation was further complicated by a lack of clear guarantees from the Great Powers.<sup>52</sup>

From his own perspective, Prince Danilo believed the moment was ripe for a unified Serbian response. He expected the Principality of Serbia to take the lead in this effort, placing his hopes in Prince Miloš's ability—and duty—to head a general liberation movement for the Serbian people. Danilo, who was more inclined toward military action than toward nuanced diplomacy, could not understand the cautious stance adopted by the Belgrade court. He declared that he would personally fight as an ordinary soldier under Prince Miloš's command, "if only to see the Serb people liberated."<sup>53</sup>

It was precisely at the moment when a more concrete alliance and cooperation between Prince Danilo and Prince Miloš appeared possible that both rulers passed away in the same year—1860. Prince Danilo died on August 13,<sup>54</sup> while Prince Miloš passed away on September 26.<sup>55</sup> In the case of Prince Miloš, his death was due to old age. Prince Danilo, on the other hand, fell victim to an assassination carried out by Todor Kadić, who sought to avenge the honor of his sister. Prince Miloš was succeeded by his son, Mihailo Obrenović, while Prince Danilo was succeeded by his nephew, Nikola Mirkov Petrović, since he had left behind only a daughter, Olga, whom Princess Darinka gave birth to in 1859.

## Conclusion

The period from the Crimean War until the death of Prince Danilo Petrović Njegoš can be described as relatively dynamic for the Principality of Montenegro in terms of political challenges. Given the autocratic nature of the Montenegrin prince's rule, his personal characteristics had a considerable impact on the country's political leadership. Prince Danilo's impetuous and militant temperament was ill-suited to long-term, strategically planned diplomacy and thorough foreign policy analysis. As a result, he lacked a full

<sup>52</sup> Same

<sup>53</sup> P. Јовановић, *Политички односи Црне Горе и Србије 1860–1878*, 32-33.

<sup>54</sup> Б. Павићевић *op. cit.* 447

<sup>55</sup> P. Јовановић, *Политички односи Црне Горе и Србије 1860–1878*, 33.

understanding of the necessity of such political principles. He believed that swift and decisive action could achieve any objective, whether in the realm of diplomacy or military affairs.

Following Russia's defeat in the Crimean War—Prince Danilo believed that aligning Montenegro with Napoleon III's France, supported by direct diplomatic engagement, could lead to international recognition and territorial expansion. However, despite a favorable reception in the French capital, such expectations proved to be illusory, largely due to France's sensitivity to the interests of other Great Powers. After this diplomatic failure, Montenegro was compelled to return to its traditional foreign policy alignment with Russia.

Concerning the Serb Question, political thought in Cetinje consistently held that the time was ripe for a widespread Serb uprising against the Ottomans. It was expected that the Principality of Serbia would initiate such an action, which Montenegro would follow without hesitation. Conversely, the ruling circles in Belgrade, more attuned to *realpolitik*, understood that a general Serb liberation movement required significantly more time, greater caution, and more favorable international conditions. Due to his aforementioned personal traits, Prince Danilo was unable to comprehend Serbia's cautious approach, interpreting it instead as excessive passivity regarding the liberation aspirations of the Serbian people. Nevertheless, the material assistance that Montenegro received from Serbia during this period was of great importance.

The historical period analyzed in this article is also marked by Montenegro's military engagements against the Ottomans. As on many previous occasions, Cetinje provided support for an uprising in Herzegovina in 1857, which provoked a series of Ottoman military campaigns against Montenegrin and Herzegovinian forces. The most significant of these culminated in the Battle of Grahovac in the spring of 1858, in which the Montenegrin-Herzegovinian rebels achieved a decisive victory. This military triumph greatly contributed to the rise of Montenegro's legendary status among the Serb people.

At the end of that year, under pressure from the other Great Powers, the Ottoman Empire recognized the formal demarcation of Montenegro's borders. This was the first time an international commission recognized Montenegro's territorial integrity. It is important to note, however, that this did not yet amount to legal recognition of the Principality of Montenegro as an independent state under international law. Nonetheless, it represented a crucial step toward acknowledging Montenegro's political subjectivity. Through this process, the principality formally obtained control over territories it already *de facto* governed. This was a significant diplomatic success,

especially considering that only two years earlier, at the Congress of Paris, Montenegro had been confirmed as Ottoman territory with no mention of border demarcation.

The following year brought another major event in European history—the Second Italian War of Independence. As with many other European upheavals, Prince Danilo believed this conflict could serve as a catalyst for revisiting the Serb Question. Consistent with his unanalytical conviction that every great European crisis would open the door to general Serb liberation, he once again expected a response from Belgrade, where Prince Miloš had returned to the throne. However, a realistic appraisal of the situation suggested that the conditions for a widespread Serbian uprising were entirely unfavorable at the time.

Prince Danilo's death in 1860 marked the end of a distinct era in Montenegrin history—an era that saw the principality affirm itself as a unique political entity on the path toward full international recognition.

Nemanja POPOVIC

#### THE PRINCIPALITY OF MONTENEGRO – POLITICAL CHALLENGES FROM THE CRIMEAN WAR TO THE DEATH OF PRINCE DANILO

##### *Summary*

This paper offers an overview and analysis of the key political challenges faced by the Principality of Montenegro from the Crimean War (1853–1856) to the death of Prince Danilo Petrović Njegoš in 1860. Special attention is given to Montenegro's foreign policy position in relation to the Ottoman Empire, and its attempts to gain international recognition. The broader context also sheds light on the influence of other Great Powers on Montenegro's foreign policy conduct, as well as its direct diplomatic interactions with Russia and France. The study examines diplomatic efforts directed toward Paris, followed by a return to traditional alignment with Russia after unsuccessful reliance on France. Relations with the Principality of Serbia are overviewed within the broader context of the Serbian national question. Particular emphasis is placed on the significance of the Montenegrin victory in the Battle of Grahovac in 1858, which would open the door to territorial demarcation between Montenegro and the Ottoman Empire, as well as on Montenegro's idea of using the Second Italian War of Independence as an opportunity to address the Serb Question. The paper concludes with the death of Prince Danilo as the end of one phase in Montenegro's state-building and Serb liberation process and the beginning of a new era under Prince Nikola.

**Literatura:**

- Иванов, Б. Ј., Караев, В. М., Куксина, Е. И., Орешников, А. С., Сухарева, О. В., Кратка историја Русије – од најстаријих времена до краја XX века, Логос, Београд, 2009.
- Ђоровић, В., Историја Срба, Leo commerce, Београд, 2017.
- Ђоровић, В., Лука Вукаловић и херцеговачки устаници од 1852. до 1862, Српска краљевска академија, Београд, 1923.
- Јовановић, Р., Црна Гора и велике силе, Историјски институт СР Црне Горе, Титоград, 1983.
- Јовановић, Р., Политички односи Црне Горе и Србије 1860–1878, Обод, Цетиње, 1977.
- Јовановић, С., Уставобранитељи и њихова влада 1838–1858, Београд, 1933.
- Кег, Р., *The Crimean War*, McMillan, 2000. 17.
- Лаиновић, А., Побјед на Граховцу 1858. године у списима савременика, Историјски институт Црне Горе, Цетиње, 1958.
- Леовац, Д., Србија и Русија за време друге владавине кнеза Михаила (1860–1868), Службени гласник, Београд, 2015.
- Љушић, Р., Српска државност у XIX века, Српска књижевна задруга, Београд, 2008.
- Микавица, Д., Васин, Г., Нинковић, Н., Срби у Црној Гори 1496–1918, Институт за српску културу, Никшић, 2017.
- Односи Србије и Црне Горе у XIX веку, Василије Крестић (уредник), Зборник за историју, језик и књижевност српског народа, Београд, 1987, 164, 165.
- Павићевић, Б., Данило Петровић Његош – књаз црногорски и брдски 1851–1860, Књижевне новине, Београд, 1990.
- Павловић, С., Историја Балкана 1804–1945, СЛЮ, Београд, 2004.
- Попов, Ч., Грађанска Европа (1770-1914), II, Београд, 2010.
- Распоповић, Р., О дипломатији Црне Горе након промјене облика владавине у земљи 1852. године, Историјски записи, 1–2/2012, 16–17.
- Вуксан, Д., Књаз Данило Петровић Његош, друга година владе (1853), Записи – књ. IX, Цетиње, 1931.