‘The Emperor remained quite calm and told me that he thought Sazonov was exaggerating the gravity of the situation and had lost his nerve. In latter years conflicts had frequently arisen in the Balkans, but the powers had always to an agreement. None of them would wish to let loose a war in Europe to protect the interests of a Balkan State. War would be disastrous for the world and once it had broken out it would be difficult to stop.’ Russian Finance Minister Peter Bark recalls a meeting with the Tsar, 24 July 1914.[[1]](#footnote-1)

After weeks of secret scheming, naïve assumptions and wishful thinking, the Austro-Hungarian government had finally delivered its ultimatum to Serbia at 6PM on 23 July 1914. In some accounts, the July Crisis began at this point, when news of Austria’s act spread across Europe. The next twelve days are among the most examined in history, and with good reason. The ultimatum shattered the period of anxious calm which had followed the assassination. Some kind of Austrian act was expected – indeed, thanks to leaks, contemporaries were aware that stringent demands on Serbia were likely. But within its ten points, infringements on Serbian sovereignty, short timeframe, no right of Serbian reply, and its general tone suggested that Austria was not seeking justice, but a pretext for war once Belgrade rejected the unacceptable. In this episode we will trace the responses to this act. In some quarters, the ultimatum provoked a flurry of diplomatic activity, accompanied by the usual communications, but in others, primarily in Russia, the ultimatum provoked a new turn in policy fanned by resentments at past retreats and anxiety over future security for itself and its allies.

The July Crisis now reaches something of a turning point. Our Austrian-centric narrative must now give way to important interventions from the relevant powers, and this presents a challenge. Following Berchtold’s navigation of his Emperor, his colleagues, and European scepticism, the Austrian Foreign Minister now retreats into the background somewhat, and the implications of his policy became the talk of St Petersburg, Berlin, Paris, Rome, and London. During this next phase of the July Crisis we will see some contemporaries recommending mediation and an advocating compromise, but we will also see some figures contribute directly to the charged atmosphere. We must bear in mind that the July Crisis did not occur in a vacuum. The reason those background episodes have been made available is because contemporaries acted with the recent context in mind. When we explain what happened next, and why peace could not be preserved, records of retreat and humiliation, insufficient allied support, fear of decline, and a corresponding emphasis on prestige must all be included within the calculations, and added to the more traditional explanations such as nationalism, the arms race or imperialist competition.

News of the ultimatum arrived in St Petersburg in the early hours of 24 July. Russia’s ambassadors, present in the capital for the Franco-Russian summit, were ordered urgently to return to their posts. Sergei Sazonov, who had played a central role in the recent Entente festivities, now faced one of the busiest days of his life, and certainly the most consequential. He arrived at 10AM in St Petersburg, to discuss the situation with Mortiz Schilling, his chief of staff. Schilling had been mulling over the details as more information had arrived early that morning. ‘This is European war,’ Sazonov told him. The Foreign Minister then took an unprecedented step, phoning the Tsar to inform him of the ultimatum, the first time he had used the phone. The phone call between Tsar and Foreign Minister is largely lost, but we do know the Tsar believed the ultimatum’s terms to be outrageous, and he insisted Sazonov kept him informed. Schilling recorded that his boss suspected German involvement in the Austrian act, perceiving the ultimatum as the beginning of an Austro-German demarche to take advantage of their momentary military superiority.

Certainly, Sazonov was not taken by surprise. Even before he turned in for the night after waving the French goodbye on 23 July, he was informed that the Austrian ambassador to Serbia had requested an audience with the Serb Premier, and Italian sources also informed him that the ultimatum had been delivered. As Sazonov fretted, Schilling made his way through some necessary busywork, setting up the day for his chief. A Council Meeting was planned for the afternoon of 24 July, and those statesmen on leave or out of the capital were ordered to return immediately. Peter Bark, Russian Finance Minister, then stopped by, and was ordered to begin withdrawing Russian funds in Austrian and German banks, with funds amounting to 100 million roubles. These recommendations and others would be prepared for the afternoon meeting. Sazonov would first have to endure one of the day’s many unpleasant meetings, when the Austro-Hungarian ambassador, Count Szapary, stopped by the Russian Foreign Ministry. In Szapary’s hands was the ultimatum, and he intended to read it in full to the Russian Foreign Minister. He found Sazonov prepared, and furious.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Szapary had already gotten an earful from the French President, who had disputed Austria’s quest for justice, and compared to ignominious examples where fabricated evidence had undermined Vienna’s case. Poincare had rejected entirely the idea that Austria was entitled to seek satisfaction, asserting that the Serbian government could not be held responsible for the actions of a few citizens. By contrast, Sazonov’s reception was more outwardly hostile, and ominous. To kick off this ninety minute meeting between them, Szapary fulfilled his duty, reading the full text of the ultimatum the Serbs were then pouring over. Sazonov did not comment on Russia’s official response, but he did not mince his words when giving his own opinion. ‘I know what it is. You want to make war on Serbia. I see what is going on – the German papers encourage you. You are setting Europe on fire.’ Vienna should not have formulated its demands into an ultimatum – how could Serbia answer the charges against it within only 48 hours?

This left Sazonov – among others – fully convinced that this was it; this was Austria’s attempt to belatedly settle the score with Serbia, to punish her for her victories, to reduce her to pre-Balkan War size, and to force Habsburg justice upon her. ‘It means you want war and you have burnt your bridges,’ Sazonov charged. To Szapary’s claim that the monarchical principle was in play, and that Austria sought to defend it, Sazonov entirely objected: ‘The monarchical idea has nothing to do with this.’ Szapary discerned that Sazonov’s riposte contained no mention of Pan Slavism, Orthodoxy, or even Russia itself; instead, Sazonov spoke emphatically about the bad impression the act would make on the Entente and Europe as a whole. Yet in Szapary’s view, Sazonov’s mood was ‘more of depression than of violent excitement.’ Perhaps the troubling impression President Poincare had of Sazonov’s timidity and reluctance to push matters to war were represented here, but this mood shifted once the Russian Foreign Minister accepted that the moment of truth had arrived.

Szapary’s report of this conversation did not move the Austrian government to pause. This was likely a sensation the ambassador was now accustomed to. If his record of that ominous conversation with the French President did not change minds, Sazonov’s reaction was unlikely to do much either. Berchtold continued to hold down the fort in Vienna, maintaining the government’s official line that Austria did not want war, only justice and satisfaction, while also leaving for a conveniently timed holiday to make himself unreachable. Twinned with this artificial distance he had created, Berchtold maintained the line that Austrian intentions were not nefarious. The Russian chargé d’affairs was assured that Austria did not intend to humiliate Serbia: ‘Nothing could be further from our minds than to wish to humiliate Serbia; we have not the slightest interest in this,’ Berchtold asserted. He claimed that earlier drafts containing passages that might contribute to this impression had been binned. Yet Berchtold was very clear that in the event of Serbia’s rejection of the ultimatum, ambassador Geisl and his legation would leave Belgrade. From there, it was surely guaranteed that war would follow. At no point did Berchtold feel the need to temper this outcome, or to modify the policy to allow more time for a Serbian response. This rigidity rightly roused suspicions that the ultimatum was a mere formality for the war Vienna wanted – Sazonov, indeed, acted on this assumption.[[3]](#footnote-3)

This bruising encounter with Szapary was not the best start to the day, but there was room for more positivity when the French ambassador Maurice Paleologue telegrammed Sazonov, requesting an audience for 12.30PM in the French embassy. It would certainly be reassuring to meet with such a firm advocate of the Entente, but Sazonov believed that for the sake of allied solidarity it would be more effective to contact another potential guest – the British ambassador to Russia, Sir George Buchanan. In his memoirs, written in the 1920s, Buchanan recalled how his day was transformed by this phone call:

I was sitting in my study the next morning musing on all that I was going to do during my approaching holiday, when I was roused by the ringing of the telephone. ‘Who’s there?’ I asked. ‘I, Sazonov,’ was the reply. ‘Austria has presented an ultimatum at Belgrade couched in terms which mean war. Please meet me at the French embassy in an hour’s time as I must discuss matters with you and Paleologue.’[[4]](#footnote-4)

Buchanan must have known that difficult conversations awaited him. He had been ambassador to Russia since 1910, and was described by a colleague as having ‘something of the appearance of a stage diplomat,’ with his ‘monocle, his finely-chiselled features, and his beautiful silver hair.’ Although he was ‘no Russian scholar’ and ‘not a man of outstanding intellect,’ Buchanan had ‘remarkable powers of intuition and an abundant supply of common sense. To Russian cleverness he opposed complete honesty and sincerity tempered with caution.’[[5]](#footnote-5) This caution would soon come in handy, but Buchanan was far from an objective bystander. He had long been an advocate of closer Anglo-Russian relations, and formed part of the clique including Foreign Secretary Grey, and Sir Francis Bertie, the ambassador to France, as well as active subordinates in the Foreign Office like Sir Arthur Nicolson and Eyre Crowe, who identified a Russian partnership as essential for imperial security. This explains Buchanan’s response to the heavy pressure applied by Ambassador Paleologue and Sazonov for Britain to come out in support of the Entente with a stern warning to the Central Powers. Paleologue recorded the scene in his memoirs:

Buchanan assumed that his government would desire to remain neutral and was therefore apprehensive that France and Russia would be crushed by the Triple Alliance. Sazonov protested: “At the present juncture England’s neutrality would be tantamount to her suicide!” “I’m certain of that,” Sir George replied sadly. “But I’m afraid public opinion with us is still far from realising what our national interests so imperiously require.” I emphasised the decisive part England could play in quenching Germany’s warlike ardour; I cited the view the Tsar Nicholas expressed to me four days ago [that] “Unless Germany has lost her reason altogether, she will never dare to attack Russia, France and England combined. Thus it was urgently necessary for the British government to announce its adhesion to our cause, which was the cause of peace. Sazonov warmly advocated the same cause. Buchanan promised to make strong representations to Sir Edward Grey in favour of the policy of resistance to German arrogance.[[6]](#footnote-6)

This captures the great burden – and great influence – ambassador Paleologue now possessed. With the President and Premier of France now at sea and difficult to reach, he would be the prime director of French policy. In this, Paleologue took his cue from Poincare’s behaviour during the summit, where the Franco-Russian friendship was toasted and praised, and firmness against the Central Powers was underlined. In his memoirs, Paleologue appears as the main driver behind this firmer line, but there is reason to suspect this version of events. In a communique sent by radiogram to the French delegation at sea, Paleologue dispensed with much of the emotive language reserved for his memoirs, reverting instead to a somewhat bland statement of imperatives:

The shortness of the time limit set by the ultimatum makes is even more difficult for the Triple Entente Powers to exercise any kind of moderating influence they may have in Vienna. On the other hand, Monsieur Sazonov suspects that Germany will want to support her ally and I fear his impression may be correct. The solidary of the Triple Entente’s powers must therefore remain firm. Any weakness would encourage the Germanic powers to intensify their provocative attitude and would speed up events.[[7]](#footnote-7)

There was nothing new in this, but something had changed in the demeanour of the Russian Foreign Minister. In Buchanan’s view, Sazonov was much more hawkish than the French ambassador let on. He did not need to be encouraged on by Paleologue; Sazonov was convinced that the moment of resistance had arrived. He provided Buchanan with a confidential account of the Franco-Russian summit, which had included a decision to ‘take action in Vienna with a view to the prevention of a demand for explanation or any summons equivalent to an intervention in the internal affairs of Serbia,’ a mission which had surely failed, in light of the ultimatum. Buchanan recorded the Russian Foreign Minister as, among other things, asserting the necessity and strategic inevitability of British involvement, and declaring his intention to begin mobilisation. His account is worth examining if we are to appreciate the extent of the pressure being brought to bear upon him:

Minister for Foreign Affairs expressed the hope that His Majesty’s Government would proclaim their solidarity with France and Russia. He characterised Austria’s conduct as immoral and provocative. Some of the demands which she had presented were absolutely unacceptable, and she would never have acted as she had done without having first consulted Germany. The French ambassador [Paleologue] gave me to understand that France would not only give Russia strong diplomatic support, but would, if necessary, fulfil all the obligations imposed on her by the alliance.

This certainly appeared as if the Entente was gearing up for war, in the event that Austria proceeded against Serbia. But when the two partners made eyes at the British elephant in the room, Buchanan found he could not make any guarantees:

I said that I could not speak in the name of His Majesty’s Government, but that I would telegraph all that they had said. I could personally hold out no hope that His Majesty’s government would make any declaration of solidarity that would entail engagement to support France and Russia by force of arms. We had no direct interests in Serbia, and public opinion in England would never sanction a war on her behalf. Minister for Foreign Affairs replied that the Serbian question was but part of general European question and that we could not efface ourselves.

But if Buchanan’s sympathies were with the two men, he knew the path forward was not so simple. If his impression was correct, Buchanan told them, Sazonov and Paleologue intended to warn Austria not to intervene in Serbia. But what would happen if Vienna ignored them, would it mean war? Sazonov qualified that a Council of Ministers was due for the afternoon, which would determine this, and that the Tsar’s personal decision would also be required. Yet, Sazonov did assert that ‘Russia would at any rate have to mobilise.’ When Buchanan sought to increase the 48 hour timeframe, Paleologue stressed that there was no time for this, because ‘either Austria was bluffing or had made up her mind to act at once. In either case a firm and united attitude was our only chance of averting war.’ It was noted that Serbia might accept some of the demands, and it should be certain how far she would go to accommodate Austria – the gap between could be grounds for mediation, an idea later pursued by Sir Edward Grey. Clearly, Buchanan felt compelled to offer something in the face of the pressure which the allies levelled against him, as he explained to Grey:

As they both continued to press me to declare our complete solidarity with them, I said that I thought you might be prepared to represent strongly at Vienna and Berlin danger to European peace of an Austrian attack on Serbia. You might perhaps point out that it would in all probability force Russia to intervene, that this would bring Germany and France into the field, and that if war became general, it would be difficult for England to remain neutral. [Sazonov] said that he hoped that we would in any case expressed our strong reprobation of Austria’s action. If war did break out, we would sooner or later be dragged into it, but if we did not make common cause with France and Russia from the outset we should have rendered war more likely, and should not have played a ‘beau role.’

This was to form the crux of a key debate, which we will address in later episodes. If Britain had communicated to Germany and Austria that it would be highly difficult for it to remain neutral, the thinking goes, the Central Powers would have been compelled to pause and pull back from the brink, rather than face the impossible coalition set against them. But Buchanan’s telegram also contains a note of warning, to the effect that while the Entente wished for British support, it would feel forced to act in its interests even if Britain remained aloof. There was thus an urgent need for Britain to show its friendship publicly, since a failure to do so might engender resentment and hostility from all circles. As Buchanan concluded:

From [Paleologue’s] language it almost looked as if France and Russia were determined to make a strong stand even if we declined to join them… Austrian government seemed purposely to have presented their ultimatum at moment when President of the French Republic and [Premier] were leaving Russia on their return to France, where they cannot arrive for four or five days.

Buchanan was right to pick up on this deceitful behaviour; although it had made perfect sense to Berchtold, it seems that PR was not Vienna’s forte. It was simply too convenient that at a crisis point such as this, the key statesmen of France should be unreachable. This deception was noted by contemporaries, particularly as the crisis dragged on and the notable absence of Poincare from such important discussions became more explicitly felt. Almost as important as Buchanan’s telegram were its accompanying minutes written by his superior, Grey, and Foreign Office doyens like Eyre Crowe and Arthur Nicolson. ‘The moment has passed when it might have been possible to enlist French support in an effort to hold back Russia,’ they discerned, noting that:

It is clear that France and Russia are decided to accept the challenge thrown out to them. Whatever we may think of the merits of the Austrian charges against Serbia, France and Russia consider that these are the pretexts, and that the bigger cause of Triple Alliance versus Triple Entente is definitely engaged. I think it would be impolitic, not to say dangerous, for England to attempt to controvert this opinion, or to endeavour to obscure the plain issue, by any representation at St Petersburg and Paris. The point that matters is whether Germany is or is not absolutely determined to have this war now. There is still the chance that she can be made to hesitate, if she can be induced to apprehend that the war will find England by the side of France and Russia.

From this, we can deduce that London had become aware of the importance of the moment for Russia in particular, and that few opportunities to defuse the crisis existed outside of demonstrating to Germany that it faced hopeless odds if it pushed the issue. We also note the tone of anxiety which permeated these observations; the notion that Britain could not afford to offer an alternative view of the situation, or to dispute that the Entente was engaged, should have been grounds for alarm. Was it not the case that the British public had no interest in a war between Austria and Serbia? How could the government manage affairs in such a way that its allies were placated and the public protected from a war they did not want? It was then suggested that the best way to clarify matters for Germany, and induce her to back down, was the mobilise the British fleet and announce this step publicly.

We will note that alternatives – such as the maintenance of Anglo-German cooperation – were not advertised. We will also note that the Entente partners did not consider the importance of Austria for Germany, and did not consider how impossible it would have been for the Kaiser to abandon his main ally. There was evidently not a lot of empathy swirling around the Entente courts at this point. In fact, Grey appears to have accepted the argument that a European war would necessitate British intervention at some point – a view many of his Cabinet colleagues would have bitterly disputed. ‘It is difficult not to agree with Sazonov that sooner or later England will be dragged into the war if it does come,’ he wrote, adding ‘We shall gain nothing by not making up our minds what we can do in circumstances that may arise tomorrow.’ There followed an assessment of the war’s potential consequences if Britain remained aloof; it was judged that if the Central Powers crushed Russia and France, then ‘what will be the position of a friendless England?’ Yet if the Entente emerged victorious without British help, ‘What would then be their attitude towards England? What about India and the Mediterranean?’ There were thus strategic reasons for weighing in on the Entente side in a forceful, public manner. But such a policy was quite unlike that recommended during previous crises, where Britain used German and French diplomatic assistance to defuse the situation. Now, Grey and his subordinates suggested, their only option was to leverage the fleet, and this departure was warranted, it was claimed, because of Germany’s dangerous objectives:

Our interests are tied up with those of France and Russia in this struggle, which is not for the possession of Serbia, but one between Germany aiming at a political dictatorship in Europe and the Powers who desire to retain individual freedom. If we can help to avoid the conflict by showing our naval strength, ready to be instantly used, it would be wrong not to make the effort.

These comments concluded with a recommendation for the mobilisation of the fleet, which Grey acceded to, with the caveat that it should not yet be announced. Did this not defeat the whole purpose of the act? In fact, Churchill, the First Lord of the Admiralty, had by this point begun this mobilisation process, which would keep the fleet in a state of readiness, and keep the Germans guessing. Churchill, Grey said, had told him it would take only 24 hours for this mobilisation to be completed.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Amidst this discussion of Britain’s best options, there appeared a new proposal for mediation. Initially, Grey had hoped to mediate between Austria and Russia; he instead pressed that Berlin should suggest a new venture, where Britain, France, Italy and Germany would mediate between Austria and Serbia. This proposal placed the whole onus of defusing the tension onto Germany, rather than onto Russia or France. We have seen above that Grey and his subordinates were anxious at offending Russia, and did not wish to suggest that the Entente was not activated by the crisis, even if this was true. For Britain particularly, its vague alignment with the Entente was a policy choice, but we have seen in the months before the crisis how Russia worked to hammer out new agreements which would strengthen its resolve, including preliminary discussions over an Anglo-Russian naval convention. Perhaps because of these discussions, Grey was more sensitive to the argument that Russia had to be shown evidence of Britain’s friendship, which could be provided by publicly siding with St Petersburg.

This mediation proposal was born from this imperative. It removed the burden from Britain, absolved Russia of any responsibility, recommended against any Anglo-French effort to defuse matters, and prejudiced the crisis with the assumption that it could only end through a concession from the Central Powers. The French were on hand to reinforce these positions, and Paul Cambon, the French ambassador to London recorded his conversation with Grey to this effect on 24 July:

I pointed out to Sir Edward Grey that we did not yet know St Petersburg’s intentions and that an attempt at mediation from this side would not be justified and could be badly received; that Russia’s intentions would only become clear after the opening of hostilities between Austria and Serbia; and that roused Russian opinion would, no doubt, force the Russian government to send an ultimatum to Vienna and it would be too late to suggest any compromises. I added that it would be preferable to ask the German government to take the initiative of approaching Vienna to offer mediation between Austria and Serbia by the four uninvolved powers. If Germany agrees, we will, most importantly, gain time.

Implicit in these steps were two key points. First, that the Austrian ultimatum was unequalled in its harshness and ferocity, and that its 48-hour deadline left painfully little room for manoeuvre. Second, as Cambon asserted, ‘Austria would not have sent her ultimatum without prior agreement from Berlin.’[[9]](#footnote-9) With these points in hand, it seems even less likely that an appeal to Germany could have worked; how could contemporaries have believed that Germany would have defused the crisis, after all, when they presumed it had played such a sizeable role in exacerbating it by conniving with Austria over the ultimatum? This logical gap is worth considering, but to this historians have attested to Grey’s faith in German statesmen like the Chancellor, Bethmann Hollweg and the Foreign Minister, Jagow, who Grey had worked with in the past. Grey’s colleagues should not be ignored here; Asquith, the Prime Minister, interpreted Buchanan’s telegram less optimistically: ‘it shows the Russian view, & how even at this stage Russia is trying to drag us in,’ he exclaimed. Such a warning went unheeded.[[10]](#footnote-10)

We should bear in mind that Grey was struggling with a loaded plate by this point in the crisis. He had kept an eye on European matters in previous weeks, conferring with Lichnowsky to gauge Germany’s position and receiving intel anticipating the Austrian act. But the main concern for the British government in late July 1914 was not the unfolding crisis in Europe, it was the Home Rule crisis in Ireland, far closer to home. The bitter disputes between Irish nationalists who wanted a Dublin parliament, and Unionists who wanted to maintain the link with London, had proved impossible to resolve. Not even intervention from the King, at the Buckingham Palace Conference of mid-July, had settled the question. With Home Rule on the statute book and the British political establishment weighing in on the nationalist and unionist sides, a genuine threat of civil war loomed. The scene painted by Churchill where Grey began reading the ultimatum aloud just as their Cabinet meeting was winding down reminds us that these British officials were then confronting the crisis properly for the first time.[[11]](#footnote-11)

Grey thus came to this point in the July Crisis already deeply distracted by Irish matters, and it is perhaps not too surprising that his efforts at mediation were based on contradictory ideas or insufficient evidence. What Grey also did not realise was the extent to which France was determined to support Russia. This precluded any French effort to try and moderate Russian policy, and meant that while Grey relied on Austria’s ally to rein her in, he was unable to fairly assume that Russia’s ally would do the same. In Grey’s defence, it is noted that the message of French solidarity implicit in Buchanan’s telegram covered above was something of an exaggeration. Buchanan’s impressions, after all, were based on the behaviour of Ambassador Paleologue, who effectively spoke for his President while the latter was incommunicado, but may have overreached in this role.

Buchanan’s telegram came in the evening of 24 July, by which time Grey had met with the Austrian, French, German and Russian ambassadors, and no such message of unconditional French solidarity with Russia emerged from these conversations. As Thomas Otte discerned, ‘The French government had not committed to supporting Russia; only its ambassador in St Petersburg had done so… The extent to which Paleologue acted outside the control of the [French Foreign Ministry] was not appreciated by British officials.’ Paleologue’s sins were of omission and commission; he claimed that Britain had communicated its solidarity with the Entente; he portrayed Sazonov as weak and willing to capitulate; he even asserted France’s unconditional support for Russian policy and falsely claimed to have been approved in this stance by Paris.[[12]](#footnote-12) More dangerous still, Paleologue did not inform his colleagues of Russia’s real efforts at mobilisation, despite recognising these measures as such as he witnessed their progress. On 25 July Paleologue bid Izvolsky farewell, as the latter departed for his return journey to Paris ‘in hot haste.’ Paleologue wrote in his diary that ‘There was a great bustle on the platforms. The trains were packed with ofﬁcers and men. This looked like mobilization.’ He and Izvolsky ‘rapidly exchanged impressions and came to the same conclusion: “It’s war this time.” … the cities and Governments of St. Petersburg and Moscow have been declared in a state of siege.’ For whatever reason, Paleologue did not communicate this to Paris, and the Russian mobilisation continued under the radar of European courts.[[13]](#footnote-13)

French solidarity would only be assured once the President and Premier returned to Paris, but the gap between Paleologue in St Petersburg and Cambon in London demonstrates how hard it must have been to acquire a clear picture. Still, we should not underrate the capacity of France’s ambassadors in London, Berlin, St Petersburg and Rome. Gordon Martel noted that these ambassadors had formed ‘a kind of diplomatic cabinet over the last decade,’ thanks to ‘a series of ever-changing, weak, and usually uninstructed foreign ministers, they had filled the gap.’ By July 1914, this coterie of ambassadors ‘were more accustomed to telling the Quai d’Orsay what policy should be than they were to follow directions they received from Paris.’ Martel notes that the Cambons in London and Berlin had studied together with Paleologue, and Jules Cambon, the ambassador to Berlin, had married Paleologue’s sister. Each of these four officials may have disputed the possibility of mediation, but they were united on the necessity of the Russian alliance and British entente for French security. With the President and Premier largely absent from the decision-making process, these four ambassadors, and Paleologue especially, were now in possession of an outsized influence at a crucial point in the crisis. That Vienna had not accounted for this experienced set of ambassadors or their potential to exacerbate the situation represents just another strike against their scheming.[[14]](#footnote-14)

The assumptions upon which Grey’s mediation proposal were based may have been faulty, but the British Foreign Secretary still believed that despite everything, there were grounds for optimism. After all, war had been avoided at the last moment during all previous crises – who was to say that calmer heads would not prevail now, as they had done before? As Grey appreciated, what mattered in the next period was Austria’s reaction to Serbia’s answer, and Russia’s reaction to this. Until matters were clearer in this respect, the British Foreign Secretary attempted to steer a middle course.Yet, the behaviour of Russia was not the only source of great concern for Vienna. The message from Italy, technically an ally of Austria, was also deeply troubling. On 24 July, Antionio de San Guiliano, the Italian Foreign Minister, telegrammed his ambassadors in Berlin and Vienna to update them on the implications of the ultimatum. ‘The wording of the note and the nature of its demands show clearly that Austria wishes to provoke a war,’ San Giuliano said. He made it clear to the German ambassador to Rome that…

…because of Austria’s manner of proceeding and because of the defensive and conservative nature of the Treaty of the Triple Alliance, Italy is under no obligation to come to Austria’s assistance if through her action she finds herself involved in war with Russia, for this would be due to her own provocation and aggression.

San Giuliano did discern that just because there was no obligation, this ‘does not preclude the possibility that it might be convenient for us to take part in an eventual war, should that correspond to our vital interests.’ Did this mean Italy could potentially join the Entente side? San Giuliano was not ruling out this possibility; he kept Italian powder dry, and Italy’s allies guessing. Yet, the Foreign Minister did intimate that if Italy was appropriately compensated for Austrian expansion in the Balkans, Rome would be more amenable. This was not a cynical bargain, but very much in keeping with Article VII of the Triple Alliance, which stipulated that gains for one power in the Balkans would have to be met with compensation for the partners elsewhere. San Giuliano presented this as follows:

Given the political regime of our country, it would be quite impossible for us to participate unless the government were able to furnish the assurance that an advantage corresponding to our risks would be secured – an advantage, that is, sufficient to overcome the resistance of public opinion to a war fought in the interests of Austria, who has recently made many mistakes that have hindered the work of progressive reconciliation which was being effected – thanks to Your Excellency’s wise cooperation.

The ‘Excellency’ in this case were the ambassadors in Berlin and in Vienna who had worked to improve Italian relations with its Triple Alliance partners in recent years, and the relationship with Austria was always the most strained. Interestingly, San Giuliano referred to Ludwig von Flotow, the German ambassador, in these considerations. San Giuliano noted that ‘Flotow mentioned several times, in the course of the conversation, the need for territorial compensation for us in the case of a territorial expansion of Austria.’ San Giuliano concluded that Flotow ‘did not have a good impression of the note from Austria, because it looked to him randomly compiled and aimed at causing conflict.’[[15]](#footnote-15) Ludwig von Flotow, the German ambassador to Rome, also wrote back to Berlin on the same day, giving his own account of this weighted conversation with the Italian ally. Writing to Jagow, the German Foreign Minister, Flotow provided a measured account of Italy’s reaction to the Austrian ultimatum. We will recall that Germany had repeatedly urged Berchtold to prepare some sort of sweetener for Italy, to ensure her neutrality, whether this was through the cession of land or other compensation. Unfortunately, Berchtold had not taken this advice, and it was up to Flotow to rescue the situation, since the Austrian ambassador to Rome was then ill in bed. The Italian position was as clear as it was troubling, as Flotow recalled:

In a rather heated meeting with Prime Minister Salandra and [Foreign Minister] San Giuliano which lasted several hours the latter was of the opinion that the spirit of the Triple Alliance agreement had demanded of such a serious and aggressive move by Austria that she consulted with the ally beforehand. As this had not occurred with regard to Italy she could consider herself not involved in any further consequences of this step.

But Flotow was determined not to let the matter rest there. Responding to San Giuliano’s emphasis on Article VII of the Triple Alliance, which provided for compensation in the event of Balkan expansion, Flotow pointed out that ‘as far as I knew, Austria had declared not to want any territorial acquisitions’, but that San Giuliano replied ‘such a declaration had only been made very conditionally. Rather, Austria had declared not to intend to make territorial acquisitions now, conditional on potential later decision which might become necessary.’ San Giuliano explained that ‘one could not hold it against him if he was taking precautionary measures in time.’ And in Flotow’s estimation ‘the text of the Austrian note was so aggressive and composed so clumsily that public opinion in Europe and also in Italy would be against Austria; no Italian government could fight against that.’ Difficult though his task was, Flotow continued to press the allied message, and he ‘energetically’ disputed the Italian point that since Austrian aggression provoked war, this negated the defensive foundations of the Triple Alliance. The best Flotow could manage was a declaration to the effect that San Giuliano’s position was merely ‘an observation of his position in principle which did not exclude different decisions by the Italian government.’ Flotow continued:

I explained that at this stage it was not important what might have to happen later, but rather that at the current moment the world needed to be shown the closeness and unity of the Triple Alliance and to avoid everything which could lead Russia and France to suspect an internal disagreement among the allies. Therefore I had to request urgently also to influence the press in this way.[[16]](#footnote-16)

The Italian conundrum was merely one issue in a growing list of uncertainties Vienna had created for itself. We have seen Austrian diplomacy concern itself with the position of Romania and Bulgaria in the past, but Berchtold’s unwillingness to offer Rome any compensation, and his refusal to inform the Italian government of the ultimatum until the day before its delivery might have seemed to him as ‘an act of courtesy entirely sufficient with an unreliable ally,’ but Berchtold ought to have reflected more carefully on the potential damage this unreliable ally could do if it was fully untethered from the Triple Alliance. The tunnel vision policy pursued by Vienna once again presents itself; despite recognising the provocative nature of this step, the Italian elephant in the room was never tended to, just as the possibility of Russian intervention was only partially considered.

Initially, at least, it was not certain that Russia would intervene. Indeed, the mood in Serbia on 24 July may best be described as gloomy. This was because Russian communications initially advised caution and accommodation with Vienna. Nikolai Hartwig’s death on 10 July had left a hole in Russo-Serb relations, moving Sazonov to write to the Russian counsellor to the Belgrade legation on 24 July:

If Serbia is really in such a helpless condition as to leave no doubt regarding the result of an armed struggle with Austria, it would perhaps be better that in the event of an invasion by Austria the Serbs should not even try to offer resistance, but should retreat and allow the enemy to occupy their territory without fighting, and make a solemn appeal to the Powers. In this appeal the Serbs, by pointing out the difficulty of their position after the recent war during which their moderation gained them the recognition of Europe, might refer to the impossibility of their surviving an unequal struggle, and ask for the protection of the powers based upon a sense of justice.[[17]](#footnote-17)

This advice would place the defence of Serbia in great peril, but it would also provide an emotive picture for sympathetic allies – above all the British, who would see that Serbia was not the true problem, but Austrian aggression was. Whether it was true that Serbia had exercised much ‘moderation’ in the Balkan Wars – considering the fact that she had to be coerced out of Albania and an Adriatic port by the threat of Russian non-intervention in the event of an Austro-Serb war in 1913 – did not necessarily matter. It did not necessarily matter either whether Austria had justice on its side in seeking satisfaction for the murdered Archduke. Serbia had until 6PM on 25 July to respond to the ultimatum, and Vienna expected her to reject it, facilitating war. Although some complained that the 48-hour deadline did not leave them with enough time to reduce the temperature, contemporaries in both blocs sent a flurry of telegrams during this period, straining communication lines and emphasising the potential for mediation. These mediation efforts were largely British in origin, as we will see, but it seems that by the afternoon of 24 July, the Russian mood had begun to turn.

In a meeting of the Russian Council of Ministers at 3PM on 24 July, several key points were set down which would inform Russian policy towards the ultimatum going forward. These were as stark as they were consequential, since they hinted at an increasing militarisation of the crisis. The first point was reasonable enough, and aimed at a joint Entente effort to…

…persuade the Austro-Hungarian government to grant Serbia a certain postponement of her reply to the ultimatum demands sent by the Austro-Hungarian government in order to give the governments of the great powers the opportunity to inspect and study the documents on the crime committed in Sarajevo that the Austro-Hungarian government has at its disposal and which, as the Austro-Hungarian ambassador confirms, it is willing to communicate to the Russian government.

The second point emphasised that Serbia should be advised to refrain from hostilities or provocations, and should refer to the great powers for her protection, as Sazonov had communicated to Belgrade earlier in the day. The third point advised ‘a proclamation of mobilisation of the four military districts of Kiev, Odessa, Moscow and Kazan, and of the Baltic and Black Sea Fleets, depending on the subsequent course of events.’ The final two points contributed to this drive towards military preparations; the War Minister was to increase stockpiles of war materiel, and the Finance Minister was charged with withdrawing Russian monies from Austrian and German banks.[[18]](#footnote-18)

This constituted the official line of the Russian government by the afternoon of 24 July, but what did Russian ministers actually think of the situation? As was normally the case in such crises, the Russian ministers of Agriculture, Finance, and War would be the most influential, alongside the Foreign Minister. Thus it is significant that the Agriculture Minister, Alexander Krivoshein took such a firm line from the beginning, as a colleague later recalled:

Our rearmament program had not been completed and it seemed doubtful whether our Army and our Fleet would ever be able to compete with those of Germany or Austria-Hungary as regards modern technical efficiency. On the other hand, general conditions had improved a great deal in Russia in the past few years and public and parliamentary opinion would fail to understand why, at the critical moment involving Russia’s vital interests, the Imperial government was reluctant to act boldly. Our exaggeratedly prudent attitudes had unfortunately not succeeded in placating the Central European Powers. No one in Russia desired war. The disastrous consequences of the Russo-Japanese War had shown the grave danger which Russia would run in case of hostilities. Consequently, our policy should aim at reducing the possibility of a European War, but if we remained passive we would not attain our objective. War could break out in spite of our efforts at conciliation. In his view stronger language than we had used hitherto was desirable. All factors tended to prove that the most judicious policy Russia could follow in present circumstances was a return to a firmer and more energetic attitude towards the unreasonable claims of the Central European powers.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Had Austrian or German officials been able to read this document, it would have confirmed their worst fears about the potential direction of the crisis. Here was a senior Russian official making the case for intervention, or at least insisting that Russia could not behave as it had during previous confrontations. Since Berlin and Vienna expected Russia to do just that, this was a serious problem, but we might argue that it was also a contingency they should have planned for. Was it not reasonable to assume that after two high profile instances of backing down, on the third occasion Russia would stand firm? Of the five points passed by the Russian council, the most significant was the third resolution which authorised the mobilisation of key military districts and strategically useful fleets. Yet not all Ministers were content with the state of preparedness. Kokovstov’s replacement as Premier, Ivan Goremykin explained the situation in less optimistic terms:

our rearmament had not been completed and it seemed doubtful whether our Army and our Fleet would ever be able to compete... [But] the only hope of influencing Germany was to show them, by making a firm stand, that we had come to the end of the concessions we were prepared to make.[[20]](#footnote-20)

This gels with the theme of inflexibility in the Russian mind. Following so many rebuffs and retreats at her expense, Russia could not afford to back down again. If she also could not afford war, then she must make it appear as though she could, in the hope Germany would get the message. The policy of confrontation would thus continue, even if Goremykin’s tone seems akin to hope and resignation than anything approaching confidence. On paper, Russia’s official response to the ultimatum was formulated through this ministerial process, but in reality, Sazonov had already prepared the ground behind the scenes before the Council even met that afternoon.

Thus at 11 AM on 24 July, Sazonov had a conversation with the Russian Chief of Staff Nikolai Yanushkevitch, where the latter was instructed to place the Russian army on a war footing. This would ensure the generals were prepared to act upon the resolutions passed in the aforementioned Council meeting that afternoon. When we tackle the question of responsibility or even guilt in the July Crisis, this issue of Russian mobilisation ranks among the most important, and controversial. If it could be proved that Russian mobilised in anticipation of war from an early stage, could it then be proved that St Petersburg provoked Germany and thus the war into being? It certainly seems that from 24 July, Russia was preparing a partial mobilisation against Austria. This, we should note, was not unlike what had occurred during the Balkan War, as Austria and Russia engaged in costly mobilisations and counter mobilisations against each other. This time, however, with Germany committed to Vienna and France tied to the Balkanisation of the Entente, the results were bound to be far more explosive.

It may also be argued that Sazonov was operating under false impressions. Although the chief of staff had advised him that pre-mobilisation measures could take place against Austria alone, Russia’s existing plan for war with the Central Powers – Plan 19 – did not allow for this selective treatment. True, Russia had refrained from mobilising the Warsaw district, so as not to inflame German opinion, but Yanushkevitch was not as well-informed as he should have been. He had been appointed after the February 1914 meeting, where Plan 19 had been constructed and aimed against Berlin and Vienna at once. There was thus good grounds for claiming that no plan existed for the kind of selective mobilisation the chief of staff was now advocating, and Yanushkevitch was told this by a subordinate mere minutes after he had given Sazonov the all-clear. On the other hand, Sean McMeekin makes the point that Sazonov had been present at a council meeting in November 1912, wherein the moderate Premier Kokovstov had pressed the impossibility of mobilisation against one of the Central Powers, since ‘no matter what we chose to call the projected measures, a mobilization remained a mobilization, to be countered by our adversaries with actual war.’

Kokovstov won the day with this argument, but by July 1914, Kokovstov was absent, and French support had been secured, meaning that even if Russian mobilisation drew German hostility, the Entente would ensure her security. In authorising the period preparatory to war in those districts opposing Austria, Sazonov had either made a grave error based on faulty intelligence, or he acted with the full knowledge of the potential consequences, safe in the belief that President Poincare would not let its ally down. It is noteworthy that when Finance Minister Peter Bark met with Sazonov’s chief of staff before this Council Meeting, he was told that Sazonov considered war inevitable. Again, this was not a smoking gun proving Russia’s premediated attempt to instigate a world war; Sazonov may have represented a certain pessimism, to the effect that matters had so deteriorated as to make war more likely. Yet it is also fair to argue that the receipt of the ultimatum made Sazonov much bolder. As he explained in the Council meeting at 3PM, Russia…

…could not remain a passive spectator whilst a Slavonic people was being deliberately trampled down. In 1876 and 1877 Russia had fought Turkey for the liberation of the Slavonic peoples in the Balkans. We had made immense sacriﬁces with that end in view… If Russia failed to fulfil her historic mission, she would be considered a decadent State and would henceforth have to take second place among the Powers… If, at this critical juncture, the Serbs were abandoned to their fate, Russian prestige in the Balkans would collapse utterly.[[21]](#footnote-21)

We already know Sazonov’s famous reaction to the ultimatum. We also know that the Foreign Minister spent the first part of Friday 24 July engaged in both bilateral meetings with foreign ambassadors and then official meetings with his colleagues. We have good reason to be suspicious of Sazonov’s presentation of himself as a Minister who was dumbstruck by the ultimatum, but just because he knew of its impending arrival and inflammatory contents, this does not mean that within hours, he had set Russia’s military response in motion, does it? Sean McMeekin’s works – both in *The Russian Origins of the First World War*, and in his recent account, *July 1914* – both place greater emphasis on what Sazonov did during these crucial hours, and their implications for how the crisis developed. As McMeekin points out, it was one thing for Russia to stipulate that if Austria attacked Serbia, she would publicly mobilise her army and send a clear message. It was quite another to authorise this mobilisation in secret, and to keep it secret until 28 July. McMeekin also takes issue with the actual orders for partial mobilisation which were handed down, writing:

Why, after all, if Sazonov and Krivoshein wished merely to safeguard Serbia’s independence, did they mobilize not only thirteen entire army corps—a force of some 1.1 million men—but also the ﬂeets of the Baltic and Black Sea, neither of which bodies of water were contiguous at any point to Austria- Hungary (or Serbia, for that matter)? Why did they include Odessa alongside Kazan, Kiev, and Moscow among the four military districts in which the ominous-sounding “Period Preparatory to War” was inaugurated—a district where recent operational planning focused on amphibious operations against Constantinople?

There were other acts that did not gel with the claim that Russia was only responding to Austrian behaviour; martial law was declared in Moscow and St Petersburg, training manoeuvres were cancelled, and cadets were promoted to officers. The period preparatory to war facilitated further measures and the expansion of military preparations over the next few days, enabling Russia to reach a state of readiness greatly at odds with what the Central Powers had assumed in their initial wargaming. Indeed, the extent of these mobilisation preparations infamously compelled Berlin to issue an ultimatum, and then a formal declaration of war against her.[[22]](#footnote-22) On the other hand, could it not be argued that these measures were part and parcel of the same strategy of preparing the colossal Russian military apparatus for all eventualities, a position she had not been in during previous retreats in 1909 and 1913?

This was certainly a different Russia even to the one which had reluctantly accepted Austrian diplomatic triumphs. There was a sense, captured by Sazonov in the ideology of prestige, that Russia simply could not permit yet another retreat if she wished to be taken seriously in the Balkans or in Europe generally. I have previously defined prestige as the reputation of a state’s power, which included her ability to project that power and leverage it effectively. A high prestige meant that a state could get what they wanted simply by referring to their reputable army, and we know by now that reports on Russia’s recovery emphasised her military power as significant and expanding. As William Mulligan discerned, this emphasis on prestige represented a stark departure from how St Petersburg had viewed similar crises in the Balkans before:

Prestige was a term that had been bandied about in diplomatic exchanges and the press for decades. Although, as the currency of great power politics, it was invested with deep significance, statesmen had stopped short of risking war against another great power to maintain prestige. The meeting of the Council of Ministers, by elevating the defence of Russia’s great power prestige into a justification for war, departed from the culture of decision-making in previous crises.[[23]](#footnote-23)

The concern for prestige manifested in a determination to resist any semblance of retreat, and to stand firm even as the risks increased. We may recall how Austrian calculations of war with Serbia gauged that Vienna would benefit from this strong stand, because her rivals would see that she was willing to take such formidable risks. The German belief that Vienna had to be supported firmly to account for weak support in the past fed these sentiments. The Russian decision to stand by its Serbian friend, after abandoning it in the Albanian crisis, moved the Tsar’s ministers to draw similar conclusions. And then we see the recommendation from Grey’s subordinates that a demonstration of British determination to act in concert with the Entente would deter the Central Powers. Deterrence had long been assumed as a break against war, but so long as each of the major actors congratulated themselves on the great risks they were taking, and presumed this would deter their rivals, deterrence could not possibly succeed. This reminds us of the climate of mistrust which permeated in the months before the crisis; if the powers were willing to assume the worst about their rival’s intentions, but also to assume that they would back down if push came to shove, then what emerges is a multiplayer game of chicken nobody could win, and few realised was actually underway.

Of all the powers concerned with the crisis, perhaps Serbia was the most moderate, at least initially. Upon receiving the ultimatum in the evening of 23 July, the Serbian mood had turned to defiance, yet by the end of 24 July, this had given way to fatalism. Since we know that Serbia did not in the end accept the entirety of the ultimatum, it appears something changed on 25 July to alter Serbia’s approach to the crisis. This change was anticipated in a meeting Sazonov had with Spalajkovic, the Serbian ambassador in St Petersburg at 6PM on 24 July. Sazonov assured Spalajkovic that the ultimatum contained terms no sovereign state could accept, but he tempered his outrage with recommendations that Serbia should not increase the tension. Serbia should show ‘extreme moderation,’ Sazonov urged, invariably recommending an approach to London for mediation, and for the Serbian army to withdraw into the country rather than resist or pre-empt an Austrian attack. Spalajkovic later reported on conversations between the Serb attaché and Russian General Staff which suggested Russia was undergoing mobilisation, and would formulate a joint Russo-Serb response to the ultimatum, though Sazonov was clear that the big decisions should be left to the great powers.[[24]](#footnote-24)

Although these gave only vague assurances to Serbia, they likely facilitated a firmer stance. Spalajkovic’s telegrams had all reached Belgrade before noon on 25 July, more than enough time to enable the official Serbian mood to swing back towards defiance as the response to the ultimatum was then being crafted. As Sazonov’s revolving door let Spalajkovic out, the German ambassador Pourtalès came in. Sazonov stressed that the Serbian issue was one of European concern, and he cast doubt on Austrian investigations into Serbian culpability, while rejecting allusions to the monarchical principle. ‘If Austria-Hungary swallows Serbia,’ Sazonov warned, ‘we shall wage war against her.’ We might think that this was a clear enough message for the German ambassador to report home; could Pourtalès not see how unlikely it now was that Russia would stand aloof from an Austro-Serb war? In fact, Pourtalès took what he wanted from this conversation; Sazonov’s references to the European Concert and his efforts to internationalise the Serbian issue struck him as proof Russia would not intervene on its own.

If you’re scratching your head at this conclusion, it should be reiterated that Sazonov did not mention the ongoing pre-mobilisation measures which had recently been authorised; this act may have clarified Russian determination for the Germans. Evidently, the thinking in Berlin and Vienna was fixed on the assumption that Russia would back down; this assumption was so ingrained that even references to Russia’s partners was interpreted as a kind of weakness.[[25]](#footnote-25) It should be borne in mind that Sazonov had a tendency to talk a big game and then back down once his nerves became frayed. The Liman von Sanders mission was a good example of this behaviour, and it enabled German and Austrian contemporaries to maintain that even if the Russian Foreign Minister raged at the ultimatum, the pressures of time would wear him down into his more amenable self in due course. As Thomas Otte discerned, these interpretations were flawed, but they were just as flawed as Russian assumptions of Austro-German intentions:

The Foreign Minister was not noted for his steady nerves. During earlier crises he had often been irresolute, prone to yielding to external pressures at the last moment. Unsurprisingly, like Berchtold at Vienna, the more hawkish elements at home reserved their ire for him. And like Berchtold, Sazonov was not prepared to succumb again.[[26]](#footnote-26)

The Austro-Russian game of chicken was perhaps the most important aspect of the crisis; it was arguably from the concerns of these powers and their allies that the crisis acquired most of its fuel. It is worth taking a moment to consider the extent of those military preparations described by Sazonov and his colleagues in the 24 July council meeting; these were brought further the following day. In the next episode we will address these military preparations, including their implications for the crisis and the historiography surrounding it. After so many weeks of fearful rumours, Austria’s ultimatum was now a fact, and the powers were forced to respond to it. Amidst all those wondering what it might mean or how to deny any explosive consequences, we see Russia begin to step forward in the name of its Serbian ally. There was, we should make plain, very little chance that Russia could remain outside of any Austro-Serb war. It was not merely Sazonov’s sense that enough was enough, but also Paleologue’s helpful – if inaccurate – assertions that France stood resolutely by her ally even in these Balkan imbroglios. This was a different Franco-Russian entente to that of 1912, and it was above all a different Russia which confronted the latest shocking development in this crisis.

By the time Sazonov went to bed after his long day of 24 July, Russia had developed its response to the ultimatum. Through the use of diplomacy, backed up by force, the Entente would coerce Vienna into extending the deadline of the ultimatum. Then, the powers would intercede, potentially through mediation, to adjudicate on the quarrel. Austria would not have its grievances listened to, but Russia would block Habsburg expansion into the Balkans, thus preserving its own influence and keeping its strategic focus on the Straits fully insulated from any change to the status quo. Vienna was unlikely to accept this unpalatable offer, but that was where the Russian military preparations would come in. Russia would use the growing reputation of its army and its improved capacity for projecting it to dissuade Austria from pushing matters further.[[27]](#footnote-27) At worse, this could result in a standoff between the two powers, seen in the early phase of the Balkan War. Then, as Vienna and St Petersburg glared at one another across their borders, the Concert of Europe worked to defuse the tensions and arrive at a settlement. The outcome had cheered proponents of Anglo-German diplomacy, but it had also taught Russia bitter lessons about the necessity of leverage. In Sazonov’s view, Russia now possessed this leverage, and she was determined to use it.

1. 24 July 1914, Peter Bark’s account of his meeting with Tsar Nicholas II in Mombauer, *Documents*, p. 334. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. McMeekin, *July 1914*, pp. 176-177. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Thomas Otte, *July Crisis*, pp. 232-233. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Ibid*, p. 234. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Quoted in John W. Young, ‘Ambassador George Buchanan and the July Crisis,’ *International History Review*, 40, 1 (Feb 2018), 206-224; 207. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Paleologue in Mombauer, *Documents*, pp. 324-325, footnote 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. 24 July 1914, Paleologue to Bienvenu-Martin in *Ibid*, pp. 327-328. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. 24 July 1914, Buchanan to Grey in Mombauer, *Documents*, pp. 323-327. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. 24 July 1914, Paul Cambon to Bienvenu-Martin in *Ibid*, pp. 328-329. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Quoted in Douglas Newton, *The Darkest Days: the Truth Behind Britan’s Rush to War in 1914* (London, 2014), pp. 21-22. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Otte, *July Crisis*, p. 255. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. *Ibid*, pp. 250-251; 258-261. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. See McMeekin, *Russian Origins*, pp. 62-63. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Martel, *The Month that Changed the World*, pp. 179-180. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. 24 July 1914, San Giuliano to Bollati and Varna in Mombauer, *Documents*, pp. 316-317. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. 24 July 1914, Flotow to Jagow in *Ibid*, pp. 317-318. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. 24 July 1914, Sazonov to Strandtmann in *Ibid*, p. 321. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. 24 July 1914, Russian Council of Ministers meeting in *Ibid*, pp. 331-332. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. 24 July 1914, Krivoshein’s summary of Russian Council of Ministers meeting of 24 July 1914 in *Ibid*, p. 333. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Quoted in Wohlforth, ‘The Perception of Power: Russia in the Pre-1914 Balance,’ 368. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. See McMeekin, *Russian Origins*, pp. 54-58. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. *Ibid*, pp. 59-60. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Mulligan, *Origins*, p. 219. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Otte, *July Crisis*, pp. 238-239. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. *Ibid*, pp. 240-241. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. *Ibid*, p. 243. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. *Ibid*, pp. 244-245. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)