

Russian agreement of 1907. Still more visible was the hand of Germany in the swing of the Russian pendulum towards reactionary methods at home; but the more bitter the disappointment of the progressive parties in Russia over the developments of internal policy, the more steadfastly they clung to the maintenance of friendly relations between the Russian and the British Governments as a certain safeguard for what remained of their liberties. Events, meanwhile, were shaping themselves in the Balkan Peninsula in such a way as to force the hands of even the worst reactionaries, who, whatever else they might be willing to do, could not repudiate altogether the traditions of Russian policy in regard to the Slavs outside the Empire.

The small States of South-eastern Europe had taken to heart the lesson of 1908-9. They felt that their interests and even their independence were exposed henceforth to even greater danger from the ambitions of the two Germanic Powers than from their old enemy Turkey. Each of them began to set his own house in order, and a genuine attempt was made to compose their past differences and jealousies in order to meet the common enemy. Long-drawn negotiations between them resulted in the formation of a Balkan League composed of Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, and Montenegro. All had not, probably, quite the same objects in view. Bulgaria and perhaps Greece had an eye chiefly to Constantinople. For Serbia and Montenegro, it was the Austrian menace that loomed largest. All, however, claimed special, if sometimes rival, interests in Macedonia, and it was Turkish misrule in Macedonia which ultimately brought the Balkan League into the field. The action, perhaps the very existence, of the League took Austria and Germany by surprise. The result of