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**Quest For Empire: The United States Versus Germany
(1891 - 1910)**

Jennifer L. Cutsforth

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Quest for Empire: The United States versus Germany Part I: 1891 - 1900

German battleships threaten American victory at Manila! United States refuses to acknowledge German rights in Samoa! Germany menaces the Western Hemisphere! United States reneges on agreement to support German stand at Morocco! The age of imperialism prompted headlines like these in both American and German newspapers at the turn of the century. Although little contact took place previously between the two countries, the diplomacy which did exist had been friendly in nature. However, when the rise of international imperialism during the late 1800s caused both the United States and Germany to join the hunt for territories and colonies, the resulting competition destroyed their long-standing amicable relationship. Because the United States and Germany were latecomers to imperialism, they competed against one another for the few remaining independent territories.

During the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century, the United States and Germany battled each other for colonial footholds around the world. The two nations expanded during the late 1890s into the Pacific and the Far East, areas already colonized by Great Britain, France, and Spain. The Spanish-American War and the Samoan Affair deepened the rift between the United States and Germany at this time. While the fundamental cause of the rift during these incidents was their mutual desire to acquire land, other factors exacerbated the competition. These were Germany's paranoid response to the obvious diplomatic reconciliation between the United States and Great Britain, the provocation of American suspicion by German rhetoric and German

diplomatic incompetence, and finally, the blatant ethnic prejudice exhibited toward Germany on the part of the United States after the Spanish-American War. It is also important to point out how the German-American rivalry influenced American consideration of the China Market and the developing Open Door Policy. Such factors will be proven through the detailed analysis of documents which expose the controversial events of the 1890s. First, however, one should briefly study the historical literature relating to the time period, other problems existing between Germany and the United States which heightened the imperialist conflict, and the particular American and German goals for empire.

Journal articles examining the German-American rivalry during the Spanish-American War and the Samoan Affair are scarce. Most diplomatic history articles deal only with the causes and effects of United States imperialism. Similarly, many scholars give opinions on the China Market appeal and the Open Door Policy, important elements which will be discussed throughout this paper. One article which mentions the German-American rivalry during the last decade of the nineteenth century is Thomas J. McCormick's essay "Insular Possessions for the China Market". This article describes the United States' perception of Germany during the Spanish-American War. According to McCormick, Germany was the biggest threat to American expansion in the Far East. During the Spanish-American War, Germany appeared to consider herself heir to Spain's empire in the Pacific, and such German expansionism in the Pacific would undoubtedly affect the United States' position in the area, thereby limiting the United

States' access to the China Market.¹ McCormick supports his argument that Germany was a legitimate threat to American interests by citing Germany's claims to United States Ambassador Andrew White and Secretary of State John Hay in July 1898. German officials informed White and Hay that Germany expected "a few coaling stations" and "a naval base" in the Philippines, as well as control of the Carolines and greater influence in Samoa.² McCormick asserts that if the United States only took control of Manila instead of annexing the Philippine Islands as a whole, Germany surely would have attempted to acquire land there. Such German holdings in the Philippines would have jeopardized American commercial interests in China.³

The United States and Germany experienced difficulties beyond imperialist competition during the final years of the nineteenth century. Tariff wars, naval growth, and the Anglo-American rapprochement only added to the German-American rivalry rooted in imperialism.

American and German tariff wars staged during the late nineteenth century contributed to the battle for empire by engendering distrust between the two nations. Both the Meat Inspection Act and the McKinley Tariff damaged German trade; the United States Congress passed both measures in 1890. The inspection law particularly hurt Germany by giving the president of the United States the authority to bar imports from countries which discriminated against American products; during the late 1800s, Germany banned American pork for health reasons, a fact which

¹ Thomas J. McCormick, "Insular Possessions for the China Market," in Imperial Surge: The United States Abroad, the 1890s-Early 1900s, ed. Thomas G. Paterson and Stephen G. Rabe (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1992), 59.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 59-60.

identified the nation as this law's prime target.⁴ In 1894, the United States passed the Wilson-Gorman Tariff, reimposing the sugar duty. This tariff strained German-American relations because of its affect on Germany's sugar industry, the chief German export to the United States.⁵ The tariff war with the United States elicited a strong German reaction. After his visit with the Russian tsar in 1896, Kaiser Wilhelm II proposed "the getting together of Europe in a battle against McKinley and America in a joint defensive tariff alliance"⁶ Although Europe never implemented the Kaiser's plan, the statement demonstrates the existing German apprehension regarding American economic power.

Germany began to strengthen its navy during the final years of the nineteenth century, triggering a similar American response. Acquisition of overseas territory revealed the need for increased American naval power as well; the Philippines and the Samoan Islands required protection from rival imperial powers like Great Britain and Germany. The powerful British navy and the rising German naval force provided one impetus for a rise in American naval strength. Another influence upon the United States naval policy was Alfred Thayer Mahan's book The Influence of Sea Power upon History, published in 1890. According to Mahan, a strong and sizable navy should protect American interests overseas while also preventing any European powers from expanding into the Western Hemisphere.⁷ During the 1890s, the United States naval department rapidly constructed fleets in

⁴ Manfred Jonas, The United States and Germany: A Diplomatic History (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984), 39.

⁵ Ibid., 40.

⁶ Ibid., 49.

⁷ Walter LaFeber, The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansionism, 1860-1898 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1963), 88-90.

order to prepare for future naval engagements in both the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific.⁸ The United States' new fleets were often in conflict with German naval forces; for example, American and German warships faced one another during both the 1898 Spanish-American War and the Venezuelan crisis of the early 1900s.

Finally, the Anglo-American rapprochement exacerbated the conflict between the United States and Germany. This reconciliation directly impacted the American and German quests for colonial empire. In 1895 and 1896, the Venezuelan border dispute initiated a new era of harmonious relations between the United States and Great Britain. The British recognized the State Department's claims to moderate the Venezuelan crisis, and this action helped to ease longstanding American suspicions toward British policies in the Western Hemisphere. Great Britain showed respect for the Monroe Doctrine and the ultimate rights of the United States in the Western Hemisphere.⁹ Germany regarded the developing Anglo-American rapprochement not only as a threat to her own expansionist goals, but also as the loss of a strategic ally against France and Great Britain. Members of the German diplomatic corps hoped to establish the increasingly powerful United States as an ally to Germany; Germany viewed the United States as a possible strategic ally because of the nation's proximity to two oceans and its potential position as a powerful naval foe to Great Britain. German paranoia of the potential Anglo-American alliance caused the nation to implement maneuvers which could produce a rift between the United States and Great Britain. Such actions only resulted in the further alienation of the United States.

⁸ Ibid., 122-3..

⁹ Ibid., 106.

During the late 1800s, the idea that the United States could expand beyond the Western Hemisphere emerged as a dominating influence on the nation's foreign policy. The chief aim was to secure foreign markets where the United States could sell its surplus goods. A surge in industrial production during the nineteenth century was the signal for the United States to expand its foreign trade. James G. Blaine, Secretary of State under President Benjamin Harrison, articulated the necessity for increased foreign trade: "I wish to declare the opinion that the United States has reached a point where one of its highest duties is to enlarge the area of its foreign trade. . . . Our great demand is expansion."¹⁰ While Blaine proposed that the United States extend its economic influence chiefly into the Latin American sphere, President William McKinley and Secretary of State John Hay directed American expansionism toward Asia and the Pacific in hopes of grabbing a foothold in the vast markets of China. Their plans called for territorial acquisitions in the Pacific to act as either coaling stations or naval bases en route to China.¹¹

American exceptionalism and the missionary movement were other reasons for imperialism. Pride rooted in the American democratic system invoked the obligation to spread the ideas of freedom and liberty around the world, especially to those peoples who supposedly possessed neither the maturity nor the intelligence to learn such principles on their own. Such racism was a driving force behind American imperialism.¹² The increasing number of missionaries residing in the Far Eastern territories also

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 112.

¹² Michael H. Hunt, "American Ideology: Visions of National Greatness and Racism," in Imperial Surge: The United States Abroad, the 1890s-Early 1900s, ed. Thomas G. Paterson and Stephen G. Rabe (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1992), 18.

influenced United States foreign policy. United States policymakers used the presence of missionaries in the Far East as an excuse for American military and business ventures there; the United States had a duty to protect its citizens in the Far East.

Several historians have researched and written articles on reasons for United States expansionism into the Far East. In his article "The Importance of Economic Expansion", Thomas G. Paterson argues that the expanding American economy was the primary motive behind expansionism. While Paterson acknowledges the other causes of imperialism, he cites several reasons why the need for increased foreign trade triggered the movement. First, exports meant profits. Second, foreign trade could result in a reduction of the domestic tension caused by overproduction and unemployment. Third, increased American foreign trade would lead to substantial political influence abroad. Finally, American accession of foreign markets would heighten the international prestige of the United States.¹³ In the aforementioned article "Insular Possessions for the China Market", Thomas J. McCormick reinforces Paterson's argument by stressing the lure of the China Market. McCormick states, "The insular possessions in the Pacific [Hawaii, Guam, Philippines, Samoa] were not pieces of empire, per se, but stepping-stones and levers to be utilized upon a larger and more important stage -- China."¹⁴

Similar to the United States, economic motives were the basis for German expansionism. By the end of the nineteenth century, Germany owned some of the strongest industries in Europe. The nation's rising foreign trade

¹³ Thomas G. Paterson, "The Importance of Economic Expansion," in Major Problems in American Foreign Policy, Volume 1: To 1914, ed. Thomas G. Paterson (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1989), 366.

¹⁴ McCormick, 67.

resulted from its booming economy; during a forty year period, German foreign trade increased five times.¹⁵ The German government saw the need for larger markets where Germany could sell her goods. Expansionism and territorial annexation were the best ways to acquire such foreign markets. Kaiser Wilhelm II indicated another reason why Germany should expand its territory; expansionism added to German glory and power. The notion of German superiority took root soon after the nation's formation in 1871, and the idea acted as a catalyst for German imperialism during the 1890s and early 1900s. According to the Kaiser, Germany should take its proper place in the world by establishing a colonial empire which could compete with the empires of Great Britain and France. As early as 1871, the Kaiser addressed the issue in a speech to the newly established Colonial Society: "The German empire has developed into a world empire, and it is your duty, Gentlemen, to help me bind this great empire to the Fatherland. . . . The time of Germany's philistinism is over when she was oblivious to whatever went on in the world."¹⁶ Germany was a latecomer to the international community, but she arrived with a vengeance.

Rivalry between the United States and Germany developed during the late 1890s due to their conflicts concerning the Spanish-American War and the Samoan Affair. Although the simultaneous search for colonies was the main reason for discord, other elements heightened the rivalry, such as German diplomatic inconsistency and rhetoric, the widespread American prejudice toward Germany, and Germany's paranoid response to the Anglo-

¹⁵ Mary Evelyn Townsend, The Rise and Fall of Germany's Colonial Empire, 1884-1918 (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1930), 176.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 179.

American reconciliation. By the turn of the century, diplomatic relations between the two countries took a decided turn for the worse.

Spanish-American War (1898)

Before proving how certain factors exacerbated the growing rift between the United States and Germany, it is important to briefly review the course of events during the Spanish-American War. Hostilities broke out between the United States and Spain in the spring of 1898; although the chief arena for conflict was Cuba, the United States also challenged Spanish interests in the Far East. On May 1, 1898, Commodore George Dewey secured victory over the Spanish naval forces in Manila Bay, thereby obtaining control of Spanish territory in the Philippines. Nations around the world viewed the Spanish defeat as a chance to expand their imperial interests in the Far East. Several countries sent naval vessels to Manila Bay, including Great Britain, France, and Germany. Yet Germany sent a naval force under Vice-Admiral Otto von Diederichs which almost doubled the contingents of the other countries, causing the United States to view Germany as the chief threat to its interests in the Philippines. Germany defended its position by claiming that German citizens in the region needed the protection of the German navy, but neither the United States government nor the American public believed the rationalization. Under pressure from the American diplomatic corps, Germany recalled its last naval vessels from Manila Bay in February 1899. The United States began its occupation of the Philippines in 1898 and established control over the territory with the defeat of the Filipino insurgents in 1901.¹⁷

¹⁷ Jonas, 57-9.

Inconsistency in German foreign policy caused problems between the United States and Germany during the Spanish-American War. Before the war began, Germany claimed its neutrality and rejected Spanish requests to intervene during the war. Germany also dispatched a notice to the American ambassador in Berlin confirming its neutral status. American Ambassador Andrew White relayed the message to the American government on May 5, 1898: "He [German minister Bernhard von Bulow] said that the Imperial Government had been from the first determined to exercise the strictest neutrality,"¹⁸ German newspapers also stressed the importance of German noninterference during the war. In April 1898 The New York Times printed an excerpt from the Staats-Zeitung, which included an interview with an official from the German Foreign Office. According to the Staats-Zeitung, the German official said, "But, nevertheless, we will interfere under no circumstances whatever, We sincerely wish to keep up the friendship with the United States which has stood the test of a hundred years without ever being impaired."¹⁹ German newspapers also indicated the German public preference for American victory over Spain. However, German diplomatic inconsistency emerged as the conflict developed. German rhetoric and maneuvers contradicted the amicable German front, causing the United States to look down upon such inconsistent messages.

Both the German government and German newspapers demonstrated anti-American sentiment before and during the Spanish-American War. In fact, Germany's decision to send a fleet to Manila Bay resulted from the unsubstantiated report that the Filipinos requested the formation of an

¹⁸ US State Department, "Mr. White to Mr. Day, Berlin, May 5, 1898," in Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1901), 863.

¹⁹ "The Only Peaceful Way," The New York Times, 10 April 1898, 2.

independent state under a German prince. Germany also viewed the Philippines as a good location for a naval base. Deputy Foreign Minister Oswald von Richthofen acted upon this judgment when he informed Ambassador White that Germany would appreciate a few bases in the Philippines.²⁰ The American government perceived such behavior as threatening to American interests in the region. German newspapers criticized the United States as well. The Berliner Post reportedly referred to the United States as "rapacious" and "pharisaical".²¹ When The New York Times printed an excerpt from the Deutsche Zeitung which proposed that Germany use the Spanish-American War for its own advantage, the United States understandably responded in anger and indignation. The Zeitung suggested:

Appropriate Samoa, drive out the Americans from there and take possession of one or more of the Antilles, if possible the Danish Islands, as Germany, after Cuba has become American or independent, will require a coaling station in those waters for her navy and merchant marines.²²

The United States considered the suggestion to be a threat to American expansion. German rhetoric influenced American policy to some extent after the Spanish-American War. One possible reason for the American decision to take over the Philippines in 1899 was to prevent any German acquisitions in the area. If the United States controlled all Philippine territory, Germany would have no chance to claim any land or resources there.

The presence of German warships at Manila Bay precipitated an onslaught of anti-German public opinion in the United States. Eventually,

²⁰ Jones, 57-8.

²¹ "Germany Veers Around," The New York Times, 1 May 1898, 4.

²² "The Only Peaceful Way," 2.

such anti-German sentiments developed into blatant prejudice on the part of the United States, as seen in the newspaper publications of the time. The New York Times once made the accusation that Germany helped Spain maintain control over the Philippines. This same article also asserted the possibility that Germany armed "the Philippine insurgents with a view to harass the American army at Manila."²³ In July 1898, The New York Times expressed the widespread American frustration regarding the German presence in the Philippines. The Times asked, "Why is it that the Germans do these things? What is it that they expect to gain by doing them?"²⁴ A June 1898 New York Times article gave another example of the growing prejudice. The article illustrated the anger and suspicion Americans directed toward Germany:

There can be no doubt of the unofficial American view of the assemblage of a German squadron in Manila Bay. It is that that assemblage is unmannerly and provocative, and that it is meant not to protect existing German interests but to find new interests to protect. It is engaged, that is to say, in 'preempting a claim'. The behavior of Germany in the Far East indicates that she is no more particular about her pretext than was the wolf in the fable. The next question is whether she takes us for a lamb.²⁵

The Spanish-American War emerged as the first imperialist conflict during which American public opinion was clearly anti-German. Future strife between the two nations revealed even greater American suspicion.

After the Spanish-American War, the United States claimed the Philippine Islands as American territory. The acquisition of the Philippines proved to be a consequential step toward easier American access to the

²³ "Germany Is Not Interfering," The New York Times, 25 September 1898, 3.

²⁴ "Germany and the Philippines," The New York Times, 18 July 1898, 6.

²⁵ "German Ships-of-War at Manila," The New York Times, 30 June 1898, 6.

China Market. The Philippines served not only as a location for an American naval base, but also as a fueling station spot for ships en route to China. The impending access to the China Market sparked the formulation of the Open Door Policy, which was established in 1899. The Spanish-American War also had a long-lasting impact on the American public opinion of Germany. The war engendered a suspicion of German motives and maneuvers which would endure for the next ten to twenty years.

Samoa (1898-1899)

The United States and Germany battled for control over the Samoan Islands during the final years of the nineteenth century. By the 1890s, Great Britain, Germany, and the United States each had substantial claim in the Samoan region. Tension between the three nations resulted from differing opinions on the question of kingship succession, and from the armed hostilities which broke out in 1899. Conflict concerning the islands began when King Malietoa died on August 22, 1898. Malietoa's death occurred when the return of opposition tribal chief Mataafa was imminent; Great Britain, Germany, and the United States exiled Mataafa to the Marshall Islands years before. In July 1898, the British consul in Samoa telegraphed that Mataafa's return should be delayed due to Malietoa's impending death. Although the consul believed that the three powers should choose the successor to the kingship rather than allowing the natives to elect their own king, the British official still feared Mataafa's impact upon Samoan natives. The British pondered whether the natives would advocate Mataafa as king, a strong leader who would not act in accordance with British

policy.²⁶ In contrast, Germany supported Mataafa's claim to the throne. Once the Germans suspected that Malietoa Tanu, the other contender for the throne, was fixed securely within the British sphere of interest, German officials began to initiate operations to establish Mataafa's power. On September 19, 1898, Mataafa returned to Samoa.²⁷ At first, the United States remained indifferent to the kingship question, stressing the natives' right to elect their own king. However, the American position gradually moved toward the British side as the conflict progressed.²⁸

On New Year's Eve, 1898, the American chief justice of Samoa, William Chambers, proclaimed Mataafa to be an invalid candidate for the throne because the tripartite government previously banned him from the kingship in 1889. In fact, German chancellor Otto von Bismarck requested the exile, although Germany obviously changed its position on the issue during the decade. Chambers subsequently named Malietoa Tanu as king of Samoa. Both the Germans and the supporters of Mataafa reacted angrily to the proclamation, and they began preparations for war. Hostilities broke out the next day; Mataafans fought Malietoans, and British and American officials sought cover in their respective warships.²⁹

The United States responded to the Samoan violence in March by sending the USS Philadelphia to Samoa under the command of Rear-Admiral Albert Kautz. The Germans and Mataafans objected to the patriotic bluster of Kautz, as well as his public rejection of the provisional government

²⁶ US State Department, "Samoa Affairs," in Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1901), 607.

²⁷ Paul M. Kennedy, The Samoan Tangle: A Study in Anglo-American Relations, 1878-1900 (Ireland: Irish University Press, 1974), 147.

²⁸ US State Department, "Samoa Affairs," 607-8.

²⁹ Kennedy, 150-2.

formed after the January hostilities. When the Mataafan rebels attempted to occupy a strategic territorial point, Kautz opened fire on several nearby Mataafan vessels, while the British Porpoise acted similarly against native villages. Mataafan rebels responded by attacking the Apia township, the British consulate, and the American consulate. Hostilities continued throughout the next month. The need for an international commission was obvious by May 1899; such a commission was necessary to resolve the disputes in Samoa. Commissioners chosen were: Baron Speck von Sternburg (counselor of the German embassy at Washington), Mr. C.N.B. Eliot (second secretary of the British embassy at Washington), and Mr. Bartlett Tripp (a former American minister at Vienna). The commissioners developed a report and possible solution over the summer. They envisioned a similarly structured government, with the goal to prevent the acquisition of disproportionate power by a certain nation. The commission also upheld chief justice Chambers' decision regarding the kingship question; Malietoa Tanu remained the rightful Samoan king.³⁰

On December 2, 1899, the Samoan affair resulted in the partition of the islands between the United States and Germany. The agreement stated that the Germans would control the islands of Upolu and Savaii, while the United States would govern Tutuila, including Pago Pago harbor. In return for British relinquishment of its claims in Samoa, Germany transferred control of some territory in the Pacific and in Africa to the British.³¹

German aggressive maneuvers, diplomatic inconsistency, and nationalistic rhetoric during the Samoan Affair contributed to the growing German-American rivalry. The greatest affront to the American conscience

³⁰ Ibid., 152-3, 169, 173, 176-7.

³¹ "Samoa Treaty Is Signed," The New York Times, 3 December 1899, 3.

was the German initiation of hostilities in January 1899; as aforementioned, the January violence constituted a direct retaliation to the chief justice determination that Mataafa was an invalid candidate for the Samoan kingship. Considering the chief justice was an American, the German reaction angered American officials because of its evident disrespect for American policy and judgment. On January 6, 1899, the Germans locked the door of the capital courthouse and declared the courthouse to be closed until notification from the new provisional government, which Germany established after American and British officials withdrew to their ships. This action effectively cut off both the Americans and the British from Samoan affairs. On January 7, Chambers and the British reclaimed their influence by forcing the German officials from the courthouse and breaking into the building itself. The German representative to Samoa displayed even more presumptuous German behavior. According to historian Paul Kennedy, Raffel assumed a dictatorial attitude toward other international officials during the Samoan Affair, although his sudden assumption of this absolutist power may have resulted from his development of mental illness. He even proclaimed himself to be the new chief justice during the January hostilities. Raffel's behavior during the incident only further frustrated American officials.³² Germany's appointment of Baron Speck von Sternburg is an example of contradiction in German diplomacy. In contrast to Germany's previous hostile actions, Germany decided in the late spring and early summer of 1899 to name Sternburg as the German representative to the international Samoan commission. This action was an attempt by Germany to secure the peace

³² Kennedy, 149-152.

and friendship of the United States. Sternburg was stationed previously in the United States, where he became friends with politician Theodore Roosevelt and married an American woman.³³ Such variance in German diplomatic tone and actions only verified the American refusal to cooperate with German officials.

German diplomatic rhetoric also provoked American suspicion. Speeches by German officials often contradicted such friendly gestures as the appointment of Sternburg as Samoan commissioner. On March 1, 1899, the German secretary of state for foreign affairs declared, "I hold strongly to the hope that we (the three treaty powers) shall succeed in disposing also of these latest troubles in Samoa, with due protection for German rights and interests"³⁴ The German secretary Bernhard von Bulow clearly indicated the German priority during the Samoan crisis. The United States perceived Bulow's speech as a sign that Germany placed its own interests and power above a peaceful coexistence with the United States. Germany also demonstrated anger at the actions of American Admiral Kautz during March 1899. A national newspaper in Germany published the following judgment:

It must remain undecided for the present whether Admiral Kautz has assailed the honor of the German flag. If this should prove to have case, we have the fullest confidence in the ability of the Government . . . to secure adequate satisfaction for the moral interest of the German Empire.³⁵

Although the German reaction to the American attack on the Mataafan rebels in March was justifiable, the threat to protect the interests of the German

³³ Jonas, 61-2.

³⁴ "Germany's Foreign Policy," The New York Times, 1 March 1899, 7.

³⁵ "Germany Not Yet Appeased," The New York Times, 10 April 1899, 7.

empire instantly jeopardized the German relationship with the United States.

Attempts made by Germany during the Samoan Affair to divide Great Britain and the United States demonstrated the growing German paranoia regarding the Anglo-American reconciliation. Such German action backfired and resulted in the alienation of the United States and the wrath of Great Britain. One example took place in January 1899. In a New York Times article published in March, German consul Rose contested that the British attempted to forcibly prevent the rise of Mataafa as the king of Samoa. This action denied the rights of the natives to choose their own king; according to Rose, the majority of Samoan natives preferred Mataafa as king. Rose hoped that the United States would look down upon such a rejection of free choice and free national election, but the United States still chose to support Great Britain.³⁶ Another force which helped to sway American public opinion toward Great Britain was widespread anti-German British sentiment. Several German actions, including German attempts to alienate the United States from Great Britain, caused vehement anti-German public opinion in the British nation. One British correspondent stated:

The Germans tried their utmost to make the natives attack the British Consulate and the mission house where the Consul was giving refuge to British subjects. It was only respect and fear for the British flag that held the natives back. The Germans told the natives to kill all the English missionaries and to sweep the 'pigs of English' into the sea. The looting was terrible. Twenty houses were utterly wrecked, the houses destroyed, and the villagers left destitute.³⁷

³⁶ "Rose's Samoa Dispatches," The New York Times, 11 March 1899, 1.

³⁷ "The Germans In Samoa," The New York Times, 1 March 1899, 7.

Such accusations undoubtedly strengthened already established American suspicions of Germany.

Once again, the most obvious result of the Samoan Affair was the reaffirmation of the China Market appeal. Naval bases and coaling stations were the best means to establish a trade route to China. The American commission representative Tripp acknowledged that Pago Pago harbor would be an excellent site for a naval base due to its strategic geographical location. Tripp contended:

In short, the whole island must be had; and it would, in my judgment be a wise policy to give out allies and the world to be informed that our interests in Samoa center mostly about Pago-Pago and the island of Tutuila, and that we should not look with favor upon any effort on the part of any nation to interfere with our rights or make them less available for future requirements of the nation by curtailment of our interests in the harbor or in the island itself.³⁸

The United States claimed and protected its territory in the Samoa region due to its importance as a stepping-stone to China. The reaffirmation of the China Market appeal only indicated the need for a policy protecting American interests and trade in China.

German-American rivalry reached a boiling point prior to the turn of the century. The Spanish-American War and the Samoan Affair revealed the problems resulting from German-American imperialist competition. One consequence of late 1890s imperialism was the strengthening of the Anglo-American rapprochement. When the United States realized that Germany was a powerful competitor for territories in the Far East, the United States

³⁸ US State Department, "Samoa Affairs," 662.

continued its reconciliation with Great Britain. This Anglo-American reconciliation only resulted in the further alienation of Germany. Another result of the Spanish-American War and the Samoan Affair was the establishment of anti-German sentiment in the United States. Such prejudice would damage German-American foreign relations in the future, because Americans would assume automatically that Germany committed grievances against the United States.

Imperialism in the 1890s significantly influenced American foreign policy as well. Americans feared that a lack of access to the China market would inflict damage upon the American economy. During the Spanish-American War and the Samoan Affair, Germany emerged as a major threat to American trade and sales in China. The United States attempted to ensure its access to the vast markets of China with the development and dispersal of the Open Door Policy. This policy became an important ingredient of American diplomacy in 1899, when Secretary of State John Hay issued the first Open Door note on September 6. The note requested that the world powers acknowledge the principle of free trade in China.³⁹ Hay released the second Open Door note on July 3, 1900. Issued during the Boxer Rebellion, this second note urged nations to respect China's territorial integrity.⁴⁰ United States officials feared that a partitioned China would harm the United States' free trade, prevent American access to the large foreign market, and jeopardize other American interests in China. The Open Door

³⁹ John Hay, "The Open Door Note, 1899," in Major Problems in American Foreign Policy, Volume 1: To 1914, ed. Thomas G. Paterson (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1989), 416-8.

⁴⁰ John Hay, "Circular Note to the Great Powers, 1900," in Major Problems in American Foreign Policy, Volume 1: To 1914, ed. Thomas G. Paterson (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1989), 419-20.

Policy also affected German-American relations during the early years of the twentieth century.

Imperialist competition during the late 1890s marred the amicable relationship between the United States and Germany. The simultaneous hunt for colonies in the Far East initiated a rivalry between the two countries. The emerging Anglo-American rapprochement, German diplomatic inconsistency and rhetoric, and the intensification of American prejudice toward Germany all exacerbated the German-American rivalry. Similar factors continued to damage the German-American relationship after the turn of century. The Venezuelan crisis, the Russo-Japanese War, and the Moroccan/Algeiras incident eventually destroyed any chance for the two countries to maintain their diplomatic friendship.

Quest for Empire: The United States Versus Germany Part II: 1901 - 1910

Imperialism took the world by storm during the late 1800s and early 1900s. The nations of Europe searched the world for colonies which they could exploit for raw materials and use as markets to sell their goods. Great Britain and France established colonial empires by the turn of the century, while both the United States and Germany hoped to compete by finding new land and population areas to conquer. When the two nations expanded their influence worldwide, their interests came into conflict with one another, and they competed over the few remaining areas to colonize.

After the Spanish-American War and the Samoan Partition of the late 1890s, friction continued to build between the United States and Germany. Several factors exacerbated imperialist competition between these two nations, namely American prejudice toward Germany, a lack of comprehension and respect for the two countries' dramatically opposite political structures and diplomatic styles, and the German paranoia regarding the developing Anglo-American rapprochement. Such causes of imperialist competition can be proven through the study of the Venezuelan Crisis of 1902-1903, the involvement of both nations in the Russo-Japanese War, and the Moroccan/Algeciras incident. These episodes shaped the critical American policies of the Roosevelt Corollary and the Open Door, while also securing the world balance of power system leading directly to World War I.

A primary source of conflict between the United States and Germany stemmed from the prejudice which the United States exhibited toward the German nation. German initiatives during the Spanish-American War destroyed the peaceful relations between the two countries and accounted

for future American suspicion of German motives. After the United States navy eliminated Spanish control of the Philippines in a decisive battle under Admiral Dewey at Manila in 1898, the Germans saw the opportunity to acquire land in the Far East. After refusing to recognize American interests in the area, Kaiser Wilhelm II dispatched a fleet to the Manila area under Vice-Admiral Otto von Diederichs. Americans viewed the move as a deliberate attempt to thwart the interests of the United States in the Pacific.¹ Politician William Roscoe Thayer later described the incident's long-term effect upon American public opinion. During the first decade of the twentieth century, Americans only saw "a Germany whose contempt for American rights . . . dated back to von Diederichs' rude and unwelcomed arrival alongside Dewey's squadron in Manila Bay in 1898."²

German rhetoric also contributed to American fears. Kaiser Wilhelm stressed German superiority and German rights in a speech to his troops during the Boxer Rebellion. The Kaiser's adamant approval of German force undoubtedly frightened the Americans. The Kaiser stressed:

You will give no quarter! You will take no prisoners! Whoever falls into your hands will be your victim! Just as the Huns under their King Attila made a name for themselves a thousand years ago which still, in saga and tradition, makes them appear powerful, so may the name German be impressed by you on China for a thousand years, that no Chinese will ever dare again look askance at a German.³

Such a speech only reinforced the suspicions and stereotypes which most Americans held toward Germany; for instance, one stereotype might

¹ Manfred Jonas, The United States and Germany: A Diplomatic History (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), 57.

² Edward B. Parsons, "The German-American Crisis of 1902-1903," The Historian (Phi Alpha Theta, May 1971), 438.

³ Jonas, 63.

describe Germans as aggressive, arrogant individuals who had little concern for the rights of other nationalities, but rather only looked toward the future glory of the Fatherland. In 1901 several rumors spread about potential German land grabs in the Western Hemisphere. For example, Americans talked about the German aspiration to buy land in Lower California or to purchase the Danish West Indies.⁴ Such rumors obviously concerned both the American public and government because of the veiled threat to the Monroe Doctrine and the United States itself.

Not only did widespread anti-German sentiment in the United States cause problems between the two nations, but their mutual disrespect for the other's political system and diplomatic methodology also perpetuated difficulties in foreign relations. The United States was a democracy, while Germany was an autocracy, and neither country could comprehend the basis for the opposite political structure. Germany did not understand the importance of individual rights to the United States, while Americans could not appreciate the German compulsion to serve and glorify the kaiser and the Fatherland. German newspapers also often criticized the Monroe Doctrine, a longstanding and integral component of United States foreign policy.⁵ Another policy which Germany misinterpreted was the Open Door Policy. The German government understandably believed that the Open Door Policy applied to all areas of the world, while the United States asserted that the policy only pertained to China. Just as the two nations' political structures did not complement one another, neither did their leaders. President Theodore Roosevelt often looked down upon Kaiser Wilhelm II's impulsiveness, unreliability, and lack of diplomatic finesse. Roosevelt's

⁴ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁵ Parsons, 449.

message to the French ambassador in June 1905 indicates his lack of respect for the German kaiser: "What is needed is to give some satisfaction to the immeasurable vanity of William II" ⁶ Unfortunately, the kaiser's ineptitude in foreign affairs appeared to influence the German diplomatic staff as a whole during the first decade of the twentieth century, generating even more frustration in the United States.

A final reason for conflict between the United States and Germany was the developing Anglo-American rapprochement and Germany's paranoid response to it. As already explained in the first section of this paper, the Venezuelan border dispute of 1895-1896 initiated a new era of harmonious relations between the United States and Great Britain. As American and British interests appeared to coincide more, Germany's fear of the developing Anglo-American alliance grew. Germany considered the Anglo-American rapprochement to be a threat to its own expansionist goals and to be the loss of a strategic ally against France and Great Britain. Members of the German diplomatic corps hoped to establish the increasingly powerful United States as an ally to the German nation. German paranoia of the potential Anglo-American alliance caused the nation to act in ways which might cause problems between the United States and Great Britain. Such actions only resulted in the further alienation of the United States from Germany.

Venezuela (1902-1903)

Venezuela marked the arena for the first imperialist conflict between the United States and Germany during the twentieth century. Before

⁶ Raymond A. Esthus, Theodore Roosevelt and the International Rivalries (Waltham, MA: Ginn-Blaisdell, A Xerox Company, 1970), 78.

analyzing the motives and reasons for the crisis, it is necessary to summarize the course of events in 1902 and 1903. During the ongoing Venezuelan Civil War, both Germany and Great Britain loaned vast sums of currency to the Venezuelan government; however, by 1902, Venezuela still had not repaid these loans. Germany also complained about acts of violence committed against German nationals residing in Venezuela, as well as the destruction of German property. On December 7, 1902, both Germany and Great Britain dispatched ultimatums to the Venezuelan government requesting the immediate compensation of claims. Along with Italy, the two countries established a peaceful blockade around the Venezuelan border.⁸ In response, the United States sent a fleet to the Caribbean under the command of Admiral Dewey.

The first incident which provoked controversy was the destruction of two Venezuelan vessels by a German warship on December 9. The United States arranged for arbitration proceedings following this event, and both Germany and Great Britain agreed to arbitration before the Hague Court by the end of the month. In late January 1903, while the arbitration proceedings were underway, a German warship leveled a Venezuelan fort; in addition, Germany demanded \$325,000 in immediate compensation for her claims, in contrast to the initial claims of Great Britain, which amounted to \$27,500.⁹ Despite the controversy which followed these German initiatives, the arbitration protocols were signed on February 13, 1903, resolving the matter with Venezuela's agreement to repay the European loans.¹⁰

⁸ Richard H. Collin, Theodore Roosevelt's Caribbean: The Panama Canal, the Monroe Doctrine, and the Latin-American Context (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University, 1990), 96.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 106-8.

¹⁰ "Sign Protocols With Venezuela," The New York Times, 14 February 1903, 1.

Previously established American suspicions of Germany escalated the Venezuelan conflict. The American public overreacted to the German initiatives in the Caribbean by assuming that Germany planned to use this opportunity to seize territory in the Western Hemisphere, even though Germany pointed out on several occasions that the German intention was not to acquire land, but simply to receive compensation for German losses during the Venezuelan Civil War. German Ambassador Theodor von Holleben stated, "... We declare especially that under no circumstances do we consider in our proceedings the acquisition or permanent occupation of Venezuelan territory."¹¹ However, the United States refused to believe such pronouncements by German officials because of the preconceived notion that the German goal was to ruthlessly expand around the world no matter what the cost to other peoples.

American newspapers of the time revealed the ethnic prejudice directed toward the Germans on the part of the American public. On December 12, 1902, The New York Times reacted to the destruction of Venezuelan vessels by German warships. The Times commented on the lack of civilized qualities which such an act demonstrated:

It can hardly be denied that they [the Germans] went beyond those proper limits when they actually seized and destroyed armed vessels belonging to the Government of Venezuela. That act is fairly comparable to acts of wanton devastation in warfare, which have long been discountenanced by civilized nations.¹²

The Times referred often to the recurrence of German barbarism and the lack of German diplomatic finesse in articles appearing from December 1902 to February 1903. Several articles indicated the American suspicion of the Berlin Foreign

¹¹ Jonas, 69.

¹²"The British and German Policy," The New York Times, 12 December 1902, 1.

Office. The editorials also depicted the American reliance on peace with Great Britain, as well as American respect for British policies. For example, The Times referred to "the friendship of our nearer kin" which would hopefully guide the Germans to a more appropriate course of action. The editorial continued: "That Germany would persist in ravaging the coast of the Venezuelans after Great Britain had discarded that method for a more civilized procedure is incredible."¹³ The United States proceeded to express anger toward German policy throughout the affair.

A variation in foreign policy which only added to the Venezuelan controversy involved opposing German and American opinions regarding the validity of the Monroe Doctrine. The New York Times often reaffirmed the American belief in the absolute virtue of the Monroe Doctrine, a policy which the United States advocated for over 75 years. Any attempt by the Germans to seize territory in the Western Hemisphere would constitute a direct violation of the Monroe Doctrine. In fact, during the Venezuelan crisis, the United States considered the destruction of Venezuelan vessels by Germany to be an infringement of the policy. In addition to this American position, several German newspapers spoke out against the Monroe Doctrine at the time. "The semi-official paper, the Tagliche Rundschau, asserted that 'the insolence of the United States . . . is . . . simply unbearable.' The old Bismarckian Hamburger Nachrichten derided it as 'a piece of incredible impertinence.'"¹⁴ Conflicting opinions concerning the Monroe Doctrine, and later the Roosevelt Corollary, only deepened the German-American rift. The Roosevelt Corollary was one of the results of the Venezuelan Controversy. Developed in 1904 by President Theodore Roosevelt, this new policy advocated the right of the United States to police the Western Hemisphere. Such a policy would give the

¹³ "A Pacific Settlement," The New York Times, 16 December 1902, 1.

¹⁴ Parsons, 451.

United States the right to defend Venezuela from the European blockade; it also provided the United States with another means of protesting European intervention in the Western Hemisphere. The Roosevelt Corollary emerged as another significant American foreign policy in future years.

The Venezuelan crisis also demonstrated the German effort to weaken the Anglo-American rapprochement. Germany hoped to undermine the link between the two English-speaking nations by blaming Great Britain for the institution of a warlike blockade. On December 14, 1902, the American ambassador to Germany, Charlemagne Tower, cabled a telegram to the United States Secretary of State John Hay. The telegram stated that "... Germany was at first inclined to a pacific blockade, but that Great Britain insisted on establishing a warlike blockade. Consequently Germany has yielded to the wishes of Great Britain" ¹⁵ Germany and Great Britain announced that a warlike blockade encircled the Venezuelan border on December 20. ¹⁶ In the December 14 telegram, Germany hoped to convince the United States that Great Britain violated the Monroe Doctrine rather than Germany itself. This action was an unsuccessful attempt by the Germans to alleviate American suspicion of Germany, as well as to create anti-British tension and ill feeling amongst the American diplomatic corps. Another motive for such German action was the realization that the Anglo-German unified front against Venezuela was on shaky ground. British public opinion against Germany climaxed at this time, as demonstrated by Rudyard Kipling's anti-German poem. The New York Times published the poem, further influencing the negative American

¹⁵ US State Department, "Difficulty with Venezuela growing out of nonpayment of claims", Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1906), 421.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 425.

estimation of Germany. Kipling's poem criticized the Anglo-German Informal alliance, reading as follows:

Of evil times that men could choose/On evil fate to fall./
What brooding judgment let ye loose/To pick the worst of all;/
In sight of peace from the narrow seas,/O'er half the world to run/
With a cheated crew to league anew/With the Goth and the shameless Hun.¹⁷

Such rhetoric undoubtedly strengthened the American preference to side with Great Britain, while simultaneously provoking even more anti-German sentiment in the United States.

Historians throughout the twentieth century argued about a particular facet of the Venezuelan crisis, namely whether President Roosevelt threatened the German ambassador that the United States would use force to prevent German intervention in the Western Hemisphere. Historian Richard H. Collin calls the incident "one of the most controversial episodes in modern diplomatic history."¹⁸ About fifteen years after the crisis itself, Roosevelt asserted that he issued an ultimatum to Germany in mid-December 1902 which inevitably forced Germany to yield to arbitration. However, historians such as Alfred Vagts and Dexter Perkins point out that no evidence about such an exchange exists. Vagts and Perkins contend that Roosevelt's declaration was an attempt to embarrass President Woodrow Wilson and to convince him to declare war on Germany. Since Roosevelt had no qualms about bullying Germany during the Venezuelan incident, than neither should Wilson exhibit acquiescence toward German aggression during World War I.¹⁹

¹⁷ "Kipling Denounces the Anglo-American Alliance," The New York Times, 22 December 1902, 1.

¹⁸ Collin, 98.

¹⁹ Parsons, 440.

In contrast, Edward B. Parsons defends Roosevelt's claim in his article "The German-American Crisis of 1902-1903." Parsons cites the readiness of the United States naval force in the Caribbean as an example of Roosevelt's willingness to use force to defend Venezuela. He also describes the animosity displayed toward Germans in American editorials as reinforcement for Roosevelt's ultimatum. A final reason to believe Roosevelt's ultimatum results from the apparent German rejection of the Monroe Doctrine as a viable policy; as aforementioned, several German newspapers condemned the Monroe Doctrine during the Venezuelan affair.²⁰ Since Germany blatantly refused to comply with the Monroe Doctrine, the United States should possess the right to defend its policy with force. Whether Roosevelt actually told the German ambassador that the United States would force Germany to withdraw from the Caribbean unless the nation submitted the case to arbitration will remain a mystery. However, the issue is interesting enough to provoke ample historical debate over the past 75 years.

Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905)

Russia and Japan engaged in a war over territories located in the Far East during the years 1904 and 1905; because the hostilities' occurred in the vicinity of China, several nations took a vital interest in the war. Both the United States and Germany acted as wartime mediators, although each nation had its own set of objectives regarding the war's outcome. The German-American cooperation during the Russo-Japanese War created the illusion that the two countries overcame their differences and could work amicably together. However, the illusion proved false the following year, when the Moroccan/Algeiras incident caused the final

²⁰ Ibid., 445-50.

disintegration of amicable foreign relations between the United States and Germany. The cooperation between the two countries during the war still persuaded the German diplomatic corps to perceive the United States as an ally, a notion which dramatically influenced German foreign policy during the Moroccan crisis. The involvement of both nations in the Russo-Japanese War contributed to their escalating rivalry through the lack of respective political and diplomatic understanding and by the German attempts to divide the United States and Great Britain.

American and German goals for the resolution of the Russo-Japanese War differed from the onset of the conflict. The United States had two fundamental concerns regarding the war. First, the United States wanted to maintain China's neutrality and territorial integrity. Second, the Americans stressed a continued balance of power in the Far East, where no nation would dominate the region. Germany strongly supported Russia during the conflict in the hopes that a victorious Russia would choose to concentrate upon its territorial gains in the Far East rather than in the Balkans, where German interests predominated. The territorial integrity and neutrality of China was also a concern to Germany. The nation hoped to sustain free trade for all countries throughout the war.²¹ In early February 1904, German Ambassador Speck von Sternburg consented to the American request to reiterate the Open Door Policy in China. Secretary of State John Hay dispatched a message to the great world powers, asking them to respect China's neutrality and territorial integrity.²² The China issue emerged as the only point of agreement between the United States and Germany during the Russo-Japanese War, and it is still important to note that the German allegiance to such

²¹ Jonas, 73-4.

²² US State Department, "Neutrality of China in the War Between Russia and Japan," In Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States (Washington D.C. Government Printing Office, 1905), 309-10.

a principle remained debatable. Considering former German responses to the Chinese, it seems unusual that the nation would seek to protect China's territorial integrity. Just four years prior to the Russo-Japanese War, Germany condemned the Chinese during the Boxer Rebellion. The exclamation by Kaiser Wilhelm II already provided in this paper once again should be used to prove the point. In a speech to the German troops in 1900, Kaiser Wilhelm adamantly encouraged his armies to suppress the Chinese revolutionaries. He desired that "the name German be impressed by you on China for a thousand years, that no Chinese will ever dare again look askance at a German."²³ The sudden reversal in German policy toward China possibly demonstrated the new German goal to secure an alliance with the United States, acknowledging the importance which the United States placed upon the Open Door Policy.

One must study the sequence of events during the Russo-Japanese War before attempting to analyze the ways in which the war contributed to the ongoing imperialist rivalry between the United States and Germany. The presence of Russian troops in Manchuria was the chief reason for the outbreak of war between Russia and Japan, along with the widespread Japanese belief that Russian territorial ambitions in the Far East presented a threat to the security of the Japanese homeland. The war commenced in February 1904, when Japan attacked Russian naval forces at Port Arthur. To the surprise of Western civilization, the Japanese won several battles during the first year of the war. The Russians surrendered Port Arthur to the Japanese in January 1905; two months later, the Russians lost approximately 97,000 men in the Battle of Mukden. By the spring and early summer of 1905, Western nations including the United States hoped to see a conclusion to the war before Japan emerged as the major power in the Far East.

²³ Jonas, 63.

Japan reached the limits of its military strength and resources in 1905, and the nation requested President Theodore Roosevelt to negotiate a peace treaty for Japan and Russia. After much deliberation, Japan and Russia signed the Treaty of Portsmouth on September 5, 1905. The treaty allowed for the Japanese occupation of Southern Sakhalin Island and also cancelled any compulsory Russian monetary payments due Japan.²⁴ Throughout the Russo-Japanese War, Germany initiated gestures of peace toward the United States in the hopes of establishing an alliance between the two nations; it proved unfortunate for Germany that neither President Roosevelt nor the American public ever seriously considered such an alliance.

Political and leadership differences continued to exacerbate the already established rift between the United States and Germany. Germany did not interpret the diplomacy of President Roosevelt correctly, perceiving certain actions on the part of the United States to be gestures of international friendship. In contrast to the widespread belief held by the German diplomatic corps, Roosevelt did not contemplate a German-American alliance. Instead, Roosevelt used friendly German initiatives to the advantage of the United States and for the preservation of the balance of power in the Far East.

Hopeful, yet gullible German officials misinterpreted certain American gestures during the war. When Secretary of State John Hay requested that Germany reiterate its compliance with the Open Door Policy in China, Germany responded as though the United States had initiated a new era of peaceful diplomacy between the two nations. Germany jumped at the chance to cooperate with the United States on this issue, as indicated by the message from the American ambassador in Berlin to John Hay on February 9, 1904:

²⁴ Esthus, 27-36.

He [the German minister for foreign affairs] said further that the German government sympathizes fully with the purpose of the United States on behalf of humanity, the protection of foreigners in China, the maintenance of order, and the safeguarding of the commerce of the world. He added that . . . the German government is prepared to act in harmony with the United States²⁵

The letter which German Ambassador Sternburg sent to President Roosevelt two weeks later again demonstrated the German anticipation for deliberations with the United States. Sternburg wrote, "I am looking forward with great joy to a talk with you over the events in the Far East. The Russian disasters there seem almost as pitiful as those of Spain in your war."²⁶ Another diplomatic effort falsely interpreted by Germany took place when Roosevelt informed Sternburg about his plan for a peace settlement to the Russo-Japanese War. Roosevelt's proposed peace settlement included Japanese control of Korea and the establishment of Manchuria as an autonomous Chinese province under a German-nominated viceroy. Sternburg and the Kaiser perceived the offer of a German-nominated viceroy in China as an act of confidence and respect toward Germany on the part of the United States. In reality, Roosevelt only meant "to bribe Germany into persuading Russia to give up that territory [Manchuria]."²⁷ Germany again tried to secure the confidence of the United States by reaffirming the German support of the Open Door Policy in 1905. Germany encouraged the United States to send forth another circular note to world powers requesting nations not to divide China's territory or to seek trade advantages there; on January 10, 1905, Secretary of State Hay distributed such a note. Germany interpreted the action as an example of joint diplomacy executed by the two nations. German Chancellor Bernhard von Bulow

²⁵ US State Department, "Neutrality of China in the War Between Russia and Japan," 310.

²⁶ Speck von Sternburg to Theodore Roosevelt, 16 February 1904, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Manuscript Division, Reference Department, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., 1969.

²⁷ Jonas, 75.

indicated this belief in his comments to Sternburg: "It is, . . . , the second time within a year, that a confidential agreement between Berlin and Washington has proven useful not only for Germany and America, but also for the securing of world peace. This fact will also not have escaped President Roosevelt."²⁸ By the end of the Russo-Japanese War, the German government was convinced that the United States respected and appreciated a newly developed amicable relationship with Germany. The German nation would soon realize during the Moroccan/Algeciras incident that such friendly relations were only an illusion.

Particular comments and actions committed by President Roosevelt during the Russo-Japanese War illustrated the lack of respect the American president granted the German nation and German political institutions. At the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War, Roosevelt assumed that Germany would act like a troublemaker in the Far East. He believed that Germany would most likely use the conflict between Russia and Japan to its own advantage, and consequently Germany would disturb the balance of power in the region.²⁹ In order to prevent German territorial acquisitions in the Far East, Roosevelt attempted to create the illusion of German-American harmony. Roosevelt praised the kaiser on several occasions, while privately the president considered Kaiser Wilhelm to be both impulsive and altogether inept at diplomacy. Yet it is important to note that publicly Roosevelt allowed the Germans to take pride in the American praise of their leader. For example, after Germany proposed a circular note encouraging the world powers to respect China's territorial integrity, the American ambassador to Berlin Charlemagne Tower delivered Roosevelt's message to the kaiser. Tower expressed "the President's profound appreciation of his Majesty's glorious initiative and

²⁸ Ibid., 76-7.

²⁹ Esthus, 41, 47.

powerful cooperation in the matter of Chinese neutrality."³⁰ Yet Roosevelt's message to British Ambassador Cecil Spring-Rice in May 1905 revealed his actual opinion of the kaiser. This particular communication also indicated Roosevelt's aversion both to authoritarian government and to a German-American alliance:

But, the German people are too completely under his [Wilhelm II] rule for me to be able to dissociate them from him, and he himself is altogether too jumpy, too volatile in his policies, too lacking in the power of continuous and sustained thought and action for me I should never dream of counting on his friendship for this country.³¹

Friendly relations between the United States and Great Britain during the Russo-Japanese War also contributed to the German-American imperialist rivalry. Germany hoped to undermine the link between these two nations by informing the United States of the alleged British plan both to control the Yangtze River Valley in China and to prohibit any foreign commercial interests in the area. In November 1904, German officials even proposed an official German alliance with the United States in order to prevent the British from exerting total control over the Yangtze River Valley. Roosevelt refused the German offer by explaining that the American Congress would have difficulties accepting such a binding agreement.³² President Roosevelt did not plan to weaken the strong bond which existed between the United States and Great Britain. In fact, German attempts to break the Anglo-American rapprochement only resulted in a stronger relationship between the two English-speaking countries. The paranoid responses which Germany exhibited regarding this rapprochement reinforced Roosevelt's opinion that the German kaiser was too impulsive to conduct mature international diplomacy, as well as providing

³⁰ Jonas, 74.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 80.

³² Esthus, 46.

Roosevelt with sound reasons to continue developing an amicable relationship with Great Britain.

The Russo-Japanese War influenced the foreign policies of both Germany and the United States. The immediate impression for Germany was the perception that the United States now acted as an informal ally to the German nation. Germany therefore presumed that the United States would support the Germans rather than the French during the Algeciras Conference in 1906. The obvious American preference for both Great Britain and France during the conference shattered the German fantasy. The Russo-Japanese War also influenced American foreign policy. The war upheld the Open Door Policy, a critical diplomatic policy for the United States during the first part of the twentieth century. The United States insisted that China's territory remain intact and that free trade in the Far East be protected during the Russo-Japanese War. The United States even cooperated with Germany to achieve this end. The success of the Portsmouth Treaty indirectly reaffirmed the Open Door Policy through the treaty's maintenance of China as a sovereign and unscathed nation. The international community now recognized and respected the United States' Open Door Policy.

A final result of the Russo-Japanese War was the new power scheme which emerged in the Far East. This balance of power system would remain in place through World War I. Nations around the world now understood Japan to be a powerful state in the region, while Russia no longer appeared as dominant. Great Britain and France continued to exert their influence through their respective colonial empires in the Far East, while neither the United States nor Germany possessed much more than economic interests there. The power scheme satisfied President Roosevelt because no nation appeared to dominate the region. This lack of a reigning power thereby safeguarded American economic interests.

Morocco (1905-1906)

Morocco emerged as the next arena for conflict between the United States and Germany. The Moroccan incident left no doubt regarding where the United States positioned its loyalties in Europe. Participating as a neutral during the conflict, President Roosevelt acknowledged the French, an ally of Great Britain, as the rightful power in Morocco; his refusal to side with Germany dashed German hopes for an alliance with the United States. The controversy over Morocco eliminated the chance for a future alliance between the two nations, and it provided yet another catalyst for the escalating German-American competition. Once again, the German-American rift deepened during this imperialist conflict due to American ethnic prejudice concerning Germany, a scarcity of diplomatic and political understanding between the two nations, and the ongoing German suspicion of the Anglo-American rapprochement. The conference also sealed the world balance of power system which would eventually explode during World War I.

France and Germany approached the brink of war on the issue of their respective economic and territorial interests in Morocco. The Entente Cordiale agreement established an alliance between France and Great Britain in April 1904, significantly influencing German diplomacy.³³ German leaders feared that the Anglo-French alliance would eliminate German interests around the world, as well as posing a menace to the German Fatherland itself. These leaders decided to confront the new alliance on the Moroccan issue in order to cause a rift in the entente. A breakdown in the alliance between France and Great Britain would serve German interests better both in Europe and around the world, while simultaneously removing a powerful threat to the Triple Alliance, which included Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy.

³³ Ibid., 67.

By the end of 1904, France controlled Moroccan customs collection and the Tangier police. German leaders naturally objected to the French Moroccan policy, since it affected their economic interests in Morocco. Because of the illusion created during the Russo-Japanese War, Germany expected American sympathy for its plight in Morocco. On March 6, 1905, Ambassador Sternburg asked President Roosevelt to tell the Moroccan Sultan that the United States would support Morocco in its quest to prevent a French takeover of the Moroccan government. Sternburg argued that such a takeover would abolish the Open Door Policy in Morocco. To Sternburg's surprise, Roosevelt refused his request based upon the fear of French alienation. Kaiser Wilhelm II visited Tangier on March 31, which only resulted in the further provocation of France. During his visit, the Kaiser promised to preserve the rights of Germans in Morocco, informed the French charge that Germany would preserve its interests at any cost, and pressured the Sultan to ask the international community to hold a conference on the issue of Moroccan independence. Both France and Great Britain opposed an international conference. Germany signaled throughout the spring and summer of 1905 that the nation would declare war if France did not agree to the conference. In response, Great Britain indicated her willingness to ally with France in a war against Germany, as dictated by the Entente Cordiale agreement.³⁴

When Roosevelt realized the gravity of the situation, he began taking steps to prevent a European war. Roosevelt feared that war would jeopardize both American political neutrality and American economic and trade interests. On June 14, 1905, Roosevelt met with French Ambassador Jules Jusserand and urged France to accept the conference proposal. Roosevelt also indicated during this meeting that the United States would support France during the conference. On

³⁴ Ibid., 67-71, 74-5.

June 27, German Ambassador Speck von Sternburg indicated German trust in the United States when he wrote Roosevelt that Germany would be willing to cooperate with any American decisions during an international conference; this binding message would damage diplomatic relations between the two nations during the conference itself. After Roosevelt relayed this message to Jusserand, France finally agreed to participate in an international conference in order to resolve the Moroccan conflict. Algeciras, Spain was chosen as the site of the conference. President Roosevelt assented to substantial American involvement during the negotiations.³⁵

The Algeciras Conference opened in January 1906. The main question during the conference was which country would control an organized Moroccan police force. Other questions brought up during the conference were Moroccan financial reforms and the smuggling of armaments.³⁶ Germany initially refused to accept a Moroccan police force administered by France. Throughout the month of January, Germany attempted to secure support for its position from the United States, Italy, Russia, and even Great Britain, yet German efforts encountered little success. Both France and Germany continued to reject several peace proposals over the next few months, driving President Roosevelt to threaten Germany into yielding her position. On March 18, Roosevelt told Sternburg that if the conference failed, he would publish Sternburg's letter from late June 1905, in which Sternburg promised to uphold any American judgment during an international conference. Roosevelt's threat ultimately destroyed Germany's position during the conference because the publication of Sternburg's correspondence would cause the German government both international disrespect and humiliation. Conference

³⁵ Ibid., 76, 82.

³⁶ US State Department, "Moroccan Conference," in Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1906), 672.

participants finally signed a treaty on April 6, 1906. As a result, France obtained the right to joint police administration with Spain in several key Moroccan ports, while Germany received minor compensation for its losses. Germany would eventually lose all assets in Morocco when France established a protectorate over Morocco in 1911–1912.³⁷ Roosevelt's preference for French control of Morocco is demonstrated in a passage written by historian Raymond A. Esthus:

Once the conference met he [Roosevelt] did much to bring about a French victory, which in turn removed the danger that the Entente Cordiale might be weakened. It is difficult to imagine how he could have given more aid to the French during the Algeciras negotiations. Roosevelt forced Germany to give way on the Casablanca question at a time when even France's Entente partner Britain was ready to compromise.³⁸

American suspicion of Germany continued to escalate the rivalry between the two nations during the Moroccan crisis. Once again, German rhetoric fueled the anti-German sentiment which dominated American public opinion. On March 22, 1905, during a speech delivered in Bremen, Kaiser Wilhelm praised German nationalism and expansionism. The kaiser emphasized superior German traits, the importance of naval growth, and most importantly, a new German world empire. "We are the salt of the earth," proclaimed the kaiser; greatness was therefore Germany's God-ordained destiny.³⁹ Such rhetoric obviously disturbed the American public along with the rest of the world because of the evidence that German government officials encouraged worldwide German expansion.

The kaiser's speech and others like it only raised more questions regarding German motives in Morocco, as is demonstrated in several issues of The New York Times. One of the first publications of anti-German sentiment during the

³⁷ Esthus, 90–1, 104–8, 111.

³⁸ Ibid., 109.

³⁹ Kaiser Wilhelm II, "Das Neue Reich," in Stimmen eines Jahrhunderts, 1888–1990, ed. Andreas Lixl-Purcell (USA: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1990), 51.

Moroccan crisis occurred in December 1905, when an editorial revealed the pro-French attitude which was popular in the United States. The editorial praised French efforts to relieve tension with Germany, even though Germany did not respond to these peace initiatives. The New York Times quoted that "it is not possible to acquit the German Government of the charge of wantonly disturbing the peace of Europe."⁴⁰ Another fervently anti-German editorial appeared while the conference itself was underway in Algeciras in March 1906. The newspaper now accused Germany of prolonging the conference in order to benefit the country's own ulterior German motives, specifically a capitalization on land acquisition in the Middle East. Although the hypothesis is unlikely considering Germany's constant advocacy for the conference in the spring and summer of 1905, Americans still dwelt upon the possibility that Germany only participated in the conference in order to acquire land in Palestine. The editorial also claimed that Germany could be responsible for the provocation of a European war, and therefore the country could no longer expect American support during the conference.⁴¹ American newspapers continued to reveal the widespread suspicion of Germany even after the conference's closure. An April 1906 editorial vehemently criticized the kaiser's bitter and angry response to the conference, indicating that the kaiser might "seriously menace the quiet of Europe."⁴² The editorial claimed that the kaiser hoped to strengthen Germany's alliance with Austria-Hungary and render France and her allies "'a like service on a like occasion'".⁴³ Such German speeches and actions provoked the American public to express opposition to a

⁴⁰ "Disturbing the Peace," The New York Times, 22 December 1905, 8.

⁴¹ "War Over Morocco Feared By America," The New York Times, 2 March 1906, 1.

⁴² "The European Situation," The New York Times, 16 April 1906, 8.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

German-American alliance; rather, the United States preferred to support France and Great Britain during the Moroccan affair.

Diplomatic and political differences during the Moroccan crisis also widened the chasm between the United States and Germany. Although German overconfidence contributed to German diplomatic error, the realization that the United States was not an ally caused most problems for the country. First, German confidence in its own diplomatic finesse hurt the nation during the conference. Chancellor Bernhard von Bulow's expansive hopes for German victory indicate Germany's low estimation of French, British, and American cooperative action:

I felt that I could prevent matters coming to a head, cause Delcasse's fall [French Foreign Minister Theophile Delcasse], break the continuity of aggressive French policy, knock the continental dagger out of the hands of Edward VII and the war group in England, and simultaneously ensure peace, preserve German honour, and improve German prestige.⁴⁴

Yet, German dependence upon the support of the United States constituted Germany's most glaring weakness. Misinterpretation of American diplomacy during the Russo-Japanese War led Germany to believe that the United States was a reliable ally; the Moroccan crisis and Algeciras Conference shattered this illusion. Diplomatic correspondence between the two nations reinforced this notion. Germany attempted to cement the friendship with the United States by pointing out the American obligations to protect governmental freedom and the open door in Morocco. In an October 28, 1905 telegram to Secretary of State Elihu Root, Germany requested an American presence at the conference in Algeciras to resolve the Moroccan issue. In this telegram, the German charge reminded Root of the American duty to protect Morocco because of the United States' participation in the 1880 Madrid convention.⁴⁵ By hinting that the United States should defend

⁴⁴ Esthus, 68-9.

⁴⁵ US State Department, "Moroccan Conference," 675.

Moroccan interests, Germany indirectly requested American support for the German position during the conference by referring to Germany's stand as the only nation which planned to protect Morocco's territorial and economic integrity. According to Germany, France hoped to weaken the governing power of the Sultan, while also eliminating the interests of other nations in Morocco.

Germany also used the possible French threat to the Open Door Policy in Morocco as a means to persuade the United States to back Germany. Throughout the spring of 1905, Germany attested to its desire to maintain the open door in Morocco. In fact, Germany pointed out that French control of Morocco would cause the end of free trade in the region. On March 6, 1905, when Ambassador Sternburg asked Roosevelt to support the Sultan's government, Sternburg hoped to elicit American backing by arguing that the United States had a duty to uphold the Open Door Policy in Morocco. Roosevelt's refusal to protect the Open Door Policy there reveals discrepancies in American foreign policy.⁴⁶ While the United States proclaimed the Open Door Policy to be universally binding in China and the Far East, the policy was not nearly so important to safeguard in Morocco. Such a contradiction in foreign policy occurred because American interests in China were vital to the economy, while American interests in Morocco were scarce. It is important to point out that the Open Door Policy was only a critical component of United States diplomacy when the policy concurred with American interests. Because cooperation with Germany regarding the Morocco issue risked the alienation of Great Britain, the United States chose to reject the Open Door Policy argument. British estrangement constituted a greater hazard to the United States than the loss of the minimal American interests in Morocco.

⁴⁶ Esthus, 70, 74.

German diplomatic gestures during the Moroccan conflict generated only sharp and critical American responses. Regardless of German attempts to acquire American support, the United States always remained on the side of Great Britain and France, while simultaneously losing respect for the German government. Roosevelt clearly stated his preference for the French in an August 1905 letter to Andrew White, the American ambassador to Berlin: "I want to keep on good terms with Germany, and if possible to prevent a rupture between Germany and France. But my sympathies have at bottom been with France and I suppose will continue so."⁴⁷ President Roosevelt crushed German hopes for American support in March 1906 when he threatened to publish Ambassador Sternburg's telegram from June 28, 1905. Sternburg's correspondence from that day read:

The Emperor has requested me to tell you that in case during the coming conference differences of opinion should arise between France and Germany, he, in every case, will be ready to back up the decision which you should consider to be the most fair and most practical.⁴⁸

The threat to publish Sternburg's telegram forced Germany to yield to the peace proposal at the Algeiras conference, even though the proposal favored French interests rather than German. Roosevelt's willingness to humiliate Germany for Anglo-French profit indicated to the German government that the United States would never side with Germany against the British and the French. Any sort of alliance between the United States and Germany was out of the question.

American newspapers also demonstrated the impact which German diplomatic maneuvers during the Moroccan incident had upon American public opinion. German endeavors to obtain American support and to divide France and

⁴⁷ Ibid., 84-5.

⁴⁸ Speck von Sternburg to Theodore Roosevelt, 28 June 1905, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Manuscript Division, Reference Department, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., 1969.

Great Britain only resulted in a stronger negative estimation of Germany. The December 9, 1905 issue of The New York Times indicated American disapproval of German aggressiveness. The editorial blamed Germany for its own problems and isolation, as well as worldwide unrest: "... there is ... no sign of any international trouble except what Germany's own aggressiveness may bring about."⁴⁹ The New York Times also criticized German unreliability. In February 1906, an editorial suggested that the Algeciras conference might close sooner if the German diplomatic corps were more dependable.⁵⁰

The Moroccan crisis and its aftermath also reveal German paranoia in regards to the developing Anglo-American friendship. German paranoia caused the nation to commit actions which the United States did not respect nor condone. Germany's first rash action was the kaiser's proposal that Great Britain might attempt to annex the Yangtze River Valley in China. The kaiser believed that France offered its support to Great Britain for this action in return for conciliation on the Moroccan issue, which was why Great Britain seconded France in her opposition to an international conference.⁵¹ If there was truth to the kaiser's speculation about British aims in the Yangtze River Valley, he might have succeeded in his attempt to generate a rift between Great Britain and the United States; such British expansionism in China would violate the Open Door Policy there. However, because there was no truth to the kaiser's accusation, he only caused greater American condescension toward German statesmanship. German diplomats continued their efforts to divide Great Britain and the United States when they pressured President Roosevelt to encourage British acceptance of the

⁴⁹ "Isolated Germany," The New York Times, 9 December 1905, 8.

⁵⁰ "Algeciras," The New York Times, 5 February 1906, 8.

⁵¹ Esthus, 71.

international conference.⁵² Germany hoped that if Roosevelt's pressure did not result in a conference for the international community, at least it would dissociate Great Britain from the United States. However, Roosevelt did not yield to German pressure for intervention until he saw the danger of a major European war, and such pressure from German high officials only irritated Roosevelt more. The New York Times revealed the public reaction to Germany's attempts to destroy both the Anglo-American rapprochement and the alliance between France and Great Britain. A March 1906 editorial on the subject is one example. The Times pointed out that "Germany seeks to weaken or destroy the entente between France and Great Britain."⁵³ The editorial explained that the German attempts to weaken the link between Great Britain and France were also hazardous to the United States because Great Britain was an American ally. Once again, Germany failed to undermine the developing alliances which were threats to German empire.

The Algeciras Conference resulted in the destruction of the German hope to form an alliance with the United States, the formation of the balance of power scheme which would exist until World War I, and the revelation of contradictions and hypocrisy existing in United States foreign policy. American support of France and Great Britain during the conference showed Germany which nations the United States favored. The Moroccan crisis and the subsequent Algeciras Conference doomed both German prospects of weakening the Anglo-American rapprochement and of forming an alliance with the United States. Rather than improving the relationship between Germany and the United States, the conference intensified the German-American rivalry; for example, Roosevelt's use of the Sternburg letter as blackmail humiliated the German diplomatic corps, creating even more tension between the two countries. Not only did the Moroccan crisis contribute to the

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ "Can It Be Now?" The New York Times, 3 March 1906, 8.

weakened relationship between Germany and the United States, but the crisis also strengthened the Entente Cordiale agreement and the European alliances which would remain in place until World War I. During the Moroccan crisis, for instance, Great Britain showed her willingness to go to war on the side of France against Germany, in accordance with the agreement signed by the two countries in 1904. The Moroccan crisis also instigated German attempts to solidify the Triple Alliance as a defense against both the Anglo-French entente and the future possibility of British cooperation with Russia. An Associated Press announcement from St. Petersburg described the emerging balance of power scheme:

Great Britain has begun vigorously to press negotiations for an Anglo-Russian entente, with the purpose of completing the triple alliance of Great Britain, France, and Russia against Germany, which has long been the aim of British policy.⁵⁴

The alliance of Great Britain, France, and Russia emerged as a powerful threat to the alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy. The major powers of the world now were aligned evenly against one another. Although the United States did not commit to a formal alliance, the aftermath of the Moroccan crisis revealed the American preference for the alliance of Great Britain, France, and Russia. The Algeiras Conference also demonstrated the hypocrisy of American diplomacy regarding the Open Door Policy. The United States adamantly defended the open door only when it suited American interests. For example, the Open Door Policy was critical in China, where American interests were at stake; however, the United States did not deem the Open Door Policy to be significant in Morocco, where American interests were minimal.

Fierce competition took place between the United States and Germany during the late 1890s and the early 1900s. While the Spanish-American War and the

⁵⁴ "The European Situation," 8.

Samoaan Affair previously damaged German-American diplomatic relations, imperialism during the early twentieth century caused the disagreement over Venezuela in 1902-1903, a brief and illusionary respite from conflict during the Russo-Japanese War, and a final struggle during the Moroccan crisis of 1905-1906. These incidents resulted in an antagonistic diplomatic relationship between the United States and Germany which would continue until the third year of World War I, when the United States formally sided with the Allied Powers and declared war on Germany. Factors exacerbating the German-American rivalry were American ethnic prejudice toward Germans, a lack of diplomatic understanding and communication, and German paranoia of the developing Anglo-American friendship. These elements deepened the German-American rift which was rooted in the simultaneous hunt for colonies and foreign markets.

The German-American rivalry at the turn of the century substantially influenced the establishment of American 'stepping-stones' to the China market, the development of both the Open Door Policy and the Roosevelt Corollary, the subsequent American use of the Open Door Policy, and the cementation of the balance of power systems in both Asia and Europe. The German loss of the United States as a potential ally further isolated the nation in the international community. Although Germany maintained amicable relations with Austria-Hungary and Italy, there is a certain truth to a conception of Germany portrayed in The New York Times. The article pointed out the deplorable fact that pre-World War I Germany truly was "the Power that has no friends."⁵⁵

⁵⁵ "Germany In China," The New York Times, 12 September 1905, 8.

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