

Abstract

Shades of Grey:

Anglo-German Diplomacy and Eyre Crowe, 1905-1914

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In January of 1907, British Foreign Official Eyre Crowe wrote a memorandum detailing the present relations between Great Britain, France and Germany. In this memorandum, Crowe argued that war between Britain and Germany could not be avoided for long. This study examines Eyre Crowe's influence in the British Foreign Office. It argues that Crowe had significant influence in the foreign office and that he was correct with what he argued in the 1907 memorandum. Using primary documents from both the British Foreign Office and the German government, this thesis contends that the 1907 memorandum caused increased hostility towards the German Government from the British Foreign Office. This hostility made British leaders unlikely and sometimes unwilling to cooperate with the German government in a series of diplomatic events. These events included the First and Second Moroccan crises, the building of the German navy and the Baghdad railway and ultimately culminated with the July Crisis in 1914. It was what Crowe argued in his memorandum coupled with the increased hostility towards the German government that led Great Britain into entering the First World War.



**Shades of Grey:**  
**Anglo-German Diplomacy and Eyre Crowe, 1905-1914**

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## **Introduction**

In 1914 “the war to end all wars” began over the assassination of an Austrian Archduke. But hidden behind the spark of the war was the leadership of the various countries’ choices to go to war over a seemingly isolated conflict between Serbia and Austria. Historians have been debating the countries’ motivations presumably since the war ended. This thesis will cover Anglo-German diplomacy in the pivotal years leading up to the war. Both Germany and Great Britain chose to aid their allies in the conflict, but for very different reasons.

There had been a growing hostility between Great Britain and Germany since the turn of the century. Germany’s growing power and status on the European continent put them in direct confrontation with Britain. It was not, however, until the Liberal party took power in 1906 that British leaders became wary and ultimately hostile towards Germany. Any political power shift causes changes in diplomatic policy, but with the Liberal party’s rise to power came the promotion and influence of Eyre Crowe. Crowe had been working for the British Foreign Office since 1885, but in 1906 he was promoted to senior clerk and became the supervising head of the western department.

In 1907, Crowe published a memorandum discussing British foreign policy in regards to France and Germany. Crowe argued that German politics were putting Germany in direct confrontation with England and that a war between the two countries could not be avoided. Crowe was ultimately right. This memorandum was highly influential and widely circulated in the foreign office; it also created hostility towards the German government in the British Foreign Office. That hostility affected British foreign policy in regards to how Britain dealt with Germany.



This thesis will be composed in six chapters. The first chapter is a broad overview of the historiography surrounding Anglo-German diplomacy, WWI and the Eyre Crowe memorandum. The historiography surrounding World War I is vast and could take a person a lifetime to read. Instead, I discuss the most important schools of thought on the subjects, as to not bog the thesis down with an inordinate amount of historiography.

The second chapter will take a closer examination of Eyre Crowe, his position within the foreign office and a detailed look at the 1907 memorandum. Crowe is a fascinating man with an interesting history. It is a shame more is not written about his life. The next four chapters are essentially case studies. Chapter three examines the First and Second Moroccan Crises and how the view of German politics changed in the British Foreign Office. As no discussion of Anglo-German diplomacy during this time period would be complete without a mention of the German navy, it is the topic of chapter four. Often overlooked in German history, a discussion of the politics surrounding the Baghdad railway comes next. The thesis ends with the beginning of the war and a discussion of the July crisis and the political reasoning behind why Germany and Great Britain decided to join the war.

The title “Shades of Grey” may not be explicitly clear to the reader, but it serves a dual purpose. In one instance it refers to Sir Eyre Crowe, who often stood in the shadow of Sir Edward Grey in the foreign office and in importance. But it also refers to the diplomacy going on between the two countries. While officials saw everything in black and white, the actual diplomatic events and negotiations were mostly a grey area. Parties on both sides would say and do things they didn’t really intend to sway the other side.

## **Chapter I: Historiography**

Historians have looked at the origins of World War I differently, each taking his or her own facet of the conflict and relating it to the bigger problems within the balance of power in prewar Europe. The historiography of the First World War includes subsidiary debates over each country's motivations and aims in entering into the conflict. Germany and Great Britain both chose to go to war in the fateful summer of 1914 on behalf of their allies. The roots of Anglo-German hostility go back several decades.

The causes of Anglo-German tensions have been looked at in different ways by historians of German and British history. This chapter will survey the historiography of Anglo-German political tensions and, in specific, Eyre Crowe- an official in the British Foreign Office. The first section will cover the historiography behind German political motivations, underlying tensions and the coming of the war in context of Germany. The second section will survey the British literature dealing with the rising Anglo-German tensions and British aims prior to the war. The final section will look at the historiography on Eyre Crowe with a focus on his 1907 Memorandum on the Present State of British Relations with France and Germany and how the memorandum influenced Anglo-German relations.

### **Section I: Germany**

At the end of the First World War, the blame for causing the war was placed on the shoulders of the German Empire. Since then historians have searched for the reasons why German leaders chose war during the fatal summer of 1914 and their political motivations for doing so. The majority of German historians focus on mounting Anglo-German tensions as the motivation for Germany's decision to back Austria in the First World War. It becomes obvious that Germany

and Great Britain were running head-long into a conflict that would bring them to war with each other, but historians, however, disagree about what the underlying roots of the conflict were for Germany.

In the 1920s, German historian Eckart Kehr focused on the socio-economic problems which brought the two countries into conflict in his essay, “Anglophobia and *Weltpolitik*.” Kehr argued that it was not foreign politics that caused Germany and Great Britain to rush towards war, but socio-economic problems within Germany that put Germany in direct competition with Great Britain. For instance, Germany’s agriculture and industry put Germany in direct competition with the leading agricultural and industrial powers in Europe, namely Russia and England. Furthermore, Kehr argued that foreign policy “was contingent on the simultaneous stand with respect to domestic politics and the resolution of the social crisis.”<sup>1</sup> The social crisis Kehr was referring to was the rise of the Social Democrats in German government. The conservative power-holders in the government saw their powerbase falling away from them, and Kehr contended they began to use foreign policy to solve the internal political problems they were having in their government. Kehr argued that it was the primacy of domestic politics that fueled the growing Anglo-German tensions over economics and the navy.

Kehr showed how the navy was actually a political weapon used by the conservatives in the government to combat the proletariat. The government wanted the navy as a way to expand their foreign policy against Britain on one hand, but it also gave Germany a cause around which various interest groups in Germany could rally.. This allowed the navy to be used as a propaganda piece and “was intended to provide the power-political basis for a successful foreign policy, which in turn was meant to stabilize the internal political and social position of the ruling

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<sup>1</sup> Eckart Kehr, “Anglophobia and *Weltpolitik*” in *Economic Interest, Militarism and Foreign Policy: Essays on German History* ed. Gordon Craig, translated by Grete Heinz (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977) 34.

strata against the threat of social democracy.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, the government was using the German navy to fuel support for its conservative regime by claiming the navy furthered the country’s political prestige. Kehr was not well-received by German historians during the time. Not until after Kehr died were his opinions recognized as important pieces of German socio-economic history.

In 1961, historian Fritz Fischer argued the causes of World War I were much simpler. Fischer claimed that Germany had the “general intent to fight a war in order to make Germany a ‘world power’ equal to Britain or Russia.”<sup>3</sup> Fischer’s book disagreed with many of the major arguments the German government had used to justify war including the myth that Germany’s enemies were trying to encircle the country.<sup>4</sup> Fischer argued that the German leadership had intended to wage a war all along; they had simply been waiting for an opportunity to start a war when they felt it favored Germany. This is not to say that there was not underlying Anglo-German tension. Fischer stated “Wilhelm II’s insistence that Germany must not yield place to England coloured both his own political creed and the ideas of the great majority of his ministers and Secretaries of State.”<sup>5</sup> Clearly, Fischer saw the heightened Anglo-German tensions prior to the war, but he argued it was because Kaiser Wilhelm II was intent on making Germany equal to Britain by any means necessary, including war.

This does not mean Germany intended to go to war with England. Quite the contrary, Fischer argued Germany wanted to secure British neutrality so that Germany would have a free hand on the continent. Fischer claimed that Bethmann-Hollweg, who replaced Bülow as chancellor in 1909, was doubtful that Britain would actively intervene in a European conflict if it

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<sup>2</sup> Eckart Kehr, “Tirpitz’s Naval Propaganda,” in *Economic Interest, Militarism and Foreign Policy: Essays on German History* ed. Gordon Craig, translated by Grete Heinz (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977) 34.

<sup>3</sup> Fritz Fischer, *Germany’s Aims in the First World War* (New York: Norton & Company Inc, 1967) xi.

<sup>4</sup> Imanuel Geiss, “The Outbreak of the First World War and German War Aims” *Journal of Contemporary History* 1 no. 3 (Jul 1966): 80.

<sup>5</sup> Fischer, *Germany’s Aims*, 8.

appeared the provocation came from France or Russia. Bethmann-Hollweg used this assumption to try to make Russia look like it was the instigator when war did break out in 1914. Fischer argues Bethmann-Hollweg delayed telegrams from Britain to Austria about mediation during the July crisis and lied to the British office about sending them as an attempt to maneuver Germany into a better position and keep Britain out of the war.<sup>6</sup> Wilhelm II was not convinced of the likelihood of British neutrality, as he knew that Britain could never allow France to collapse completely. But he was ready to face a war on the continent even if Britain, France and Russia were against him.<sup>7</sup> Fischer used all of this to argue that German leaders had not been trying to maintain the peace in Europe, but had been actively seeking a war in order to expand German power. According to Fischer, the reason Germany and Great Britain went to war in 1914 had little to do with the political tension between them, and everything to do with aggressive German tendencies. The German government wanted the country to be an equal power to Great Britain and Russia. The only way German leaders felt Germany could do that was by expanding in Europe and gaining overseas colonies, which meant taking territory from other countries via war.

German Historian Gerhard Ritter disagreed with Fisher. He devoted the third volume of his work, *Staatskunst and Kriegshandwerk: das Problem des Militarismus in Deutschland*, on German militarism to discrediting Fischer's arguments. Ritter argued that the German government's policies in World War I were defensive in nature but that the policies took a more offensive turn as the war continued.<sup>8</sup>

In 1973, historian Volker Berghahn picked up where Kehr left off. Berghahn argued in *Germany and the Approach of War in 1914* that German Admiral Tirpitz's naval policy, while

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 30- 32

<sup>8</sup> Wolfgang J. Mommsen, "The Debate on German War Aims" *Journal of Contemporary History* 1 no. 3 1914 (July 1966): 67.

initially helpful in suppressing the proletariat, eventually encountered opposition at home and abroad. Opposition came from the British both in terms of economic and naval power as the Germans were encroaching on British interests. Opposition from home occurred because many Germans believed economic rivalry with Britain would “lead inevitably to a political confrontation” and because Germany had hit a period of stagnant growth with its economy in shambles.<sup>9</sup> Berghahn stated “It was at this point that the domestic and the foreign political aims of the naval programme merged into a single all-embracing consideration: the stabilisation of the Prusso-German political system.”<sup>10</sup> Berghahn noted that the overarching problem of the country was not foreign policy but a domestic political system in which the conservative government was doing everything in its capacity to hold onto power. Revolution seemed to be brewing behind every corner in the German monarchy.

With the political problems inside Germany coming to a head, Berghahn argued the government’s way out was to “escape into war.”<sup>11</sup> The conservative government believed Germany was being encircled and “put into a territorial straightjacket” by the entente powers, which thwarted German ambitions.<sup>12</sup> In addition, the monarchy and right parties were quickly losing power in the government and the left and center parties were approving taxes that hurt their position. In reaction, the right became more extreme in adhering to the status quo, making it unlikely that they would be able to compromise with the other parties. Berghahn argued this meant the conservatives had to take higher risks to stay in power, which included resorting “to violence as long as there was still a chance of victory.”<sup>13</sup> Berghahn contended the government believed the only way out of this political quagmire was an escape into war whenever the

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<sup>9</sup> V.R. Berghahn, *Germany and the Approach of War in 1914* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993)49

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

moment arose. In fact, the German leadership believed the sooner the better since it was believed that Germany had a limited window of opportunity to win such a war. The effect of this decision was that the “Chancellor and his political advisers became less and less concerned with finding a peaceful solution to the crisis. Instead they made increasing efforts to create conditions for such a war which were as favorable as possible to the central powers.”<sup>14</sup>

British historian Paul M. Kennedy took a different stand in his book, *The Rise of Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860-1914* published in 1980. He argued that Germany and Great Britain came into conflict because of the shifting economic balance in Europe. Great Britain’s status in Europe had been declining while the status of Germany had been rising. In a half-century “Germany grew out of its position as a cluster of insignificant States under insignificant princelings” to a major power player on the world stage.<sup>15</sup> This challenged the other major powers already in place in Europe, the largest being Great Britain.

Kennedy exhaustively traced the roots of the conflict on both sides, and he finds three main sources of the conflict: economical, geographical, and ideological. The rising industrial sector in Germany challenged Britain’s leading industrial status, but Kennedy argued this does not necessarily lead to a growing tension. Rather it was Germany’s growing navy that put the two countries at odds over control of the sea. Furthermore, Kennedy stated that the British leadership might not have reacted to the growing German empire if it had been located “at some safe distance away.”<sup>16</sup> Germany’s proximity to Great Britain and the areas into which Germany was expanding caused great concern about Britain’s national security. Kennedy also noted the ideological issues between liberal Great Britain and the “reactionary” Germany, but he argued that this ideological hostility would not have led to a conflict alone. Kennedy maintained that

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.,213.

<sup>15</sup> Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise of Anglo-German Antagonism 1860-1914* (New York: Humanity Books 1980) 466.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 465.

these three things were subsets of the larger problem of Germany within the balance of power in Europe. It was Germany's expansion at the expense of its neighbors that upset the status quo in Europe. Great Britain, as the leading country at the time, had the most to lose if the balance was upset. This, Kennedy argued, is what increased hostility between the two countries.

In addition, Kennedy stated that Germany began to believe that war with Great Britain was inevitable. The German leadership felt that England was the greatest rival and "that an Anglo-German conflict was, in the long term, unavoidable."<sup>17</sup> This became even more of a reality when Kaiser Wilhelm II appointed Bernhard von Bülow as Chancellor. Kennedy claimed that Bülow contributed to the growing Anglo-German tensions because "he had never at any time shown enthusiasm for an alliance with that country [Great Britain]."<sup>18</sup> Kennedy noted this was a shift from previous German chancellors who had always had difficulty with Great Britain but had ultimately wanted to bring Germany and England into an alliance together.

Bülow wanted to keep "Germany at arm's length from Britain."<sup>19</sup> Bülow believed that an Anglo-Russian war was coming that would greatly weaken both Britain and Russia and allow Germany to become the center of the world stage. If a conflict were to break out between Germany and Great Britain, Bülow thought it would be possible to fall back on the alliance with Russia. This made him all the more confident in his dealings with Great Britain. Moreover, Kennedy argued that Bülow believed "he had to eliminate Britain's global predominance in order to secure Germany's 'place in the sun.'"<sup>20</sup> Kennedy contended that this made the situation worse; Bülow's policies only increased the tensions between the two countries.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 224.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 226.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 227.



In 1985 Historian Hans-Ulrich Wehler took Berghahn's theory a step further arguing that not only did the conservative government "escape into the future" in 1914, but in fact he argued the German government had used war to solve its domestic political strife for centuries in his book, *The German Empire: 1871-1918*. This bolstered the theory that the German leadership was embedded in a culture that predisposed it to use war as a way to break domestic political deadlocks, including using the July Crisis in 1914.

Furthermore, Wehler argued that it was not the trade rivalry that fueled the tension between Germany and Great Britain. It was the "contrasting political values of the two countries—that is, their quite different historical traditions, political cultures and their underlying social configurations" that caused the conflict.<sup>21</sup> Wehler contended the stark contrast between the liberal parliamentary government in Great Britain and the conservative monarchical government in Germany as a leading factor driving a wedge between the two countries. Even though both countries had monarchies and parliaments, Germany could hardly have been considered a liberal government whereas Great Britain could have hardly been considered a strict monarchy. Wehler believed it was the opposing political and social structures in the two countries that caused them to be at odds with each other.

In contrast, David E. Kaiser argued in his article "Germany and the Origins of the First World War" that while domestic political problems were important in Germany's course to war; *Weltpolitik* (foreign politics) "made war more likely."<sup>22</sup> Even if German leaders were using foreign politics to supplant problems domestically, it was the foreign policy that made war a part

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<sup>21</sup> Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *The German Empire: 1871-1918* (New York: Berg Publishers, 1997) 187.

<sup>22</sup> David E. Kaiser, "Germany and the Origins of the First World War," *Journal of Modern History* 55 no. 3 (Sep. 1983) 448.

of their plans. Kaiser claimed that “the originators of *Weltpolitik* looked forward to a series of small-scale, marginal foreign policy successes, not to a major war.”<sup>23</sup>

In the mid 1980s, political scientist Stephen Van Evera stated that “Europeans embraced a set of political and military myths....this mindset helped to mold the offensive military doctrines which every European power adopted during the period 1892-1913.”<sup>24</sup> Van Evera contends that the German military glorified these offensive doctrines and that this exacerbated the July Crisis.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, Van Evera argues that World War I “arose from a web of six remarkable misperceptions that were prevalent in Europe during the years before the war” in his article “Why Cooperation Failed in 1914.”<sup>26</sup> Van Evera contends that while all six misconceptions were “especially popular in Germany, they flourished throughout the continent.”<sup>27</sup> Among the list of misconceptions is the cult of the offensive.

Matthew Stibbe took a radically different view, claiming an intense German Anglophobia was the major reason for the two countries to be in conflict in his 2001 book, *German Anglophobia and the Great War, 1914-1918*. While his research focuses mainly on the two countries after World War I had already started, he makes some interesting points about Anglophobia prior to the war as well. He claimed that hardened Anglophobes such as the Kaiser and Admiral Tirpitz had always perceived England as the “chief obstacle to the achievement of Germany’s continental and world power aspirations.”<sup>28</sup> But by August of 1914, even men who had looked upon Britain favorably began to share this view as well.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, rumors

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Stephen Van Evera, “The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War,” *International Security* 9 no. 1 (Summer, 1984): 59

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>26</sup> Stephen Van Evera, “Why Cooperation Failed in 1914” *World Politics* 38 no. 1 (Oct. 1985) 81.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Matthew Stibbe, *German Anglophobia and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 11.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid

began to circulate around Germany that Great Britain not Russia that had started the war. A German naval officer, Count Ernest Graf zu Reventlow, argued that economic greed has caused Britain to start a “war of destruction” against Germany.<sup>30</sup> Members of the German press went as far as to accuse German ambassadors of failing to understand Britain’s real motivations and claiming that they were duped by Sir Edward Grey.<sup>31</sup> Stibbe argued that this intense Anglophobia meant that the war went on longer than it needed to. That this intense hatred appeared in Germany before the first shots were fired seems to imply that there was already an underlying Anglophobia in Germany. The outbreak of the war simply exacerbated the position and brought it to the forefront.

Obviously the historiography of German tensions related to Great Britain and the coming of the First World War contains many different answers. Some historians stress domestic problems are the real cause behind the growing antagonism, others see German aggression or the shifting balance of power in Europe as the real cause of the tension.

## **Section II: England**

While German causes or motivations for war can be leveled at any number of issues, the historiography about the British motivations for declaring war tend to be far less controversial. Almost all arguments about the British reasons for going to war revolve around maintaining the status quo in Europe. While historians might argue over where the international tension came from, almost all agree that it was in the best interests of the British to maintain the existing conditions on the continent.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 15.

Before the First World War had even ended, historian Bernadotte Schmitt was arguing that Anglo-German political tensions were not over jealousy or envy of Germany, but about British self-preservation in *England and Germany 1740-1914*. Great Britain was willing to accommodate German ambitions except in one respect, naval supremacy. Schmitt argued that because the navy was so vital to British way of life it was “irresistibly driven to maintain a supreme navy.”<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, Schmitt argued that the root of the conflict was not so much over the navy as it was over France. He stated that German diplomacy tried to prevent a rapprochement between Great Britain and France, even though both countries had been determined to attain it. Schmitt asserted that even though Britain had assisted France in resisting excessive demands from Germany in both 1905 and 1911, on the eve of the war the German chancellor asked “the British Government to stand aside while Germany appropriated French colonies.”<sup>33</sup>

In addition, Schmitt argued that the agreements Great Britain signed with France in 1904 put Britain on the side of Germany’s traditional enemy. The Anglo-French entente restored the balance of power to a continental Europe that had long been dominated by Germany. The power balance put Britain into a struggle with Germany. Germany had long wanted to become a world power rather than just a European power, and it could not do this with Britain standing in the way on the continent. It was Britain’s bolstering of France in the face of German power that caused the tension between the two countries.

Keith Wilson argued that Sir Edward Grey and by extension British Foreign Policy was based on one principle, “the avoidance of isolation” and one objective, “a settlement of outstanding disputes with Russia” in his book *British Foreign Secretaries and Foreign Policy*:

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<sup>32</sup> Bernadotte Schmitt, *England and Germany 1740-1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1916) 3.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6.

*From the Crimean War to First World War.*<sup>34</sup> According to Wilson, Grey was guided by fear, especially fear of Russia, and this compelled Grey to support France as the “only road to St. Petersburg went through Paris.”<sup>35</sup> Wilson contended that British foreign policy was essentially at the service of France and Russia. It was, therefore, no surprise that Great Britain would choose to enter World War I on the side of Entente.

Zara Steiner and Keith Neilson argued in their book, *Britain and the Origins of the First World War* that the growing Anglo-German tensions stemmed from what the British perceived to be a German clamor for war.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, they argued that Britain felt a sense of being blackmailed by the Germans and that tension was the price “Germans had to pay for their decision to embark on an active world policy at a time of British weakness.”<sup>37</sup> They cite the Kaiser’s visit to Tangier in 1905 as confirming Grey’s suspicion of German aims. It became clear to Grey that an entente with France was necessary otherwise the French would fold in the face of German threats, and that would leave Britain isolated in the face of the German attack. Grey continued his predecessors’ work of warning Germany that Great Britain would not back down if France was attacked. But Steiner and Neilson also contend that “Grey was more concerned with maintaining the prestige of the Entente than with promoting a peaceful relation with Berlin.”<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, Steiner and Neilson stated that Grey felt that German leadership was waiting to test its newfound power on the international stage and could only do so “through

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<sup>34</sup> Keith Wilson, “Grey” in *British Foreign Secretaries and Foreign Policy: From the Crimean War to First World War*, ed. Keith Wilson (New Hampshire: Croom Helm Ltd, 1987) 172.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>36</sup> Steiner and Neilson’s book is actually the revised edition of an earlier work of the same name written by Steiner alone in 1977. The second edition, published in 2003, has an entirely new chapter on Russia. It also has an in-depth look at parliamentary influence, the British Empire, and military policy. However, Steiner’s basic argument remains the same.

<sup>37</sup> Zara Steiner and Keith Neilson, *Britain and the Origins of the First World War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) 45.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

the military conquest of Europe.”<sup>39</sup> They maintained that Great Britain felt only Germany had the power to upset the status quo in Europe and it served Britain’s interests to “prevent the rise of an all-powerful European state.”<sup>40</sup> Great Britain felt threatened by the rise of Germany in continental Europe during a period of British weakness and therefore perceived German actions to be hostile. This led to miscommunications between the countries and blustering for reasons of prestige and advantage, which included the naval arms race.

In 1999, Niall Ferguson argued that Britain did not need to enter the First World War at all in his book, *The Pity of War*. Ferguson contends that while Germany did start the war, the British leadership’s decision to join the war caused the war to go on much longer than it originally would have. British interests were not being threatened by the war and would not have been affect if the Germans had won. He considered Britain joining the war to be “nothing less than the greatest error in modern history.”<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, he argued that if Britain had not joined the war many of twentieth century Europe’s problems could have been avoided. He lays fault for both World War II and the Russian Revolution at the feet of the British government. In Ferguson’s view had Germany won the First World War “the victorious Germans might have created a European Union, eight decades ahead of schedule.”<sup>42</sup>

Looking at Anglo-German relations from an entirely different perspective is Frank McDonough with his book, *The Conservative Party and Anglo-German Relations, 1905-1914*. He stated that since the major power players in the foreign office in Britain were liberal, the conservatives were often overlooked. McDonough examined how the conservative party reacted to the growing Anglo-German tension and argues “it is possible to assess the continuing

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>41</sup> Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1999) 462.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 458.

importance of ‘primary’ controversy to the study of Britain’s role in the outbreak of the First World War.”<sup>43</sup> McDonough argued that conservatives in Great Britain were not actually anti-German scaremongers who increased the tension between the two countries as has often been argued.

McDonough argued that discussion of Anglo-German tensions revolves around three main issues for the conservatives. The first was, obviously, the naval arms race. He states that conservatives supported the maintenance of the British naval supremacy and that there was a rift with Germany over its growing navy. But McDonough contended that conservatives also expressed concern over a possible French naval invasion in 1883, and the build up of the Japanese and Russian navies as well. What made the German navy different from the previous scares was that Germany was building a major naval fleet a few hundred miles away from Britain. McDonough argued that conservatives were very careful in their language not to express hostility towards the German people or government during the build up of the navy. Liberals, socialists and others in the British media often distorted conservative views to make them seem hostile to the Germans. He stated that conservative speeches showed very mild language in discussing the German navy and hostile comments “were surprisingly few and far between.”<sup>44</sup>

The second major issue for conservatives dealt with trade relations. Again, McDonough finds that the reaction of the conservative party was astonishingly mild. The conservatives did push tariff reforms to increase revenue and trade, but McDonough found that it was not aimed at the Germans. The tariff reform went after French, American, Russian, and Canadian imports as well.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Frank McDonough, *The Conservative Party and Anglo-German Relations, 1905-1914* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007) 7.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 78-79.

The final issue that conservatives discussed concerning Anglo-German tensions revolves around conscription in the army and the role it would play in a war against Germany. This issue originally divided Conservatives into two camps: those who believed Great Britain's survival depended on sea power and those who believed a military force would be needed to guarantee victory in future European wars. McDonough argued that, after 1905, the increasing German threat convinced many conservatives that only conscription into the British army would prevent Germany from capturing Europe.<sup>46</sup>

McDonough's study of conservative reactions to Anglo-German tensions is important because it noted a shift in policy from what the leading political power in Britain were doing and saying and what the minority party was doing. It is easy to lump the British during this period into one group, but McDonough clearly shows that British leaders were not unified in their dealings with Germany.<sup>47</sup>

While slightly less contentious than the historiography concerning Germany's role in the origins of the First World War, historians still have conflicting views over minor issues concerning the role of Britain. Most historians would agree that Britain was trying to maintain the status quo in Europe because it benefited their interests, but there are several different theories as to what actually caused the tension.

### **Section III: Eyre Crowe**

While dozens of books and articles have been written discussing Anglo-German tensions prior to the First World War from either perspective, much less has been written about Eyre Crowe. A pivotal figure in the British Foreign Office during the two world wars, few books has been

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 80-81.

<sup>47</sup> In fairness, there were divisions among the liberal party in Great Britain over how to deal with Germany as well.



focused on him. The extent of Crowe's influence and therefore the extent to which he holds the key to questions concerning British attitudes towards Germany remain controversial amongst historians. Sidney Bradshaw Fay stated that "Crowe appears to have been accepted as an infallible authority on Germany" in the Foreign Office.<sup>48</sup> German Historian Ludwig Reiners considered Crowe to be Germany's most bitter enemy.<sup>49</sup>

The first real historical arguments about Crowe came in 1973. Richard Cosgrove argues that Crowe had a limited influence on the diplomatic policy in Great Britain, and that his position in the British Foreign Office has been misinterpreted. He claimed "Sir Eyre Crowe was credited by historians with enormous surreptitious influence."<sup>50</sup> Cosgrove states that historians were wrong when they argued Crowe was responsible for the hostility towards Germany after 1906 in Britain. He claimed that the officials in government were concerned that Germany challenged British interests around the globe, which is what caused Grey and others to be concerned about the German threat. Furthermore, Cosgrove argued that Crowe did not have easy access to the officials in the government, so he had little opportunity to give them advice. The only way Crowe could express his theories to Grey and others was through memorandums, which Cosgrove claimed symbolized Crowe's marginalization from the rest of government. In addition, Cosgrove argued that Grey was wary of Crowe and hesitant to take his suggestions.<sup>51</sup>

Historian Keith Wilson agrees with Cosgrove, in his book *The Policy of the Entente*, stating his memorandum "has been elevated by many historians to the status of State Paper. It

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<sup>48</sup> Sidney Bradshaw Fay, *The Origins of the World War*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., revised, Two Volumes in One (New York, 1930), I, 557 in Richard Cosgrove, "Sir Eyre Crowe and the English Foreign Office, 1905-1914" (PhD diss., University of California, 1967) 8-9.

<sup>49</sup> Ludwig Reiners, *The Lamps Went Out in Europe* (New York, Pantheon, 1955) 126.

<sup>50</sup> Richard A. Cosgrove, "The Career of Sir Eyre Crowe: A Reassessment," *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* vol. 4 no.4 (Winter 1972): 193.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 197-199.

was in fact no such thing.”<sup>52</sup> Additionally, the memorandum was considered to be anti-German when it was, according to Wilson a “confused and self-contradictory piece of work.”<sup>53</sup> Wilson maintained that Crowe’s memorandum alternated between hypotheses and was so vague and confusing that the memorandum could hardly be considered a valid argument. Wilson also claimed that Crowe left out facts and events dealing with Anglo-German relations that were easily ascertained.<sup>54</sup>

Henry Kissinger disagrees with Wilson in *Diplomacy*. Kissinger applauded the 1907 Memorandum stating it “was at a level of analysis never reached by any document of post-Bismarck Germany.”<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, he argued it “leaves no reasonable doubt” that Great Britain ultimately joined the Triple Entente to stop German hegemony in Europe.

The most extensive work written on Crowe was written by his daughter Sybil and published in 1993. *Our Ablest Public Servant: Sir Eyre Crowe, 1864-1925*, depicted Crowe as hardworking and intelligent contributor to the British Foreign Office. Sybil Crowe gives detailed accounts of her father’s work with chapters covering every major event that happened during Crowe’s time with the foreign office. Like most biographies though, the book assumes Crowe had influence and authority in the foreign office without giving much evidence to justify the assumption. Sybil Crowe’s book is the best source for events and opinions dealing with Eyre Crowe inside the Foreign office.

Zara Steiner and Keith Neilson, in the *British Origins of the First World War*, are not quite as critical of Crowe. They argued Crowe was convinced that the German government “was determined to achieve a new world position and this would be done through the military

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<sup>52</sup> Keith Wilson, *The Policy of the Entente: Essays on the Determinants of British Foreign Policy, 1904-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)101.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>55</sup> Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994) 192.

conquest of Europe.”<sup>56</sup> While they concurred with Cosgrove that Crowe had little personal contact with Grey, they argued that Crowe’s analysis of German policy confirmed Grey’s own opinion and provided a logical basis for Grey’s views. Steiner and Neilson stated that Crowe’s opinion did not shape policy but rather confirmed it was going in the right direction. They claimed the problem with Crowe and the foreign office was that his policy of no negotiations with Germany and closer ties to France was problematic to many people in Grey’s cabinet.<sup>57</sup>

While historians have questioned the personal influence of Crowe on the British Foreign Office, few can doubt that his memorandum had some affect on Anglo-German politics in the lead up to the First World War. Just how much influence his memorandum had on British and German politics remains to be seen.

In conclusion, the various historiographies on Anglo-German political tensions prior to the First World War vary depending on the country and the historian. Each brings a new and innovative perspective to the underlying causes of World War I. The historiography of British underlying political tensions and the importance of Eyre Crowe is limited, but it speaks volumes about the importance of looking at Anglo-German relations in context with Crowe’s memorandum

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<sup>56</sup> Steiner and Neilson, *British Origins of the First World War*, 106.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

## **Chapter II: Eyre Crowe**

### **The Man, the Myth and the Memorandum**

Sir Eyre Crowe is largely an enigma in early twentieth century politics. A German born Briton working for the British Foreign Office, Crowe has been both demonized and glorified by historians. He is perhaps best known for his 1907 “Memorandum on the Present State of British Relations with France and Germany”, although he had a long and illustrious career with the British Foreign Office.

But who was Sir Eyre Crowe and how much of an influence did he really have? What did his 1907 Memorandum really say, and has it been blown out of proportion by historians looking to place the blame for WWI on the British? This chapter will dissect Eyre Crowe and his origins, his influence in the British Foreign Office, and his 1907 Memorandum on the Present State of British Relations with France and Germany.

#### **Section I: Who Was Eyre Crowe?**

Eyre Alexander Barby Wichart Crowe was born in Leipzig, Germany on 30th July 1864. He was the third son to Sir Joseph Archer Crowe. Joseph Crowe had aspired to be a painter like his brother. His father Eyre Evans Crowe, however, decided one painter was quite enough in the family and convinced Joseph to go into journalism. At the age of 18, Joseph Crowe joined his father working for the *Morning Chronicle* in London. A few years later, Joseph was transferred to the *Daily News* and sent on assignment in Paris. Upon the outbreak of the 1848 revolutions in Europe, Joseph began to take an interest in Foreign Affairs. By 1850, Joseph was appointed the sub-editor for foreign affairs for the *Daily News* but two years later he was dismissed from the newspaper. Joseph continued to write during these years as he struggled to find regular

employment. In 1860, a friend persuaded Joseph to offer his services to the government. He was quickly sent to Germany to report on events there for Lord John Russell. Russell was so pleased with Joseph's work that he offered Joseph the position as British Consul-General at Leipzig. Joseph became close friends with Duke Ernest of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha during his prior years in Germany working for the Daily News. Upon his return to Germany in 1860, Joseph often visited the Duke, and it was during one of his visits he met Asta von Barby.<sup>58</sup>

Barby was the eldest daughter of Baron Gustav von Barby and Evelina von Ribbentrop of Germany.<sup>59</sup> Ribbentrop was considered one of the great beauties of her day and an accomplished singer. Joseph described her as "one of the brightest and most accomplished women whom it had been my fortune to meet."<sup>60</sup> When Baron von Barby died, Evelina married Otto von Holtzendorff. Holtzendorff was a distinguished lawyer with liberal views. The two would go on to have six more children. Asta and her sister, Wanda, had a very close relationship with their stepfather and half-siblings.<sup>61</sup>

Joseph Crowe became smitten with the "young, dark-haired, dark-eyed vivacious" Asta and they married a year later.<sup>62</sup> Asta was charming, intelligent, and cultivated with a determined personality. She learned English quickly and spent many years correcting the grammar and spelling of Eyre. Joseph and Asta had six surviving children: Evan, Percy, Eyre, Victoria, Mildred and Vera. Eyre was named after his Grandfather and his uncle, the painter Eyre Crowe.

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<sup>58</sup> Sibyl Crowe and Edward T. Corp. *Our Ablest Public Servant: Sir Eyre Crowe, 1864-1925*. (Braunton Devon, England: Merlin Books, 1993) 6-10.

<sup>59</sup> Zara Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969) 108.

<sup>60</sup> Crowe and Corp, *Our Ablest Public Servant*, 9.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

His second name, Alexander, was “in honour of his godmother the Duchess Alexandra of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, the wife of Duke Ernest”.<sup>63</sup>

Eyre Crowe grew up in Düsseldorf, but the family spent summers in Gamburg in Baden visiting Wanda, her husband Dr. Carl Gerhardt and their children. Crowe studied both in Düsseldorf and Berlin before moving to Britain in 1882. He lived with his brother Percy and the two attended King’s College. Money problems plagued the Crowe family, and Eyre quit King’s College in 1883 as it was too expensive. Instead under the suggestion of one of his father’s friend, Eyre joined his father in Paris to improve his French. Upon his return to Britain in October, Crowe attended Scoones Cramming Establishment where he did very well. He attended another semester at Scoones before going to the University College, where he was asked to join the debating society.<sup>64</sup>

In March of 1885, Crowe took the Foreign Office Examination for a job that had just become available. He came in first in German, Constitutional History, Geography and Greek but was hampered by Arithmetic and Orthography. Crowe came in second being beaten by only 6 marks, and lost out on the position. Lord Granville wrote to Joseph Crowe stating that he would keep Eyre’s name on his list if another position came available. Two months later a position opened up and Crowe entered the British Foreign Office in 1885 at the age of 21.<sup>65</sup>

Crowe left a distinct impression in the Foreign Office. He “had little patience with the snobberies and social preoccupations of many of his contemporaries.” His peers often said when Crowe was angry he spoke English with a German accent. Fellow diplomat Harold Nicolson described Crowe as being a “man of extreme violence and extreme gentleness...He was so

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.,20-26.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid

human. He was so superhuman. Yet here, if ever, was man of truth and vigour.”<sup>66</sup> Crowe was meticulous, distrustful of outsiders, brilliant and exceedingly arrogant. “He had ‘an unfortunate habit of indicating to the Foreign Secretary and his colleagues in the Cabinet, that they were not only ill-informed but also weak and silly.’”<sup>67</sup> Despite Crowe’s arrogance and controlling nature he quickly rose in the Foreign Office first in the Consular, then the African Department. By 1906, he became a senior clerk and the supervising head of the Western Department. In 1912 he was promoted to the Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Crowe’s arrogance did not always work in his favor, though. By 1914, it was widely thought in the Foreign Office that Crowe would succeed Arthur Nicolson as Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. But Lord Bertie wrote Crowe “was insubordinate and insolent to [Sir Edward] Grey who has decided that his [Crowe’s] appointment to succeed Nicolson is impossible.”<sup>68</sup> In 1920 Crowe was given the position as Permanent Under-Secretary anyhow and it was a position he would hold until his death in 1925.

Crowe often visited the European continent staying in Paris or Baden. In 1903, Crowe married his German cousin, Clema von Bonin, the widowed daughter of his uncle Professor Gerhardt. They were both cousin’s to Henning von Holtzendorff, the future Chief of the German Naval Staff, and the Crowe’s corresponded with him often. Holtzendorff was one of Admiral Tirpitz’s main critics. The naval attaché in Paris, Rudolf Seigel, later became one of Crowe’s brothers-in-law. These connections would cause Crowe grief as he was often under attack by other members of the government and the press for these family relations.<sup>69</sup> The press neglected

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<sup>66</sup> Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy* 109-110

<sup>67</sup> Sir Harold Nicolson, *Sir Arthur Nicolson, Bart: First Lord Carnock: a Study in the Old Diplomacy*, p. 327 in *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>68</sup> Lord Bertie, Dec 19 1914 in Zara Steiner, “Grey, Hardinge and the Foreign Office, 1906-1910” *The Historical Journal* 10 no. 3 (1967): 436.

<sup>69</sup> Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy* 111.

to note that Crowe's older brother Percy, who became a colonel in the British military, and Percy's son who died at sea during WWI served in the British Navy. Eyre and Clema had four children all with the middle name Eyre; his three daughters were Asta, Una, and Sibyl and his son was Eric. His youngest daughter Sibyl became the leading- and only biographer of her father.<sup>70</sup>

Crowe's position in the Foreign Office gave him the opportunity to influence Anglo-German relations. The Foreign Office papers are littered with minutes and notes by Crowe. Zara Steiner stated "There is hardly a major dispatch on any German question which does not carry one of his minutes and many French dispatches contain briefer but equally penetrating comments by the senior clerk."<sup>71</sup> Crowe was not anti-German; he admired German achievements and contributions to European society. Crowe was well versed in German history, economics, literature, philosophy and military. He read all three volumes of Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*. But Crowe had no love for the German government. His father was critical of Wilhelm II and felt that he would be the death of German liberalism.<sup>72</sup> Crowe's grandfather and uncle had similar views and Crowe grew up in an environment where "literature, politics and the arts were the current talk of the day."<sup>73</sup> It should be no surprise that Eyre Crowe would be deeply distrustful of the German government as well.

## **Section II: Crowe's Influence in the Foreign Office**

To understand fully the influence of Crowe's 1907 memorandum, a detailed look at Crowe's influence in the British Foreign Office is necessary. Until the late 1960s, historians had not

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Crowe and Corp, *Our Ablest Public Servant*, 20.



looked closely at Crowe's actual influence in the Foreign Office. It was assumed that he shared the same amount of influence as anyone else working for Edward Grey.

In 1967, Richard Cosgrove did an in-depth study of Eyre Crowe and his influence in the Foreign Office. As stated, Cosgrove argued that Crowe had remarkably little influence at all. Cosgrove argued that Crowe's influence had been greatly exaggerated because of the sheer volume of minute-writing he had done on documents in the Foreign Office. Cosgrove claimed that the "large number of minutes from his pen was a result of his [Crowe's] personal isolation from the foreign secretary. Where as others could make verbal suggestions to Sir Edward Grey, Crowe rarely saw him in person and had to be content with the written word."<sup>74</sup> While it is impossible to determine how much face-to-face time Crowe had with Grey, Crowe's influence can hardly be discredited. Almost every member of the Foreign Office wrote minute notes on documents and these documents were consistently circulated. Cosgrove could just have as easily argued that any number of officials did not have face-to-face time with Grey because they wrote lengthy minute notes on documents. In fact, it is in these minute notes that it becomes crystal clear that Crowe did have a wide reaching influence in the Foreign Office. Furthermore unlike verbal conversations, which can be easily forgotten, these minute notes were readily accessible to everyone and could be reexamined at a moments notice.

Every historical document has its own drawbacks and minute notes are not any different. Cosgrove states minute notes were "observations destined very often to be discussed orally with a higher authority, liable to oral correction which might not appear on paper and sometimes provoking disagreement which was only casually expressed."<sup>75</sup> Minutes were written on

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<sup>74</sup> Richard Cosgrove, "Sir Eyre Crowe and the English Foreign Office, 1905-1914" (PhD diss., University of California, 1967) 83.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

memorandums, notes between various members of the Foreign Office, transcripts of speeches and virtually every other type of document used in the Foreign Office. They were not, however, the same as state papers or important documents; they were simply an addendum to them.

Crowe's notes on Foreign Office documents are innumerable. There seems to hardly be a letter, memo, or speech without a minute note attached with Crowe's initials. While not every note can be examined in the length of this paper, a few significant notes can easily show the importance of Crowe to the Foreign Office. The two men Crowe worked under as a clerk, and then assistant, are prime examples. Crowe worked under Sir Charles Hardinge from 1906 to 1910 and Sir Arthur Nicolson from 1910 to 1916. Both Permanent Under-Secretaries for Foreign Affairs found Crowe's opinions insightful.

Often agreeing with Crowe's assessments was Sir Arthur Nicolson. On a note sent from Sir E. Goschen to Sir Edward Grey in 1910 discussing an upcoming naval agreement with Germany, Crowe wrote minutes claiming that Germany was only trying to make the agreement so that it would preclude Britain from intervening in Germany's affairs with France and Russia. Nicolson stated "Sir Eyre Crowe's minute is an admirable summary of what has passed and merits the most careful consideration. I entirely agree with his views...."<sup>76</sup> Nicolson repeats this sentiment in a telegram from the Count de Salis to Sir Edward Grey during the Agadir crisis, stating "I quite agree with Eyre Crowe. And we should certainly not give the German Gov[ernment] any indication as to what line we may follow[.]"<sup>77</sup> Considerable other minute notes have Nicolson agreeing with Crowe's assessments. This furthered Crowe's opinions and

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<sup>76</sup> Sir Arthur Nicolson, Minute note on No. 462 Sir E. Goschen to Sir Edward Grey, May 10<sup>th</sup> 1911 in *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914. Vol. VI, Anglo-German tension armaments and negotiation: 1907-12*, ed. G. P. Gooch and Harold William Vazeille Temperley, (London: H.M.S.O., 1928) 623.

<sup>77</sup> Sir Arthur Nicolson, Minute note on No. 355 Count de Salis to Sir Edward Grey, July 3<sup>rd</sup> 1911, in *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914. Vol. VII, The Agadir Crisis*, ed. G. P. Gooch and Harold William Vazeille Temperley, (London: H.M.S.O., 1928) 326.

status in the Foreign Office. As his direct subordinate, Nicolson had contact with Edward Grey on a daily basis.

According to Sibyl Crowe, Charles Hardinge never took a liking to Crowe as Nicolson had. Hardinge “watched with jealousy and alarm the formidable and unique position of authority which he [Crowe] was beginning to build up for himself.”<sup>78</sup> Hardinge was a soft-spoken man by nature and did not like Crowe’s outspoken tendencies. This was especially difficult for Hardinge as Crowe expressed his opinions without checking to see whether Hardinge agreed with him first. Hardinge went as far as to circulate a rumor that Crowe “was a man ‘of unsound judgement.’”<sup>79</sup> Despite his personal dislike for Crowe, even Hardinge admitted when Crowe was right. Writing after a lengthy minute note by Crowe discussing problems with the building of the Berlin-Baghdad Railroad, Hardinge stated “I agree generally with all the above minutes, but wish to point out the change which has taken place in the attitude of Germany...”<sup>80</sup> While Hardinge and Crowe did not get along well, Hardinge was balanced enough to recognize when he believed Crowe’s opinions were right. Additionally, agreeing with Crowe furthered Crowe’s status in the Foreign Office, as Sir Edward Grey read all of the minute notes himself.

Furthermore, the minute notes written by Edward Grey show that he took Crowe’s opinions very seriously. In the minute notes on Crowe’s 1907 Memorandum on the Present State of British Relations with France and Germany, Grey wrote “This Memorandum by Mr. Crowe is most valuable... The whole Memorandum contains information and reflections, which should be carefully studied.” Grey also said that the “Memorandum should go to the Prime Minister, Lord

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<sup>78</sup> Sibyl Crowe and Edward T. Corp. *Our Ablest Public Servant: Sir Eyre Crowe, 1864-1925*. (Braunton Devon, England: Merlin Books, 1993) 98-99.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Sir Charles Hardinge, Minute note on No. 343 Sir E. Goschen to Sir Edward Grey, April 10<sup>th</sup> 1910 in *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914. Vol. VI, Anglo-German tension armaments and negotiation: 1907-12*, ed. G. P. Gooch and Harold William Vazeille Temperley (London: H.M.S.O., 1928) 451.

Ripon, Mr. Asquith, Mr. Morley, Mr. Haldane, with my comment upon it.”<sup>81</sup> This showed that Grey found Crowe’s opinions and insights so important that he wanted them passed on to the Prime Minister. In the minute notes on a letter between Grey and Sir G. Buchanan, Grey wrote under Crowe’s notes “The points raised by Sir Eyre Crowe merit serious consideration, and doubtless the Cabinet will review the situation.”<sup>82</sup> By Grey’s own admission, Crowe’s opinions and insights were valuable and were discussed by the British Cabinet and Foreign Office.

Grey also called on Crowe for his opinions in certain matters. Written on minutes note about the Baghdad to Berlin Railroad and the Hakki Pasha, Grey wrote “I think I had better see Hakki Pasha....I should like to discuss this with Sir E. Crowe and Mr. Parker.”<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, in a minute note discussing the Anglo-German convention, Crowe wrote “Sir. E. Grey has spoken to me about this, and has asked me to prepare a revised draft [of the Anglo-German Convention.]”<sup>84</sup> In the minute notes of a private letter discussing the convention, Grey wrote “Mr. Harcourt and Sir J. Anderson should be asked to come to discuss this and the other points in these papers with Sir A. Nicolson, Sir E. Crowe and myself at the F[oreign] O[ffice] on some morning in this week.”<sup>85</sup> This suggests that Crowe visited Grey on foreign matters quite often.

In addition, Grey trusted Crowe to write important documents on these matters. On another of Crowe’s memorandums dealing with island of Timor and Germany, Grey wrote “I think Sir Eyre Crowe’s 2<sup>nd</sup> proposal for dealing with Mr. Gilmore can be adopted; if necessary

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<sup>81</sup> Sir Edward Grey, Minute note on Memorandum on the Present State of British Relations with France and Germany, January 28<sup>th</sup> 1907, in *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914. Vol. III, The Testing of the Entente, 1904-6*, ed. G. P. Gooch and Harold William Vazeille Temperley (London: H.M.S.O., 1928) 420.

<sup>82</sup> Sir Edward Grey, Minute note on No 102 Sir G. Buchanan to Sir Edward Grey, July 25<sup>th</sup> 1914 in *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914. Vol. XI, The Outbreak of War*, ed. G. P. Gooch and Harold William Vazeille Temperley (London: H.M.S.O., 1928) 82

<sup>83</sup> Sir Edward Grey, Minute note on letter from A. Parker to Sir Edward Grey, August 20<sup>th</sup> 1914 in *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914. Vol. X part II, The Last Years of Peace*, ed. G. P. Gooch and Harold William Vazeille Temperley, (London: H.M.S.O., 1928) 420.

<sup>84</sup> Sir Eyre Crowe, Minute note on No 319, December 18<sup>th</sup> 1912 in *Ibid.*, 492.

<sup>85</sup> Sir Edward Grey, Minute note on No 321 Sir J. Anderson to Sir Eyre Crowe, December 12<sup>th</sup> 1912 in *Ibid.*, 498.

we might go a little further...”<sup>86</sup> This indicates that not only did Sir Edward Grey take Crowe’s opinions to heart, but that he implemented Crowe’s proposals into Britain’s policy initiatives. That is hardly the work of someone who could be considered unimportant in the British Foreign Office. Grey had a significant amount of trust in the Assistant Undersecretary. He was in no way distanced from the Foreign Secretary as Cosgrove erroneously asserted. Crowe was a valuable member of the Foreign Office and his opinions and observations were taken as seriously as any other members of the Foreign Office.

### **Section III: The 1907 Memorandum**

Crowe’s 1907 “Memorandum on the Present State of British Relations with France and Germany” has become a hotly contested document in the annals of diplomatic history. As indicated many historians, such as Keith Wilson, have argued that the importance of the Memorandum has been blown out of proportion, and the Memorandum in no way reflected the views or actions of the British Foreign Office. Others, such as Friedrich Thimme, argued that Britain’s entry into World War I on the side of France and Russia was “the logical consequence and continuation of the Memorandum.”<sup>87</sup> But what does the 1907 Memorandum really say? Is it a decidedly anti-German piece spurred on by a writer who was biased against the Germans as Ludwig Reiners contended? Is it a blueprint for future British foreign policy?

If Crowe was biased against the Germans there is little proof of that in the 1907 Memorandum. In fact, Crowe spoke highly of the Germans. He wrote, “It cannot for a moment

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<sup>86</sup> Sir Edward Grey, Minute note on No 270 Timor and the Anglo-German Secret conventions of 1898, January 26<sup>th</sup> 1912 in *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914. Vol. X part II, The Last Years of Peace*, ed. G. P. Gooch and Harold William Vazeille Temperley, (London: H.M.S.O., 1928) 434.

<sup>87</sup> Friedrich Thimme, “Das Memorandum E. A. Crowe vom 1 Januar 1907,” *Berliner Monatshefte* VII (August, 1929) 768 in Richard Cosgrove, “Sir Eyre Crowe and the English Foreign Office, 1905-1914” (PhD diss., University of California, 1967) 112.

be questioned that the mere existence and healthy activity of a powerful Germany is an undoubted blessing to the world... The world would be unmeasurably the poorer if everything that is specifically associated with German character, German ideas and German methods were to cease having power and influence.”<sup>88</sup> Crowe had a significant amount of respect for the German people. He felt German ideas and methods had contributed considerably to the rest of the world. Crowe felt that England and Germany benefited from each other and had a special bond. He wrote, “For England particularly, intellectual and moral kinship creates a sympathy and appreciation of what is best in the German mind[.]”<sup>89</sup> Crowe felt that as long as Germany competed for “intellectual and moral leadership of the world” then England would applaud the effort and the two countries would get along fine. In addition, Crowe stated that England did not want Germany reduced to a weaker power, as this could lead to a “Franco-Russian predominance equally, if not more, formidable to the British Empire.”<sup>90</sup> Crowe felt a strong Germany was important to offset the powers of France and Russia, especially after they had signed an alliance.

At the same time Crowe was critical of the path Germany was taking. His 1907 Memorandum seriously examined Germany’s history and how Germany came in conflict with England. Crowe started the Memorandum by discussing the Anglo-French agreement of 1904. He argued that the French were seeking an agreement with England as a way to strengthen their hand against Germany after Russia’s collapse against Japan in the Russo-Japanese War. France feared she was in “danger of finding herself alone face to face with her great enemy [Germany].”<sup>91</sup> The decline of Russia “deprived France of the powerful support which alone had

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<sup>88</sup> Eyre Crowe. Memorandum on the Present State of British Relations with France and Germany. in *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914. Vol. III, The Testing of the Entente, 1904-6*, ed. G. P. Gooch and Harold William Vazeille Temperley, (London: H.M.S.O., 1928) 406.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.,417

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 398.

hitherto enabled her to stand up to Germany in the political area on terms of equality.”<sup>92</sup> After France’s humiliating defeat in the Franco-Prussian war in 1871, France had been unable to feel secure against Germany without another country providing support either politically or militarily. Without the possibility of Russian aggression on her borders, Germany felt it was in a position of power over France. This power was “rudely checked by the unexpected intelligence that France had come to an understanding with England.”<sup>93</sup> Crowe argued, from that moment Germany wanted to drive a wedge between England and France.

Crowe contended that England’s foreign policy was determined because of her geographical situation “as an island State with vast oversea colonies and dependencies, whose existence and survival as an independent community are inseparably bound up with the possession of preponderant sea power.”<sup>94</sup> Crowe stated that sea power was more important than land power because sea power was easily moveable and it made England “the neighbor of every country accessible by sea.”<sup>95</sup> Because of this, Crowe asserted that England had an interest in the independence of other nations. England had to be the natural protector of weaker countries and was consequently the natural enemy of any country threatening the sovereignty of another. In addition, Crowe stated that while every other country would prefer to be the supreme sea-power, if that could not be the case, these countries would prefer “England hold that power than any other state.”<sup>96</sup> Furthermore, England historically believed in having a balance of power in Europe. Crowe argued that England maintained that balance by throwing their might to oppose the political tyranny of the strongest state or group of states against the weaker ones. It is for this reason that England determine whether or not Germany is aiming at a political hegemony in

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 400.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 402.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 403.

Europe at the impairment of the other nations through schemes of expansion and political maneuvers. This is what Crowe spent the bulk of the 1907 Memorandum discussing.<sup>97</sup>

Crowe started his look at German political policy by discussing Prussian imperialism. Crowe argued that Prussia set out to “turn a small State into a big one....”<sup>98</sup> To do that Prussia felt it needed a stronger military force, a bigger territory and more inhabitants. After Prussia became Germany and found their place in the great powers of Europe, Germany became aware of “the true position of countries such as England, the United States, France and even the Netherlands, whose political influence” extended well beyond their own borders and across the seas.<sup>99</sup> Crowe argued that though Germany found a place as the leading power on the Europe; it then felt it must become a world power. This thinking was consistent with the ideas of Prussian Imperialism and finding a German “place in the sun.” Crowe stated this thinking is what pushed German political policy to gain colonies. As long as Germany did not try to gain these colonies by schemes of a subversive nature, then they would not come into an armed conflict with England; as “England seeks no quarrels, and will never give Germany cause for legitimate offence.”<sup>100</sup>

Crowe then evaluates the last twenty years of Anglo-German relations and noted that the “German Governments have never ceased reproaching British Cabinets with want of friendliness” but that Germany launched numerous colonial and maritime enterprises which brought the two countries into conflict. Crowe stated these acts “all have in common this feature that they were opened acts of direct and unmistakable hostility to England ....” Additionally, Germany made demands to other countries, as well as England, and would use excessive shows

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 404.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. 404-407



of force to convince them to acquiesce to German whims. Crowe stated that Britain accepted these actions from Germany to avoid quarreling with them and maintain “cordial relations.”<sup>101</sup>

But continuing actions of this nature would affect Anglo-German relations, as almost every German demand had been met. Crowe likened Germany’s foreign policy to blackmail:

The action of Germany towards this country since 1890 might be likened not inappropriately to that of a professional blackmailer, whose extortions are wrung from his victims by the threat of some vague and dreadful consequences in case of a refusal. To give way to the blackmailer’s menaces enriches him, but it has long been proved by uniformed experience that, although this may secure for the victim temporary peace, it is certain to lead to renewed molestation and higher demands after ever-shortening periods of amicable forbearance.<sup>102</sup>

To Crowe, England had been more than forthcoming in giving Germany what it wanted, but he found Germany continued to demand more. Crowe found that there had been Anglo-German opposition but it had been caused by the “one-sided aggressiveness” of Germany. England, Crowe stated, had been more than conciliatory and had given numerous concessions to Germany.

Crowe contended that “Germany is deliberately following a policy which is essentially opposed to vital British interests, and that an armed conflict cannot in the long run be averted,” unless England was willing to sacrifice its own self-interests to Germany and lose her place as a great power. He asserted that Germany was heading towards a political hegemony in Europe, at the expense of England and the other great powers. But Crowe is unsure whether Germany had set out on this path. Crowe offered two hypotheses: Either Germany was aiming at political hegemony and maritime power at the expense of England and the other powers; or that Germany’s foreign policy was clear from any clear-cut ambition and is really “the expression of a vague, confused, and unpractical statesmanship not fully realizing its own drift.”<sup>103</sup> Either

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 408-409.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 416.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 415

Germany was aiming to dominate Europe or Germany was simply promoting it's own interests not really knowing what it was playing at. Crowe noted that the second hypothesis was not particularly flattering to the German Government. But that it could be the temperament of the German Kaiser that was causing the "erratic, domineering, and often frankly aggressive spirit" of German foreign policy.<sup>104</sup>

Crowe contended that the British Government need not determine which of the two hypotheses was actually correct because at any point the first hypothesis may unite with the second. To Crowe it did not matter whether Germany had set out on this course of action or if it had simply stumbled upon it; either way Germany was heading towards the same thing. Crowe stated that England should have no quarrel with German expansion nor should it oppose the German Navy because Germany had a natural right to both. England needed a strong Germany as a way of balancing the powers of Russia and France. But if Germany continued on the path that ran counter to British interests, then Britain would either have to go to war to maintain their world power status or sacrifice their self-interests and lose its status as an independent great power in Europe.<sup>105</sup>

Crowe's 1907 Memorandum provided valuable insight into Anglo-German relations for the British Foreign Office. It clearly lays out that Germany was aiming at a political hegemony in Europe which came in conflict with British interests. Whether the Germans did this purposefully or not was not relevant according to Crowe. The two countries were on a path towards war unless Britain or Germany was willing to back down. Furthermore, it showed that Germany's foreign policy was built around demands, brute shows of force, and blackmail, none of which Britain could continue to deal with in the future. Has the importance of the 1907

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 415-418.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

Memorandum been blown out of proportion as Keith Wilson asserted? No, the memorandum marked a shift in the way British Foreign Policy would handle German relations in the future. But it was also not a blueprint for future British Foreign Policy either. Crowe made no suggestions about how to handle Germany. He simply asserted that based on the current path the two countries were taking, war was likely. Of course, Crowe could have hardly known the circumstances that would bring on World War I in 1914. Nonetheless, he was correct.

## **Chapter III: Crises in Morocco**

The context in which Crowe wrote his memorandum is significant, because it underscores the arguments about Germany Crowe was making. While the memorandum circulated the British Foreign Office on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1907, Crowe wrote it in 1905-1906, during the height of the First Moroccan Crisis. It is only logical that the First and Second Moroccan crises would fully illustrate the underlying hostility in British Foreign policy towards Germany, which happened after Crowe's memorandum circulated.

Crowe argued that Germany's foreign policy was built around demands, brute shows of force, and blackmail. The Moroccan crises epitomize exactly the kinds of brute force and blackmail Germany was willing to use to gain control in Europe. Furthermore, Crowe stated that Britain could not continue to deal with Germany in the future as it had in the past. After the memorandum circulated, Sir Edward Grey and the foreign office took a much harsher stand in relation to German government's politics. Rather than trying to get France to compromise, the British Government stood behind France and tried to force Germany to back down.

### **Section I: The First Moroccan Crisis**

In March of 1905 in the middle of his annual Mediterranean cruise Kaiser Wilhelm II stopped off at Tangiers, a port city in northern Morocco. While there he declared that "The object of my visit to Tangier is to make it known that I am determined to...safeguard efficaciously the interests of Germany in Morocco for I look upon the Sultan as an absolutely independent sovereign."<sup>106</sup> The Kaiser proclaimed Morocco was an independent country in which no other country should have

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<sup>106</sup> Bernadotte Schmitt, *England and Germany 1740-1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967) 227.

special rights or a sphere of influence, as far as Germany was concerned. The Kaiser's stop had been suggested to him by German leadership in the hopes of producing an international crisis that the German government could exploit. The plan worked perfectly; the proclamation created a serious diplomatic crisis in Europe.

The Kaiser made this proclamation in the face of the 1904 Anglo-French convention, which had given France the right to preserve order and provide assistance in Morocco in order to protect French interests there. In other words, the Anglo-French convention gave France a sphere of influence in Morocco.<sup>107</sup> This act violated the 1880 Madrid convention, which had given favored nation status and protection rights over Morocco to all the countries in attendance at the conference.<sup>108</sup> When the Kaiser returned to Germany in April, he demanded a review of the Madrid Convention by all the countries that had participated; even after the French Foreign Minister, Théophile Delcassé, offered a bilateral settlement no fewer than three times.

The German government's motivation for this proclamation was simple; the German government felt slighted by France. The 1904 Anglo-French convention was hardly the first time a treaty had been overturned by two major European powers. Germany had little to gain in Morocco, even in regards to trade. Germany could have allowed France to have a sphere of interest in Morocco and it would not have changed anything for Germany. But to gain a sphere of influence in Morocco, France had basically bribed Great Britain, Italy, and Spain; all of which had interests in Morocco and legitimate historical claims to having a sphere of influence there. France, however, neglected to discuss the proceedings with Germany. In a 1904 memorandum a German Foreign Official, Baron von Holstein, wrote that "Germany would suffer great injury owing to the French monopoly. Even more alarming would be the injury to Germany's prestige,

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<sup>107</sup> F.R. Bridge and Roger Bullen, *The Great Powers and the European States System 1814-1914* (Harlow, Great Britain: Pearson Education Limited, 2005) 278.

<sup>108</sup> "The Algeiras Conference," *New York Times*, Jan 17, 1906,

if we sat still whilst German interests were being dealt with without our taking a part.”<sup>109</sup> The German leadership saw France’s influence in Morocco as challenge to their great power status in Europe. Additionally, the German government felt that France slighted Germany by not discussing the matter them.

Furthermore, Germany saw the opportunity to humiliate France by challenging France over Morocco. France’s closest ally, Russia, had been humiliated by the Japanese in the Russo-Japanese war and would be unlikely to give support to France. Germany believed that Great Britain would be unwilling to enter a confrontation over Morocco. Without Russia or Great Britain to assist them, Germany believed the French government would surrender to German demands. That Germany rejected three offers to settle the Moroccan problem from France further proved that Germany cared more about humiliating France than it did about their minimal interests in Morocco. German Chancellor, Bernhard von Bülow, stated in a letter to the Kaiser before his trip “Your Majesty’s visit to Tangier will embarrass M. Delcassé, traverse his schemes, and further our business interests in Morocco.”<sup>110</sup> Germany also thought the conflict could drive a wedge between Britain and France and their newly formed entente.<sup>111</sup>

The relations between Britain and France were already on strained ground. With the Russian military and navy having been decimated by the Japanese, France had sent numerous appeals to Great Britain to pressure their ally, Japan, into ending the Russo-Japanese war. The British Foreign Office ignored the French appeals as a weakened Russia could not endanger British interests in India. To the British, a weak Russia was better than a weak Germany. Additionally, Delcassé misinterpreted the British Foreign Office’s intentions when British

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<sup>109</sup> Baron von Holstein, Memorandum, June 3<sup>rd</sup> 1904 in *German Diplomatic Documents 1871-1914. Vol III: The Growing Antagonism: 1898-1910*, ed and trans. E.T.S. Dugdale (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc, 1969) 220.

<sup>110</sup> Bernhard von Bülow, Letter to the Emperor, March 20<sup>th</sup> 1905 in *Ibid*, 223.

<sup>111</sup> Bridge and Bullen, *The Great Powers and the European States System*, 278-279.

officials had told the French ambassador that Britain and France should “concert their policy.”<sup>112</sup> The British Foreign Office had been warning France not to make an agreement with Germany behind the British government’s back. Delcassé took the message to mean that the British wanted an alliance with France, and he encouraged his superiors to stand up to Germany.<sup>113</sup> Ultimately, the French gave into German demands. The nations arranged a conference for January 1906 in Algeiras to discuss the problem of influence in Morocco. Furthermore, Delcassé resigned from office in June of 1905.<sup>114</sup>

Initially, Germany seemed to come out the winner of the First Moroccan Crisis. Germany had forced agreement to a conference to discuss the sphere of influence over Morocco. The German government had managed to get the French Foreign Minister, an avid Germanophobe, to resign from office. France and Britain seemed to be at odds with each other over how to handle the crisis. Germany seemed to have succeeded in all of their goals. But by the time the Algeiras conference came to fruition the diplomatic momentum had turned against Germany.<sup>115</sup>

In December of 1905, the Liberal party came into power in Great Britain bringing with it a new perspective in the Foreign Office. Sir Edward Grey was made the new Secretary of State for Foreign affairs and he felt promoting the Anglo-French entente was in Britain’s best interests. The German ambassador in London, Count Paul von Metternich, stated as much in a letter to Bülow on January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1906, “The Entente with France and the removal of the old quarrels were very greatly welcomed in England, and they wish to keep to it and run no risks with it.”<sup>116</sup> Grey gave France the full support of the British at the Algeiras conference regardless of the issues at

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Count Paul von Metternich, Letter to Chancellor Bülow, London, Jan 3<sup>rd</sup> 1906 in *German Diplomatic Documents Vol. III*, 235.

hand. According to Metternich, Grey believed “the British people would not stand France being involved in a war with Germany ... and that, if it happened, any British Government, whether Conservative or Liberal, would be forced to help France.”<sup>117</sup> This was something the previous British government had never made clear to France or Germany. Nevertheless, this support from Grey did not actually commit Britain to go to war. In fact several members of the British Cabinet were not informed about these discussions at all.<sup>118</sup> The British government was making it clear Britain supported France in this crisis, but Britain did not actually commit to sending troops nor did it ever put the army and navy on ready in case war broke out. Grey and the British Foreign Office were claiming they would go to war without actually intending to go to war over Morocco.

From the beginning of the conference, Germany was isolated at the bargaining table. Germany did not receive support from Italy or the United States as Germany had expected. The only support Germany obtained was from their traditional ally, Austria-Hungary, and Morocco. On the other hand, France received the full backing of not only Italy and the United States, but Great Britain, Russia and Spain as well. France was given a protectorate over Morocco with a few exceptions in which political control reverted to Spain. The Kaiser’s proclamation that Morocco should be considered an independent country under the Sultan was confirmed but the proclamation meant very little. Germany went into the Algeiras conference feeling as they would be victorious over France, only to come out as the loser.

Not only did France get Morocco, Germany’s attitude during the event also made Great Britain wary of German intentions. Germany had been unwilling to compromise with France even though Germany was standing on shaky diplomatic ground. Germany had little if any historical claim in Morocco. Germany’s presumption of power made Britain wonder what

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 236.

<sup>118</sup> Bridge and Bullen, *The Great Powers and the European States System*, 282.



Germany was doing. Britain became suspicious of German motivations pushing them to reinforce ties with France. Frank Lascelles, the British Ambassador in Germany, stated in letter dated September 1906 “The result of the Conference was certainly not satisfactory to Germany. She had found herself in a position of almost complete isolation, and the understanding between England and France had been greatly strengthened.”<sup>119</sup> Instead of driving a wedge between France and Great Britain, Germany had managed to push the two countries closer together.

It is in this context that Crowe wrote his “Memorandum on the Present State of British Relations with France and Germany”. Crowe’s correct interpretations of the First Moroccan Crisis lent further credence to his arguments in the Memorandum. Germany’s actions in Morocco clearly show what Crowe meant when he argued that Germany would use excessive shows of force to convince countries to acquiesce to German whims. Furthermore, Crowe saw what Germany was trying to do with regard to Morocco. The aim of the German leadership during First Moroccan Crisis was to drive a wedge between Britain and France so that Germany would be in a position of power over France. Crowe stated “The object of nipping in the bud the young friendship between France and England was to be attained by using as a stalking-horse those very interests in Morocco which the [German] Imperial Chancellor had, barely a year before, publicly declared to be in no way imperiled.”<sup>120</sup> Crowe argued that German leader were trying to split France and England by using the Moroccan Crisis after saying Germany had no problems with France in Morocco just a year prior.

Crowe noted that the German leadership had carefully chosen Morocco to test the Anglo-French entente. The German government had believed that Britain would not lend military

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<sup>119</sup> Sir Frank Lascelles, Letter to Sir Edward Grey, Berlin, Sept 2<sup>nd</sup> 1906 in *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914. Vol III: The Testing of the Entente, 1904-6*, ed. G. P. Gooch and Harold William Vazeille Temperley, (London: H.M.S.O., 1928) 385.

<sup>120</sup> Eyre Crowe. Memorandum on the Present State of British Relations with France and Germany. in *Ibid*, 400.

assistance to France. But just in case, German leaders had “taken to inflame French opinion by representing through the channels of a venal press that England was in her own selfish interest trying to push France into a war with Germany, so revealing the secret intentions which had inspired her [Britain] in seeking the *entente*.”<sup>121</sup> Crowe argued Germany was playing both sides of the coin in regards to the Anglo-French agreements. If Britain did not offer militarily assistance to France, German could play on French fears of a war , which France was unprepared for to get France to acquiesce to German demands. If Britain did offer military assistance to France it was because Britain secretly had wanted a war with Germany and was using the Anglo-French entente to drag France into a war.

In addition, Crowe was wary of the German government’s deceitful attempts to gain colonies. Crowe believed these attempts would bring England into an armed conflict with Germany. The crisis in Morocco had been a subversive scheme from the outset. Germany made a conflict where there was none in the attempts to drive a wedge between Britain and France. France being ill-prepared for any war, and with the military defeats of Russia, would be forced to conceded to Germany’s whims in Morocco and any other territories or face war. This was exactly the type of blackmail Crowe argued Germany used to get what they wanted.

## **Section II: The Second Moroccan Crisis**

Even though they were not successful in using Morocco to get what they wanted the first time, the German leadership did not give up using Morocco for political advantage. Six years later in 1911, Germany once again used Morocco to try to gain political leverage. Like the First Moroccan Crisis, diplomatically Germany had a leg to stand on. France had once again violated

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

an agreement. But it was the way in which Germany handled the problem that caused the event to become a major diplomatic incident that almost brought Europe to war.

In 1909, France and Germany signed an agreement concerning Morocco. France agreed to safeguard economic equality in Morocco and would not hinder German economic and industrial interests there. Germany agreed to only pursue economic interests in Morocco and would not disturb French political interests there. Furthermore, Germany agreed not to encourage any economic privilege for themselves in Morocco.<sup>122</sup> This gave France complete control over the policing of Morocco.

In April 1911, a rebellion broke out in Morocco against the Sultan, who was trapped in his house in the capital city of Fez. The French Ministry for Foreign Affairs sent troops in to put down the rebellion and occupy the capital. This act threatened the independence of Morocco under the Sultan as preserved by the Algeiras conference in 1906. The German government, arguing it was protecting German commercial interests in Morocco per the Franco-German agreement of 1909, dispatched the German gunboat *Panther* to the Moroccan port of Agadir in July.<sup>123</sup> This set off shock waves in Europe.

Even before the boat was sent, British leadership was anxious about German intentions concerning the French occupation of Fez. The British Ambassador in Vienna wrote to Grey in April stating the “German Chancellor has informed the Austrian Ambassador at Berlin that... should the French government occupy Fez and render position of Sultan one of absolute dependence upon France, basis upon which Treaty of Algeiras was founded would have

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<sup>122</sup> E.W. Edwards, “The Franco-German Agreement on Morocco, 1909” *The English Historical Review* 78, no. 308 (July 1963): 507.

<sup>123</sup> Bridge and Bullen, *The Great Powers and the European States System*, 304.

disappeared and that thereby whole of Moroccan question would be reopened.”<sup>124</sup> Britain knew the French occupation of Fez would cause unrest in Germany. Crowe argued that Germany would try to repeat what the Germany had done with the First Moroccan Crisis. Crowe wrote in the minutes of that letter, “The situation is likely to become serious rapidly. Germany’s game is to repeat what she tried to do before and at the Algeiras conference: Frighten France by threatening armed intervention; urge England to abandon France...”<sup>125</sup> All Crowe and the British Foreign Office could do was to sit in wait to see exactly what Germany did. A note was sent to the French Government warning them of Germany’s possible interference at the urging of Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs Arthur Nicolson, who agreed with Crowe’s opinion of the situation.<sup>126</sup>

On July 1, the *Panther* appeared on the coast of Morocco, the British Foreign Office was informed the next day. The Count de Salis, who was the counselor of the British embassy in Berlin at the time, wrote to Foreign Secretary Grey stating that according to the German Secretary of State “Public opinion [in Germany], which would not allow German Government to stand by while other Powers were dividing up country.”<sup>127</sup> The German Secretary of State, Alfred von Kiderlen-Waechter, was justifying sending the *Panther* to Agadir by claiming public opinion would not allow the German government to sit by idly. Furthermore, the German official stated that the Panther would stay in Agadir until Germany decided what to do. Crowe saw this to be a serious problem as “It was hardly conceivable that Germany would have taken this step without considering the possible contingency of her policy leading to a war in which

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<sup>124</sup> Sir Fairfax Cartwright, no. 214 Letter to Sir Edward Grey, Vienna, April 22<sup>nd</sup> 1911 in *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914. Vol VII: The Agadir Crisis* ed. G. P. Gooch and Harold William Vazeille Temperley, (London: H.M.S.O., 1928) 197.

<sup>125</sup> Sir Eyre Crowe, Minute note on no. 214 Sir F. Cartwright to Sir Edward Grey, London April 24<sup>th</sup> 1911, in *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>126</sup> Sir Arthur Nicolson, Minute note on no. 214 Sir F. Cartwright to Sir Edward Grey, London April 24<sup>th</sup> 1911 in *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>127</sup> Count de Salis, no. 343 Letter to Sir Edward Grey, Berlin, July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1911 in *Ibid.*, 325.

France and England would be ranged against her... The fact that Germany has made the plunge, must give rise to the supposition that she now considers herself in a position to face the danger of an armed Franco-British opposition to her.”<sup>128</sup> Crowe realized that Germany must have weighed the option of war and decided that Germany could successfully wage war against the British and French. Furthermore, the British government firmly believed that Germany was out to disrupt the Anglo-French entente and British leaders were determined to resist.

While Germany had a claim to protecting its interests in Morocco, the German government’s objectives went further. Germany did not expect France to relinquish her protectorate in Morocco, but Germany wanted to be compensated it. Germany had its eyes set on the French Congo, as the German government was looking to create a German *Mittelafrika*. Franco-German negotiations over the Moroccan problem started in June. The German government was trying to extract a bilateral settlement from France and decided to demonstrate German military strength hoping to convince France to settle more quickly.<sup>129</sup> Furthermore, prior to sending the *Panther*, Germany did not believe England would interfere in this Moroccan crisis. The new German Chancellor, Theobald von Bethman-Hollweg<sup>130</sup>, wrote “His Majesty’s impression is that France’s action in Morocco is much disliked in England.”<sup>131</sup> The Kaiser was correct that France’s occupation of Fez was not universally loved in England, but the appearance of the *Panther* had convinced the British that Germany was the bigger threat.

Very quickly the Second Moroccan Crisis had turned from a Franco-German dispute to an Anglo-German dispute. By July 12, the British Foreign Office was on high alert concerning

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<sup>128</sup> Sir Eyre Crowe, minute note on no. 343 Count de Salis to Sir Edward Grey, London, July 3<sup>rd</sup> 1911 in *Ibid*.

<sup>129</sup> Richard Cosgrove, “Sir Eyre Crowe and the English Foreign Office, 1905-1914” (PhD diss., University of California, 1967) 138.

<sup>130</sup> The Dismissal of Bülow and the succession of Bethmann-Hollweg are explain on pg. 63.

<sup>131</sup> Theobald von Bethman-Hollweg, Memorandum, May 23<sup>rd</sup> 1911, in *German Diplomatic Documents 1871-1914. Vol IV: The Descent into the Abyss 1911-1914*, ed. and trans. E.T.S. Dugdale (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc, 1969) 5.

Germans intentions. Crowe led the charge against Germany writing “I have no doubt as to the correctness of the diagnosis made by M. Jules Cambon that the [German] Emperor thought he had ‘captured’ the sympathies of England to a sufficient extent to justify the belief that he could fall upon France alone and neglect any British feeling in the latter’s favor.”<sup>132</sup> Crowe and the British Foreign Office knew that the German government was trying to force France to do what German leaders wanted and assumed the British would not aid the French. Furthermore, Crowe stated “Germany may now be counted upon to continue her well-tried policy of blackmailing. For the present France is the victim...Nothing will stop this process except firm resolve, and the strength, to refuse, and, if necessary, to fight over it. This is the real lesson, not only for France, but also for us.”<sup>133</sup> Crowe was pushing Grey and the foreign office to back France.

The British Foreign Office now began watching the situation even more carefully as war became an increasing possibility. Events were not helped by the Germans either. On July 18, news broke to the British that “parties from German ship at Agadir land increasing numbers up to 40 men and make expeditions into the country around, spreading agitating rumors among the tribes and apparently with the intention of provoking incidents as pretexts for establishing a permanent landing party....”<sup>134</sup> The Kaiser and his advisors were not content to simply have a war ship in the Moroccan port. The Germans intended to stir up more trouble in Morocco to further their claims that France was incapable of keeping order there, which affected German economic interests. By landing a permanent party to secure order in Agadir, the Germans could claim that they could keep order in Morocco where the French could not. Also, troops on the

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<sup>132</sup> Sir Eyre Crowe, Minute note on no. 369, Sir F. Bertie to Sir Edward Grey, July 12<sup>th</sup> 1911, in *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914. Vol VII*, 349.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Sir F. Bertie, no. 392 Letter to Sir Edward Grey, Paris, July 18<sup>th</sup> 1911, in Ibid, 372.

ground in Morocco would make the French even more nervous to settle the problem quickly, giving Germany a bigger chip at the bargaining table.

The British Foreign Office was unnerved by this. Crowe wrote, “We begin to see light. Germany is playing for the highest stakes. If her demands are acceded to either on the Congo or Morocco...it will mean definitely the subjection of France... The defeat of France is a matter vital to this country.”<sup>135</sup> Arthur Nicolson agreed with Crowe’s assessment stating “We have arrived at a critical moment...If Germany saw the slightest weakening on our part her pressure on France would become intolerable to that country who would have to fight or surrender. In the latter case German hegemony would be solidly established, with all its consequences immediate and prospective.”<sup>136</sup> The foreign office was already extremely hostile towards Germany because of the Crowe memorandum coupled with the events surrounding the navy and the Baghdad railway negotiations. British leaders could no longer sit idly by. Sir Edward Grey wrote the Prime Minister suggesting Britain stand by France even if it meant war.<sup>137</sup>

By August, the possibility of war was looming on the horizon. Sir Vincent Corbett, a British Official in Munich wrote to Grey stating “It seems to me to be ominous that both in France and Germany the eventuality of war is beginning to be spoken of as a contingency regrettable but possibly unavoidable.”<sup>138</sup> Unlike 1905, the French were now prepared for war and could stand up to Germany. The British Ambassador in Paris writes, “Now however the French army was in a highly efficient state and the people had confidence in it and then men had confidence in their officers and in themselves.”<sup>139</sup> France was confident that its army could withstand the Germans now with the aid of the British Navy. This was a clear difference from

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<sup>135</sup> Sir Eyre Crowe, minute note on no. 372, Sir F. Bertie to Sir Edward Grey, July 18<sup>th</sup> 1911, in *Ibid*

<sup>136</sup> Sir Arthur Nicolson, *Ibid.*, 373.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> Sir Vincent Corbett, no. 486 Letter to Sir Edward Grey, Munich, Aug 20<sup>th</sup> 1911, in *Ibid.*, 459.

<sup>139</sup> Sir Francis Bertie, no. 488 Letter to Sir Edward Grey, Paris, Aug 21<sup>st</sup> 1911, in *Ibid*, 461.

the First Moroccan Crisis where France wanted to avoid war at all costs. The British government alerted the navy and was considering plans of sending 160,000 troops to help the French if war indeed became inevitable.<sup>140</sup>

Unlike the First Moroccan Crisis, during which threats of war were made to Germany with little or no backing from the British government, the Second Moroccan crisis pushed Europe to the brink of war. The British Foreign Office under Grey had seen the truth in Crowe's 1907 Memorandum over the last four years and knew that only by forcing Germany to back down would Britain be able to avert German hegemony in Europe. The British government was willing to go to war, even over a conflict that did not directly involved British interests. This was a clear change from the First Moroccan Crisis during which Britain had made threats, but had never really intended to go to war. In contrast, the British Foreign Office was prepared to go to war over the Second Moroccan Crisis. Foreign office officials even sent notes to the Prime Minister suggesting such. The Prime Minister was willing to ready the army and navy so that they could be deployed if war did break out.

Germany quickly realized that England and France were willing to go to war over Morocco and began to negotiate with France. Germany did not believe that its fledgling navy was strong enough at the time to beat the British and did not want to condemn its navy to annihilation. Exploiting the crisis for domestic gain, German Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz pushed an increase for the German naval program through the Reichstag.<sup>141</sup> By November, France and Germany had come to a settlement. France received Morocco as a full protectorate and Germany received small slices of the French Congo.

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<sup>140</sup> Bridge and Bullen, *The Great Powers and the European States System*, 305.

<sup>141</sup> Bridge and Bullen, *The Great Powers and the European States System*, 306.



While Germany gained parts of the French Congo, it was in no way the size or shape of what the German government had wanted to receive by their actions in Morocco. The German government succeeded in further alienating Germany in Europe and proved to Britain that Germany could not be trusted. It was a lesson Germany did not learn. The hostility towards Germany over the Second Moroccan crisis caused Great Britain to cease all negotiations with Germany.

## **Chapter IV: The Building of the German Navy**

Many historians have explored the connection between the naval arms race and the growing Anglo-German antagonism prior to the First World War. The antagonism over naval supremacy has been noted as a key reason that Great Britain eventually joined France and Russia in the entente. Eyre Crowe's interpretation on the German navy and its role in the growing Anglo-German tension was that "it is not merely or even principally the question of naval armaments which is the cause of the existing estrangement. The building of the German fleet is but one of the symptoms of the disease. It is the political ambitions of the German government and the nation which are the source of the mischief."<sup>142</sup> Crowe argued that the increasing German navy was a by-product of the actual problems Great Britain was having with Germany; the navy was not the source of the tension between the two countries.

The source of the tension was the German government's goal of hegemony of Europe. The navy was simply a tool Germany was using in the struggle for hegemony. Crowe stated that Germany's foreign policy was built around demands, brute shows of force, and blackmail. The navy was no exception to this policy. The German government knew that the British government could not afford to lose naval supremacy. Therefore, the German government could exploit this weakness to further their foreign policy goals. The negotiations over the navies made the British Foreign Office more wary and ultimately hostile towards the Germany government for the reasons Crowe stated in his 1907 memorandum. Even Richard Cosgrove agrees that the German navy made the British hostile towards Germany.

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<sup>142</sup> Eyre Crowe, no. 404 Memorandum by Mr. Crowe, Oct. 11<sup>th</sup> 1910, in *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914. Vol VI: Anglo-German Tension: armaments and negotiation 1907-1912* ed. G. P. Gooch and Harold William Vazeille Temperley, (London: H.M.S.O., 1928) 534-535.

## Wilhelm II, Tirpitz, and the Beginning of the Naval Arms Race

1897 brought many changes in the German government. Kaiser Wilhelm II brought in new men to assist him in running the country. In the terms of the German navy, no man was more important than Alfred von Tirpitz, the newly appointed State Secretary of the *Reichsmarineamt* (German navy). Wilhelm had already become infatuated with the idea of strong powerful German navy, and Tirpitz was equal to the cause. Soon after taking the position of naval secretary, Tirpitz managed to convince the Reichstag to finance expanding the navy, something his predecessor had never managed to do.<sup>143</sup> Furthermore, Tirpitz saw the need for a strong German navy as he felt that Germany's "most dangerous enemy at the present time is England...The situation against England demands battleships in as great a number as possible."<sup>144</sup> Tirpitz felt that an Anglo-German conflict was unavoidable in the long term and for Germany to win said conflict the German government would need a strong navy.<sup>145</sup>

In April of 1898, the first of Tirpitz's naval bills passed through the Reichstag. It authorized the construction and maintenance of "19 battleships, 8 armoured cruisers, 12 large cruisers and 30 light cruisers" to be constructed by April of 1904.<sup>146</sup> This would bring Germany's navy up to the status of Russia or France, but nowhere close to the size of the British Navy. This did not bother Wilhelm, Tirpitz or State Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Bernhard von Bülow, as they anticipated a future war between England and Russia over the near-east that would greatly weaken the British Empire. This event would allow Germany "to come to the center of the world's stage" both through economic strength and the navy.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Paul Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism: 1860-1914* (Amherst, New York: Humanity Books, 1980) 223-224.

<sup>144</sup> Memo by Admiral Tirpitz in Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Kennedy, *Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism*, 224.

<sup>146</sup> Holger Herwig, *'Luxury Fleet' The Imperial German Navy 1888-1918* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: The Ashfield Press, 1987) 42.

<sup>147</sup> Kennedy, *Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism*, 227.

In spring of 1900 with Britain tied up fighting in South Africa, Tirpitz pushed through a second naval bill practically doubling the size of the German “fleet to 38 battleships, 20 armoured cruisers, and 38 light cruisers.”<sup>148</sup> The bill did not come without complications in Germany. The Reichstag was originally unwilling to pass the bill as they did not have the funding and could not increase taxes without negotiating with individual German states. The Kaiser vowed to dissolve the Reichstag if they did not accept the second naval bill, which would have “produce[d] a return to the constitutional crises” that had been avoided in the mid-1890s. Ultimately, the bill was passed and financed with massive loans.<sup>149</sup> The Boer War provided Germany the opportunity to increase the size of the fleet under the pretense of assisting the British. But Chancellor Bülow was careful to make sure that this did not arouse British suspicions as the German navy was still weak and in its infancy and not ready for war with Britain.<sup>150</sup>

By 1902, Britain had become wary of the growing German challenge. Intense Anglophobia had run rampant in the German press during the Boer war and it caused King Edward VII of Britain to be hostile towards Germany in general. He found his nephew, Kaiser Wilhelm, to be pushy and tactless and nearly canceled a visit of the Prince of Wales to Berlin after being outraged by a speech by Bülow. In retaliation Wilhelm threatened to recall all ambassadors until the British Foreign Secretary, Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice- the Marquis of Lansdowne, intervened and smoothed over the situation.<sup>151</sup> The British press also picked up on the hostility and was heavily anti-German. The majority of the British press “firmly believed that German hatred of Britain was irreversible and that the German fleet was aimed at wresting

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<sup>148</sup> Herwig, *Luxury Fleet*, 42

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Kennedy, *Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism*, 239

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 255.

maritime supremacy from the Royal Navy: all efforts by the government to hold out the olive branch to Berlin were therefore regarded with deep mistrust and heavily criticised.”<sup>152</sup>

In 1904 a war scare broke out between Germany and England due to Britain’s entente with France. The entente between Britain, France and possibly Russia ran counter to the fundamental German assumption that colonial quarrels would keep the three countries separate leaving Germany the ability to play them off each other. With the entente finalized and Italy defecting from the Triple Alliance, Germany was humiliated. In a meager attempt to rescue themselves from the position, Germany approached Britain for compensation over changes in the administration of Egypt. The German government felt that Britain was snubbing them while they bought off other countries. Germany then hinted that if Britain did not acquiesce to German demands they would turn to Russia further angering the British Foreign Office.<sup>153</sup> Russia was in the middle of the Russo-Japanese war and Germany hoped the war would distract Britain from Germany’s growing presence in the North Sea. During the beginning of the war it was likely that Britain would enter on the side of her ally, Japan. But the war was not as big of a distraction as Germany hoped. The British admiralty was concerned that if the Russian navy emerged from the war visibly weakened, the German navy would be much stronger; thus bringing it into direct contention with the British Navy.<sup>154</sup> The German government, however, did not feel it was ready for a war with England. The government was concerned that “the possibility of war with England, in which the attack would come from England” was imminent as the sheer force of the British navy was substantially larger than the still-in-construction German fleet.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.,266-269.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 269-270.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid. 273

The 1904 war scare subsided, but by 1905 a new war scare broke out over the First Moroccan Crisis. The Kaiser's declarations in Tangiers sent off shock waves in Europe, but the fact that he was on a German naval ship suggested that the whole force of the German navy was behind him. The First Moroccan crisis increased the growing antagonism between the British and German navies since it caused hostility and suspicion on both sides. Furthermore, Kaiser Wilhelm stated that he had "no desire for good relationship with England at the price of the development of Germany's navy. If England will hold out her hand in friendship only on condition that we [Germany] limit our Navy, it is boundless impertinence and a gross insult to the German people."<sup>156</sup>

### **Suspicion and Ambitions**

From the moment Eyre Crowe took office in 1906, as Senior Clerk in the Western Department, he had a deep mistrust of Germany and their naval ambitions. Germany claimed many economic and defensive reasons for needing a navy. The British Ambassador in Bavaria wrote to Edward Grey stating, "that in the minds of the great mass of the [German] population [the navy] is not intended primarily for the purpose of aggression against England."<sup>157</sup> Crowe disagreed stating "the argument...that the Germany navy is not meant for anything else than the defense of Germany's coasts and commerce is a rather hollow one."<sup>158</sup> He argued that the size and breadth of the German navy suggested that it was not for commerce and coastline defense alone. He claimed size of the German Navy was dictated by the size of the British Navy. Furthermore, he wrote "information in possession of this [British Foreign] office shows undisputably that the

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<sup>156</sup> Herwig, *Luxury Fleet*, 52.

<sup>157</sup> Fairfax L. Cartwright, Confidential Letter to Sir Edward Grey, Jan 12 1907, in *British Documents Vol VI: Anglo-German Tension* ed. G. P. Gooch and Harold William Vazeille Temperley, 10.

<sup>158</sup> Eyre Crowe, minute note, June 3 1907 in Richard Cosgrove, "Sir Eyre Crowe and the English Foreign Office, 1905-1914" (PhD diss., University of California, 1967) 171.

whole German navy is inspired by the conviction that the object of its existence is ultimately to fight England.”<sup>159</sup> Crowe was convinced that the German government wanted a strong navy for one purpose and one purpose alone: to use it to win a war against Britain. This coupled with Crowe’s memorandum made the British Foreign Office apprehensive of the German navy and unreceptive to any German negotiations over the fleet.

In December 1906, Britain unveiled a new ship named *Dreadnought*. The ship had only taken 14 months to build and was the first major warship propelled by turbines. The *Dreadnought*’s greatest innovation was its armaments. It had “ten 30.5 cm and twenty-two 7.6 cm guns” and the “*Dreadnought*’s arrangement of five twin turrets (one fore, two aft, two side) gave her the firing-power equivalent of two pre-*Dreadnoughts* in broadside firing and three in firing ahead.”<sup>160</sup> This gave the British Navy a superior advantage and some had claimed it was built specifically to deter German naval ambitions. Britain already had one of the new ships completed and they had done it in a quick time frame.<sup>161</sup> It would take Germany some time to make-up the ship building ground they had just lost

Britain waited to see what Germany would do in regards to the new ship. By the fall of 1907 reports were circulating in Britain about a new German naval bill to be pushed through the Reichstag. The British Naval Attaché to the embassy in Bavaria, Philip Dumas, wrote in a report detailing the German Navy for 1907 that “the introduction of the *Dreadnought* type” forced Germany to “delay their building programme by something like a year...”<sup>162</sup> The new ships did not deter Germany from building a strong navy. It simply forced them to restructure German

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<sup>159</sup> Eyre Crowe, Minute note on Confidential Letter from Fairfax L. Cartwright to Sir Edward Grey, Jan 21 1907 in *British Documents Vol VI: Anglo-German Tension* ed. G. P. Gooch and Harold William Vazeille Temperley, 11.

<sup>160</sup> Herwig, *Luxury Fleet*, 56.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>162</sup> Philip Dumas, no 81 Secret letter to Sir F. Lascelles, Feb. 12 1908 in *British Documents Vol VI: Anglo-German Tension* ed. G. P. Gooch and Harold William Vazeille Temperley, 118.

shipbuilding. In fact Germany presented a new bill in 1908 which proposed a 37 million pounds increase to the German debt over a ten year period so that it could increase the size of the German Fleet.<sup>163</sup> The German government had accepted Britain's inadvertent challenge and was willing to put Germany in considerable debt in the attempt to gain mastery of the sea.

Furthermore, Dumas noted "that a considerable party in Germany are in the greatest hopes that by persistent efforts in the increase of their fleet the people of England will tire of the struggle for mastery of the sea and finally leave them in possession."<sup>164</sup> Germany felt that if they continued in the constant path of naval supremacy, England would ultimately grow tired of trying to compete with Germany. Crowe argued that part of this hope was because of the demonstration of British pacifists who "clamour for economics and reductions in naval and military expenditure..."<sup>165</sup> These pacifists had recently been making demonstrations for disarmament in England which was garnering attention from the British press. In addition, Crowe stated "every indication derived from what is being done and advocated in Germany, does now tend to confirm that the whole energy of her government is directed towards preparing for the coming struggle with England."<sup>166</sup>

Moreover, Crowe stated that "The greater our efforts in the direction of disarmament, the more persistent will be Germany's endeavour to overtake us."<sup>167</sup> Crowe was convinced that Germany wanted dominance of the seas so that they could win a war against Great Britain, and that they were willing to go to any lengths in the hopes that England would economically or mentally tire of the race. Germany, to Crowe, was going to win the naval battle no matter what

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Notes by Eyre Crowe, no 81 Secret letter from Captain Philip Dumas to Sir F. Lascelles, Mar 1 1908 in Ibid., 132.

<sup>166</sup> Eyre Crowe, minutes notes on Letter from F. Cartwright, Jan 14 1908 in Ibid., 108.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.



the costs, because hegemony of Europe depended on Germany being able to overtake the British navy. Crowe was determined that Great Britain could not allow them that chance. The German Ambassador in London, Count Metternich, tried to make it clear in a letter to Chancellor Bülow that England would defend its naval supremacy at all costs. He wrote “the German naval programme has awakened the vigilance of the British in the highest degree, and that England intends to maintain her supremacy at sea without question.”<sup>168</sup>

The construction of new German dreadnoughts and the increasing size of the German navy made the British even more convinced that war was likely to come with Germany. The questions were only how and when that war would come. The belief was generally held during this time, that before the hostilities were to break out that there would be some kind of general warning at least three days to three months prior. Colonel Trench at the British embassy in Berlin disagreed. Trench claimed that when Germany thought her navy had a reasonable chance of winning against the British fleet, that Germany would make the first strike without any warning. Crowe was quick to agree with Trench’s assessment that a German surprise attack was likely.<sup>169</sup>

### **Attempting to Reach an Accord**

In the fall 1908, the Britain and Germany governments made an attempt to come to some sort of naval understanding. The British Foreign Office, being pushed by King Edward VII, made a considerable effort to obtain a joint agreement with Germany to limit naval armaments. The German government was open to the idea, but Kaiser Wilhelm was not. The German Ambassador in London, Count Paul von Metternich, recounted a meeting he had with Foreign

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<sup>168</sup> Count von Metternich, Letter to Chancellor Prince von Bülow, Feb 3 1908 in *German Diplomatic Documents 1871-1914. Vol III: The Growing Antagonism: 1898-1910*, ed and trans. E.T.S. Dugdale (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc, 1969) 272.

<sup>169</sup> Colonel F. Trench, no. 94 Secret Letter to Sir Frank Lascelles, Apr 27 1908, in *Ibid.*, 147.

Secretary Grey and Lord George in a letter to Chancellor Bülow; the letter is peppered with notes from the Kaiser criticizing Britain. Metternich wrote that both Ministers agreed that “Expenditure on the British navy had risen as a result of the German programme, and in proportion to the increased speed of construction...”<sup>170</sup> In the marginal notes Wilhelm wrote “False! as a result of British greed for Power and their seeing bogies.”<sup>171</sup> Wilhelm was convinced that his uncle and the British government were out to cripple Germany. British leaders were hoping to curtail the size of the German navy, as the British government was suspicious of German intent with the navy. The Kaiser refused to discuss the idea of any naval agreement with Britain. Wilhelm stated “We must not talk of that at all! We will never submit to dictation as to how our armaments are to be arranged.”<sup>172</sup> Chancellor Bülow eventually agreed arguing “Not till there was less tension between Germany and England was it worth while discussing the question or perhaps possible to decide whether the two countries could agree about their ship-building, thus doing away with their fears of each other.”<sup>173</sup>

In spring of 1909, Bülow and the German government tried once more to come to a diplomatic agreement with Britain. The Kaiser had become much more disposed to proposals for a naval agreement as well. Britain, however, had become more suspicious of Germany’s intentions. The new agreement Germany had sent to Britain was highly skewed in their favor and would significantly limit Britain’s ability to keep Germany in check. The agreement allowed Germany to continue expanding the size of its navy and forced Britain into a state of “benevolent neutrality,” in the case that Germany went to war with a neighboring country. Crowe argued “The German government’s desire for an “understanding” with England is of old standing...The

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<sup>170</sup> Count von Metternich, Letter to Chancellor Prince von Bülow, July 16<sup>th</sup> 1908 in *German Diplomatic Documents 1871-1914. Vol III: The Growing Antagonism: 1898-1910*, 285.

<sup>171</sup> Kaiser Wilhelm II, notes on Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid 286.

<sup>173</sup> Chancellor Prince von Bülow, Letter to Count von Metternich, Sept 22 1908, in Ibid., 298.

end and object of German foreign policy is to frustrate any combination between other Great Powers in which Germany is not the predominant partner.”<sup>174</sup> Crowe believed that Germany wanted an agreement with Britain as a way to drive a wedge between the British-French entente. Germany did not want Britain or France to be in any alliance, either with each other or with another great power because the combined might of those two countries would put Germany at a disadvantage.

Furthermore, British naval supremacy was the only thing keeping Germany from controlling the European continent. The new British Ambassador in Berlin, Sir Edward Goschen, agreed stating “The naval supremacy of Great Britain is...the only obstacle to the German domination of Europe, and it is evident that an arrangement which would remove that obstacle would be extremely acceptable to the Imperial Government.”<sup>175</sup> The newly proposed agreement by Germany would do just that. It would allow Germany to continue to expand its navy while limiting the chances they would have to go up against the British navy. Edward Grey also saw the German proposal as a bad idea arguing the proposals are “an invitation to help Germany to make a European combination which could be directed against us when it suited her so to us it.”<sup>176</sup> The proposals were summarily dismissed.

In June 1909, Chancellor Bülow resigned having lost popularity with the Reichstag and having failed to gain support for more funding of the navy. He was replaced with the State Secretary of the Interior, Theobald Bethmann-Hollweg. Bethmann-Hollweg, like his predecessor, wanted a détente with England. He, however, came into conflict with Admiral Tirpitz who was unwilling to curtail the construction of the German navy. In the fall of 1910, Britain sent its own

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<sup>174</sup> Eyre Crowe, minute note on no. 174 Letter from Sir E. Goschen to Sir Edward Grey, Apr 19 1909, in *British Documents Vol VI: Anglo-German Tension* ed. G. P. Gooch and Harold William Vazeille Temperley, 266.

<sup>175</sup> Sir E. Goschen, no 174 Letter to Sir Edward Grey, Apr 16 1909, in *Ibid.*, 265.

<sup>176</sup> Sir Edward Grey, minute note on *Ibid.*, 266.

proposals for an Anglo-German naval agreement. While both the Liberal government in London and the imperial government in Berlin favored an agreement, the underlying suspicion and hostility caused the proposals to fall flat. Bethmann-Hollweg claimed that attitude of the British was causing the rift between the two countries. He wrote “this policy is above all responsible for the anxiety... regarding Germany’s naval policy. The indifference with which England regards the rise of the American navy is a proof that a strong fleet in the hands of a *friendly* power is not necessarily a subject of anxiety for England.”<sup>177</sup> Bethmann-Hollweg argued that if Germany were a friendly power, as the British government was claiming, why then was there growing tension between Britain and Germany over the size of the Germany navy. There was no tension between Great Britain and the United States even though the American navy was expanding at a similar rate to Germany’s navy. Therefore, Bethmann-Hollweg argued Great Britain must see Germany as an antagonist and that attitude is causing the rift between the two countries.

When Germany countered the new British proposals with ones of their own, the British government became even more suspicious of German motivations. Crowe argued “the German gov[ernmen]t have merely held out the bait of their possibly consenting to such agreement [a limitation of naval armaments], for the purpose of getting their political agreement... They are none of them to be believed on their word.”<sup>178</sup> Crowe felt the German government was playing a game with Britain to both divide Britain from the entente, and to come to an agreement to curb naval spending that would allow Germany’s navy to become as large as the British navy. British Ambassador Goschen agreed stating Germany “want[s] the Hegemony of Europe and to neutralize the only thing which has prevented them from getting it, viz., England’s naval

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<sup>177</sup> Theobald Bethmann-Hollweg, Memorandum to Sir Edward Goschen, Oct 13 1910 in *German Diplomatic Documents 1871-1914. Vol III: The Growing Antagonism: 1898-1910*, 419.

<sup>178</sup> Eyre Crowe, minute note on no 403, Letter from Sir Edward Goschen, Oct 24 1910, in *British Documents Vol VI: Anglo-German Tension* ed. G. P. Gooch and Harold William Vazeille Temperley, 533,

strength.”<sup>179</sup> Goschen then produces a balance sheet with the net gains and losses from the current proposed agreements and notes that Germany gains significantly from the new proposals. He stated “the balance would be so heavy on the German side that I cannot see how it would remove ‘that atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion which has so long hung over the two countries.’”<sup>180</sup> British officials in the foreign office were unreceptive towards any understanding over the British and Germany navies. The foreign office was suspicious of Germany’s motivations in regards to hegemony in Europe, which Great Britain could not allow.

By 1911 any chance of a naval arms agreement between Great Britain and Germany was gone. The Second Moroccan crisis broke out and the dispatching of the German gunboat *Panther* to the port of Agadir in July destroyed any lasting shreds of trust the British government had for German intentions.<sup>181</sup> The Second Moroccan crisis proved to Britain that the intention of Germany in securing a naval agreement with England was “to allow Germany to deal with the other Powers, such as France and Russia, without any fear of British intervention.”<sup>182</sup> In the proposed agreements by Germany in regards to the British navy, one of the key pieces had been that Britain and Germany would agree to “benevolent neutrality,” in the case that either went to war with a neighboring country. The Agadir crisis proved what the British Foreign Office had suspected all along: Germany was trying to force Britain to the sidelines while Germany took control of Europe by force. With the British army at bay, the combined force of the German army and navy could blackmail a weakened France and Russia into giving up control of whatever Germany wanted. Crowe stated “The German government now at last confess what we suspected from the outset to be the case...it is clear they never did believe that they could put

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<sup>179</sup> Sir Edward Goschen, no. 405 Private Letter to Sir Arthur Nicolson, Oct 22 1910, in *Ibid.*, 536.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 537.

<sup>181</sup> Bridge and Bullen, *The Great Powers and the European States System*, 304.

<sup>182</sup> Eyre Crowe, Minute note on no. 462 Letter from Sir E. Goschen to Sir Edward Grey, May 9 1911, in *British Documents Vol VI: Anglo-German Tension* ed. G. P. Gooch and Harold William Vazeille Temperley, 622.

forward such proposals.”<sup>183</sup> Germany had never had any intention of reducing their naval armaments according to Crowe; it was a ruse to get Great Britain to agree to a political agreement first with the intention of backing out when the naval agreements were to come up afterwards.

Furthermore, Crowe declared that “Now again, as on former occasions, the German gov[ernmen]t after a period of much unfriendliness on their part, come to woo us with assurances that if we will only do what they wish, it will lead to peace, the end of all friction and the definite establishment of Anglo-German friendship.”<sup>184</sup> This was Germany’s modus operandi according to Crowe. The German government encourages Britain to do something with the promise of peace. It was a form of blackmail with peace being the prize. Sir Arthur Nicolson agreed with Crowe stating, “Sir Eyre Crowe’s minute is an admirable summary of what has passed... We have hitherto resisted, and rightly resisted, going further with Germany as regards to an understanding than we have done with France and Russia. I trust that we shall firmly maintain this attitude.”<sup>185</sup> Nicolson was affirming Crowe’s belief and stressing to the British Foreign Office that the only way to deal with Germany was to resist their traps at all costs. Even Edward Grey reluctantly agreed stating “It would be well to have the papers put together, which... will bring out the points of Sir Eyre Crowe’s minute.”<sup>186</sup> Grey saw the wisdom and logic in Crowe’s arguments against Germany, although it was much harder to convince the British government of that. Grey states further that the Second Moroccan crisis as well as Crowe’s opinions and

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 623.

<sup>185</sup> Sir Arthur Nicolson in Ibid., 623.

<sup>186</sup> Sir Edward Grey in Ibid., 623.

Ambassador Goschen's letter "makes it easier for us to avoid being entangled in separate political negotiations with Germany to which other Powers are not parties."<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

## **Chapter V: Baghdad Railway and the Young Turk Revolution**

Much like the naval agreements, the Baghdad Railway and the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 caused increased hostility between Great Britain and Germany. Similarly, they were symptoms of the problems between the British and German governments, not the cause of the growing antagonism. Unlike the naval agreements, historians have mostly overlooked the railway and the revolution as a significant event leading up to World War I. But the diplomatic negotiation and tensions between Great Britain and Germany regarding the railroad and the revolution feed into the deeper problems the two countries were facing. Historian Frederic C. Howe concurs stating “The Baghdad Railway incident figures more prominently in the Present European War [WWI] than is generally admitted.”<sup>188</sup> It was in Britain’s best interest to come to terms with Germany over the railway, instead they thwarted the Baghdad railway at every turn. The hostile and suspicious postures of the two governments continued taking them on a collision course to war and every disagreement brought all of Europe closer to war.

Crowe did not have a large role in the Baghdad railway negotiations, as the negotiations fell under a different department within the foreign office. The Baghdad railway, however, shows how hostile the British government was towards Germany because of Crowe’s memorandum. The foreign office thwarted German advances on the railway at every turn, while claiming the German government was being obstinate in negotiations. Furthermore, Crowe was “opposed [to] all plans for an agreement on the Baghdad railway or the Persian railway concessions.”<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Frederic C. Howe, *Why War* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1916) 214.

<sup>189</sup> Zara Steiner, “Grey, Hardinge and the Foreign Office, 1906-1910” *The Historical Journal* 10 no. 3 (1967): 434.





(Figure 1<sup>190</sup>)

<sup>190</sup> Thomas Leisten, *Excavation of Samarra I, Architecture, Final Report Of the First Campaign 1910 – 1912* (Mainz: von Zabern, 2003)

## The Beginnings of the Railroad

Germany was a late entry to the race for colonies. Former Chancellor Otto von Bismarck had advised Kaiser Wilhelm I to leave the Near East alone as Germany had no real interests there. When Wilhelm II took the throne and relieved Bismarck of the Chancellorship, Germany's policy in the Near East changed significantly. Wilhelm II was adamant about finding Germany's "place in the sun" and he felt the only way to do that was if Germany was able to compete with the other Great Powers on their terms. This meant increasing the size of the German navy, but more importantly it meant that Germany needed spheres of influence in Europe and colonies abroad.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century Turkey was a crumbling nation. It was being called the "sick man of Europe" by the Great Powers and efforts were being made to slowly dismantle the Ottoman Empire. Turkey's ailing status led to significant economic and financial exploitation of Turkey through the "control of the Ottoman Public Debt Administration," which was almost entirely made up of foreigners.<sup>191</sup> In 1888, the German Deutsche Bank bought the right to an existing piece of railroad in Turkey (Figure 1) and to build and operate a new stretch of railway from Ismid (*Izmit*) to Angora (*Ankara*). The Bank set up the Anatolian Railroad Company to produce and operate the track. This marked the entry of German capital and interests in Turkey and would lay the foundation for the eventual Baghdad railway.<sup>192</sup>

The speed and thoroughness at which the Germans worked on the project won over support for them in Constantinople with many of the interest groups that had originally been suspicious of German motivations. In two years the new stretch of railway had almost been completed and the Turkish Sultan was hoping to extend the railway to the Persian Gulf. The

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<sup>191</sup> Edward Mead Earle, *Turkey, The Great Powers and The Baghdad Railway: a Study in Imperialism* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935) 11.

<sup>192</sup> John B. Wolf, *The Diplomatic History of the Bagdad Railroad* (New York: Octagon Books, 1973) 14.

French were clamoring to get the contract for the stretch of railroad from Angora to Baghdad, but impressed with the German's work the Sultan encouraged the German investors to continue.<sup>193</sup>

The German investors were hesitant in agreeing as there had not been a preliminary study detailing the technical difficulties of the route or the cost-benefit of doing so. The Sultan recognized the concerns as valid and not only agreed that the Germans should wait for the study but volunteered to finance it. A few days later the Sultan had his ambassador in Berlin requested support for the Angora-Baghdad line from the Kaiser.<sup>194</sup> When the study was completed it was determined that both the terrain and route would be rather difficult to build on and the chance of the monetary gain was small. The Deutsche Bank was hesitant to agree to the project, especially as German finances were feeling the strain of a world banking crisis of the early 1890s. The German Foreign Office, however, felt differently. The German government could not give up the growing prestige and influence it was gaining in Turkey. The German government feared if they turned down the Baghdad section of the railway it would surely go to France and influence would go with it. Furthermore, when the Turks had gone to the Germans about extending the line to Baghdad, the French, British, and Belgians all began scrambling to get the railways contract and the prestige and privileges that went with it. The German government had to use every tool it had in Turkish diplomacy or it would lose its claim. The German government came up with an alternate solution for problems with the terrain and financing and was finally granted the extension of the line in 1893.<sup>195</sup>

The course of events, however, caused friction between England and Germany. The proposed changes to the railway from Angora to Baghdad cut through an area where two British

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 16-17.

railroads already operate. The area was already considered British territory for expansion and the newly proposed German lines would curtail the British railways. The British were indignant at the idea and they sent their ambassador to the Sultan demanding that he reconsider and hinting that if the British demands “were not respected there might be a naval demonstration to give it more force.”<sup>196</sup> This caused outrage in Berlin and the German Secretary of Foreign Affairs complained to the British ambassador that England was making the railroad a matter of political status rather than an economic competition. Moreover, as the railroad was a special project to the Kaiser, the British proceedings were a personal insult to him. The British ultimately backed down after the Sultan granted a concession to the Anatolian Railroad Company to build two other lines. This gave Germany the dominant position in terms of railroad development in Turkey. The first of these two additional lines, from Eskisehr to Konia (*Konya*), was completed in 1896. Due to the world market and the political difficulties in Turkey, however, Germany waited to continue the line to Baghdad.<sup>197</sup>

By the end of 1898 the Deutsche Bank wanted to continue the line but was having difficulties with funding. The bank also realized there would be serious political complications in completing the line to Baghdad. The new line would be the quickest route to India, and the British were likely to pose serious problems if they had no stake in the railroad. Furthermore, the French and Russians were likely to have serious qualms as well. The German bank approached the British and French bankers about possible agreements. The British turned them down based on prior experience, but the French were willing to compromise. The French banks agreed to help fund the railroad as long as they got equal percentage in stock of the railway with Germany.

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 17-18.

Then in November of 1899, Deutsche Bank went to the Sultan to ask for a concession to extend the Konia line to Baghdad rather than the Angora line, because it would be easier to construction and less likely to upset the Russians. The Russian's, however, voiced objections to the project. The Russian government demanded exclusive rights to build railroads on the Black Sea basin and would only agree to drop the demand if Turkey would revoke the German allowance to build a railway. After much negotiation, Turkey finally agreed to give Russia exclusive rights to the Black Sea basin but managed to insert a clause that allowed the Ottoman government to build in that region without foreign capital.<sup>198</sup>

The only possible problem left was Great Britain. Initially the British Foreign Office told Germany that it was not unfriendly to the railroad but that it was up to British banks and industry if they wanted to aid in the project. But nine months later, in 1902, as final negotiations were going with the French and German; the British had yet to join the project. Finally the Director of the Deutsche Bank managed to find two officials to make a proposition to the British Foreign office to join the building of the railroad.<sup>199</sup> British public opinion was against the cause, however. The British press claimed the Baghdad railway was just a “scheme to dupe English capital and entangle England with Russia. The benefits of the scheme would surely go to Germany, while England would pay the bill by loss in prestige...”<sup>200</sup> In addition, if the Baghdad railway extended to Basra it would have destroyed British trade between India and the Suez Canal.<sup>201</sup> Lord Lansdowne, the Secretary for Foreign affairs at the time, argued it would be better for England to be involved with the project since then Britain would have proper share of control

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 19-28.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 39-40.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 42-43

<sup>201</sup> Morris Jastrow Jr., *The War and the Baghdad Railway* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1917), 100

over the railway. Under the pressure from public opinion, the British government ultimately backed out of negotiations.<sup>202</sup>

Furthermore, the British withdrawal led to increased pressure on the French to back out of the railway as well. The Russians were pressuring their alliance partners to back out of the deal with Germany. Although the French Ambassador argued that French interests in Turkey were much different from Russian interests and the alliance “does not compel us to abandon them [French interests].”<sup>203</sup> Eventually, the French government backed out of the Baghdad railway arguing the financial agreement was unfavorable to the French, although the French financiers protested the move. The German government was adamant that the Russian’s had forced the French to back out. So Germany was indignant when the Russian government once again asked Turkey for compensation for the Baghdad railway. The Russian government did not push the issue and Germany began building the railroad without international cooperation.<sup>204</sup>

### **Anglo-German Hostility over the Railroad**

In 1903, the German government along with the Deutsche Bank pushed forward on the railroads without the cooperation of Britain, France, or Russia. But Germany soon ran into problems with funding, and the only way to continue building the railroad was to get monetary aid from other sources. The German government quickly learned that any solution to the problem with the Baghdad railway was going to have to involve an international political solution. Germany managed to free up some of the money by a tariff reform in Turkey and by negotiating with French financiers.

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<sup>202</sup> Wolf, *The Diplomatic History of the Bagdad Railroad*, 43-45.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 45-47.

In 1907 demand for stock in the railway suggested to the Germans that some foreign power was trying to buy controlling interest in the company. Germany, already highly suspicious of England, pointed the finger at British banker Sir Ernest Cassell. Germany devised a plan to assure control over the railway by asking the Sultan for concession to irrigate the Konia region which would allow the railway company to double its stock. The British ambassador in Turkey protested but the railroad company was given the rights in 1907. It was at this point where the political negotiations and hostility between Great Britain and Germany over the railway became evident. Once again British and German suspicion of each other's motives made it clear that war between them was a looming possibility.

The Germans had already gone out on a limb twice in the attempt to get the British involved with the railway and twice the British government had turned them down. The Anatolian railway company had British, as well as French, financiers but there was no government agreement with Germany over control or stock of the railway. At the tail end of 1907, Sir Edward Grey wrote a memorandum, included are discussions of the Baghdad Railway where the current Foreign Secretary did not recognize his predecessor's failures with the railway. Grey wrote the British government "feel[s], however, that if other nations are to take part in the enterprise the German Gov[ernmen]t should make proposals to other Powers with whom she wishes to cooperate including ourselves."<sup>205</sup> Furthermore, Grey stated "Great Britain holds a preponderant position in the Persian Gulf... and for these reasons H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] could not welcome a Railway to the Persian Gulf if they were excluded from a fair share in its permanent control."<sup>206</sup> Grey knew that Britain's position in India was a chief priority and the

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<sup>205</sup> Sir Edward Grey, no 59 Memorandum, Nov 1907 in *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914. Vol VI: Anglo-German Tension: armaments and negotiation 1907-1912* ed. G. P. Gooch and Harold William Vazeille Temperley, (London: H.M.S.O., 1928) 91.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

Baghdad railway could be used to threaten it. If Britain could not get some control over the line, Germany and the railway could cause serious problems. The fear of German intervention in India was more hypothetical than based on fact. The Kaiser had no intention of sending troops to India if war with England broke out.<sup>207</sup>

Deep-seated hostility towards Germany because of Crowe's memorandum and the First Moroccan Crisis led Grey to believe that the German government should come to Britain if Germany wanted British help with the railway. Grey ignores the fact that the German government had twice previously attempted to do so. Furthermore, the state of relations between Great Britain and Germany due to the First Moroccan Crisis and the naval tensions made it unlikely that Germany was going to reach out to England at the time.

In summer of 1908, the question of the Baghdad railways came up in a meeting between the Kaiser and King Edward. Grey and the Foreign Office had instructed the king that Britain could not discuss the question of the Railway alone with Germany, but that France and Russia must be involved. The British Foreign Office could not afford to let Germany use the Baghdad Railroad to drive a wedge in the entente between England and France. Germany had already attempted to do so through other various means, and the British were suspicious they would try to do so again. The Kaiser originally agreed to a four powers conference to discuss the railway.<sup>208</sup> Nevertheless, when the Kaiser returned home, the German government would not allow discussion of a four power conference about the railway. The German Government had tried once already to get Britain, France and Russia to assist in the Railway with no success. Furthermore, the German government believed that the conference would be a complete failure

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<sup>207</sup> Stuart Cohen, "Mesopotamia in British Strategy, 1903-1914" *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 9 no. 2 (Apr. 1978): 176.

<sup>208</sup> no 367, Memorandum respecting the Baghdad Railway, July 3 1908 in *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914. Vol VI: Anglo-German Tension*, 367.



and only cause more friction between the four countries. The German government feared that Germany would be in the minority against the three other powers.<sup>209</sup>

Just as the discussions between Britain and Germany about the Baghdad railway ended, revolution occurred in Turkey. The Young Turks were a group of reformers, modernist, and liberal-minded thinkers in Turkey that formed a coalition opposing the government. In July of 1908, part of the Turkish army revolted. The Sultan tried to suppress the movement, but it backfired and rebellion broke out. The revolution eventually subsided with the ousting of the current Sultan in favor of a new Sultan, Mehmed. It also brought a parliamentary government to Turkey. The revolution caused considerable problems for Germany. The Young Turks felt the German government had propped up the government of the former sultan and helped suppress their cause. Furthermore, they felt the Kaiser was an autocrat that was stifling democratic reform in Germany. To make matters worse, Germany's closest ally, Austria caused further problems when Austria annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina while the revolution was going on. All of this caused Germany's prestige in Istanbul to drop considerably and continuing the railroad was highly unlikely.<sup>210</sup>

The new government in Turkey was decidedly pro-British since the Young Turks believed England was the bastion of democracy in Europe. The British had hoped that the new government "would solve the problem of the Baghdad railway for them" and prevent the Germans from completing the railway.<sup>211</sup> Initially, the new Turkish government wanted to do just that by repealing the German company's contract for the railway. The government, however,

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<sup>209</sup> Sir Edward Grey, no 267 Letter to Count d Salis, July 13<sup>th</sup> 1908 in *Ibid.*, 368.

<sup>210</sup> Earle, *The Baghdad Railway*, 218-219.

<sup>211</sup> D. W. Sweet, "Great Britain and Germany, 1905-1914" In *British Foreign Policy Under Sir Edward Grey*, ed. F.H. Hinsley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) 227.

decided it would look bad if it did remain “true to the obligations of its predecessor...”<sup>212</sup> The Turkish government did turn to Britain for other things. In 1909, the Ottoman navy was put under the command and training of a British admiral, and the British were given considerable power over the Turkish ships and naval yards.<sup>213</sup>

Germany knew, with the new government in Turkey, it was going to be complicated to complete the Baghdad Railway without getting British support in the future. The British were trying to gain concessions from Turkey to build their own railway lines, but the Turkish government was uneasy to grant them as they had already given the area to Germany. The German Foreign Minister in Turkey suggested that the best thing would be to allow the British “to participate in the Persian Gulf-Baghdad section in equal shares with the Germans and eventually the French...”<sup>214</sup> But the growing hostility over the naval arms race in 1908-1909 made it unlikely that Germany and Great Britain would be able to work something out. Additionally, Britain was blocking the progress of the railway line in the hopes of convincing Turkey to lower British customs dues.<sup>215</sup>

Then in 1909, Grey went to the German Ambassador Metternich suggesting Britain would like to arrive at an understanding with Germany over the Railway. Metternich noted that Grey did not go into details about what the basis for the understanding would be. Metternich suggested to Grey that “an understanding about the Baghdad Railway should not be attempted unless preceded by a general political, plus a naval understanding.”<sup>216</sup> The German government knew that England could not step aside and let Germany build the Baghdad railway without

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<sup>212</sup> Earle, *The Baghdad Railway*, 220.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Baron von Marschall, Letter to the German Foreign Office, Oct 25 1909 in *German Diplomatic Documents 1871-1914. Vol III: The Growing Antagonism: 1898-1910*, ed and trans. E.T.S. Dugdale (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc, 1969) 366.

<sup>215</sup> Marian Kent, “Constantinople and Asiatic Turkey, 1905-1914” In *British Foreign Policy Under Sir Edward Grey*, ed. F.H. Hinsley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) 152.

<sup>216</sup> Count von Metternich, Letter to Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, Oct 28 1909 in Ibid., 369.

some control or assurance that it would not be used against England interests in India. Therefore, Bethmann-Hollweg was confident he could use it as a bargaining chip to get the Anglo-German agreement he wanted with England over the navy and the Entente.

The two governments waited while British and German bankers attempted to come to some sort of agreement in relation to the commercial interests of the two countries in relation to the railway; as no political agreement could come until a commercial agreement had been made.<sup>217</sup> But by January of 1910, the British were concerned they had gotten themselves in over their heads with the Germans. The negotiations between the Director of the Deutsche Bank, A. von Gwinner, and the British Financier Sir Ernest Cassell were hung up on kilometric guarantees and construction costs. Grey called it being “dragged into the vortex,” and he found it increasingly hard to defend the British governments actions either in Parliament or in the Press.<sup>218</sup>

Furthermore, naval negotiations, which had been on going since 1908, were once again breaking down between Germany and Great Britain, making it harder to come to an agreement about the railway. In February of 1910, Grey tried to reverse the process by attempting to make the Baghdad “railway question independent of the naval negotiations.”<sup>219</sup> He hoped that an agreement over the railway could make it easier for naval and political agreements. But the railway negotiations were at an impasse; Britain wanted the Persian Gulf section of the railroad but was unwilling to give Germany adequate compensation for it. German leaders believed with German public opinion already being hostile towards England that they could not give up such an important section to British control without significant compensation.<sup>220</sup> England, however,

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<sup>217</sup> Sir E Goschen, no 308 Letter to Sir Charles Hardinge, Dec 15 1909 in *British Documents Vol VI: Anglo-German Tension* ed. G. P. Gooch and Harold William Vazeille Temperley, 408-409.

<sup>218</sup> Sir Edward Grey, no. 318 Memorandum, Jan 10 1910, in *Ibid.*, 422.

<sup>219</sup> Count von Metternich, Letter to Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, Feb 10 1910 in *German Diplomatic Documents 1871-1914. Vol III: The Growing Antagonism* ed. E.T.S. Dugdale, 372.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 372-374.

felt that Germany was simply unwilling to grant them the Persian Gulf section of the line, even thought they had offered an “agreement in regard to Persia.”<sup>221</sup> In addition, British officials were once again suspicious of Germany’s motives claiming “we must now abandon the idea of coming to terms with Germany over the Baghdad line, although their overtures will probably be renewed...”<sup>222</sup> Crowe took an even harder stance. He argued the German government had no intention of giving Great Britain any rights to the Baghdad line, but that this was a clever ruse designed to “deliberately opened up the false prospect of an agreement respecting limitations of armaments, in order to entangle H[is] M[ajesty’s] G[overnment] once more in the meshes of an Anglo-German agreement of the well-known type, under which it is the part of Great Britain to pay compensation to Germany.”<sup>223</sup>

Crowe was arguing what he had argued many times before, that Germany was not trying to come to any real agreement with Great Britain. Germany was after an agreement that would drive Great Britain away from the Entente and keep England out of war between Germany and either France or Russia. The railway was just another means to an end to the same goal that Germany had been trying to achieve since 1904. Furthermore, Crowe argued “It is difficult to understand how Great Britain could entertain such a scheme...If H[is] M[ajesty’s] G[overnment] were minded to abandon France to Germany, they would at least demand an enormous price. But to ask us for such abandonment of France, and make, in addition, onerous conditions about the Baghdad railway and Persia, is a plan to characterize with is really difficult to find the appropriate adjectives.”<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Sir Edward Goschen, no. 342 Letter in *British Documents Vol VI: Anglo-German Tension* ed. G. P. Gooch and Harold William Vazeille Temperley, 450.

<sup>222</sup> L.M, minute note on Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Sir Eyre Crowe, minute note on no. 343 Sir E. Goschen to Sir Edward Grey, Apr 10 1910, in Ibid., 453.

<sup>224</sup> Sir Eyre Crowe, Minute note on. 344 Sir E. Goschen to Sir Edward Grey, April 11 1914, in Ibid., 460.

Negotiations continued into the summer and fall of 1910, but as the naval negotiations were more or less at a standstill so were negotiations over the railway. Britain's deep hostility and mistrust of the Germans did not allow them to seriously consider any of the proposals Germany sent over. Germany, on the other hand, was seriously considering the proposals Britain sent over. Germany, however, felt it was in a position of power over Great Britain with the railway because it came so close to British interests in India. The German government was overconfident that they could use the railway as a bargaining tool to get major concessions from Great Britain in terms of naval agreements and to force a split in the triple entente. The two sides were unwilling to waver on their perspective platforms, making it obvious that neither side was really committed to coming to arrangement.

As negotiations stalled over the Baghdad railway, Britain attempted to keep a hold of their interests in the Persian Gulf went to the Sultan to gain concessions to build a railway in the Tigris valley. This railroad would almost overlap the Baghdad railway and would be a direct competitor. The German government was not happy with Britain encroaching on what they believed to be rightfully theirs. Germany became increasingly hostile to the British arguing German "proposals had not only been rejected by His Majesty's Government, but the latter had also tried to put obstacles in the way of the German project."<sup>225</sup> The German government believed that Britain was trying to hinder German progress in any way possible, whether with the German navy or the Baghdad railroad. The German Government was quick to note that the British had no hostility towards the Baghdad railway scheme the French were proposing.<sup>226</sup>

Britain, however, felt that they had done everything possible to come to an agreement with Germany. They had, more than three times, attempted to come to an agreement with

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<sup>225</sup> No 414 Memorandum in *Ibid.*, 549.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, 549-550.

Germany only to be rebuffed at every turn and have exorbitant demands placed on Britain. The British government argued “It may be that the construction of the railway can be completed...but it is not for his Majesty’s Government actively to co-operate to this end at the expense of British commerce.”<sup>227</sup> The British government was resigned that “Such then are the causes which have rendered all negotiation for British participation in the Baghdad railway ineffective...”<sup>228</sup>

But it was Britain’s hostility towards Germany that had rendered the negotiations ineffective. The British government’s suspicion, whether it was founded or not, had not allowed the government to make any concessions on the railway. Britain was suspicious of Germany’s every move and was unwilling to accept that they were being unfair to Germany. Britain’s influence in India trumped every other country’s rights in the Middle East, and Britain was hostile to any other countries influence in the area. The British government had been hostile to the Baghdad railway from the beginning and once the Young Turk revolution cemented British power in Turkey, all negotiations over the Baghdad railway were a farce. The British government did not want part of the railway as much as they wanted to make sure the railway didn’t happen so that it could not be used against British interests in India. Once Britain had power in Turkey, the primary goal of the British government was to impede the construction of the Baghdad railway.

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<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 552.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 553.

## **Chapter VI: Hostility Boils Over**

From 1911 to June of 1914, Anglo-German relations were at an impasse. Neither side trusted the other enough for any real settlement to be found between them, even though negotiations over the navy and the Baghdad railway continued right up until July of 1914. Eyre Crowe's memorandum and the events afterwards had made the British leaders hostile to all things German. The Second Moroccan Crisis proved to Britain leaders that Germany could not be trusted. The British believed that German leaders were after one thing: European hegemony. Additionally, the British government thought that German leaders would do anything in their power to pull Great Britain away from the Triple Entente. For their part, the German government felt that Britain was trying to hinder German progress in any way possible. The increasing hostility between the two countries made it unlikely that anything would be settled between them.

But during the three years between the Second Moroccan Crisis and the outbreak of the First World War, Europe's eyes shifted to the Balkans. In 1912, the First Balkan War broke out with the countries of Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece and Montenegro declaring war on the declining Ottoman Empire. The crisis was made worse by the possibility of Austria-Hungary and Russia joining into the war in the hopes of gaining territory and influence in the area. Germany and Great Britain were both hoping to keep the conflict localized to the Balkan region. The German government did not feel that October of 1912 was the correct time to get into a European war since Admiral Tirpitz did not believe the German navy could beat the British at sea. Furthermore, Germany's strongest ally, Austria, would be distracted by the Balkan states and Turkey would be unable to assist Germany in a war against Russia. With the threat of Austria-Hungary and

Russia joining the Balkan Crisis looming, Great Britain and Germany called for a conference in London to settle the matter. The Great Powers (Great Britain, Italy, Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Russia) settled the question with the Treaty of London, and then enforced the terms on Turkey and the Balkan states.<sup>229</sup>

Germany and Great Britain's peaceful cooperation in dealing with the First Balkan War suggested to both sides that some sort of agreement could be found between them on other matters. This restarted negotiations between the two about naval agreements, the Baghdad Railway and possible political agreements. But the two countries quickly came to the same impasse they had found before the First Balkan War. Both countries were too suspicious and hostile towards the other for any real settlement to be found. Furthermore, public opinion in both countries made it unlikely any settlement would not cause the press to be outraged with the current government.

In June of 1913, Bulgaria declared war on its former allies Serbia and Greece since the Bulgarian government was unsatisfied with the terms imposed on them by the Treaty of London. Seeing the possibility for territorial gain, Romania and Turkey then joined the war on the side of Serbia and Greece. Unlike the First Balkan War, the Great Powers opted to refrain from involvement in the second war. Britain, France and Germany were concerned that intervention this time would cause further hostility between Austria-Hungary and Russia and ignite a general European war. Ultimately, Bulgaria called for an armistice as Romanian troops were circling the Bulgarian capital. Bulgaria ended up giving up much of its gains in the First Balkan wars to its former allies.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> F.R. Bridge and Roger Bullen, *The Great Powers and the European States System 1814-1914* (Harlow, Great Britain: Pearson Education Limited, 2005) 316-321.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, 322-323.



Nevertheless, by abstaining from the Second Balkan war so that a conflict between the Great Powers would not erupt, the Great Powers created an even bigger problem. Serbia had long resented Austria-Hungary for annexing Bosnia-Herzegovina during the Young Turk Revolution in 1908. The Serbian government had idealistic notions of a “greater Serbia” that included the territory Austria-Hungary had annexed. Having now defeated Turkey, Serbians set their eyes on the Austrian territory they felt was rightfully theirs. Even members of the great powers “observed that the Treaty of Bucharest ‘cannot last. We are moving towards a new Balkan war.’”<sup>231</sup> None of the Great Powers could have known that their non-intervention in the Second Balkan war would eventually cause the First World War to happen.

### **The July Crisis**

On June 28<sup>th</sup> 1914, the heir to the Austrian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, was assassinated in Sarajevo, Bosnia by a Serbian ultra-nationalist. Austria-Hungary was outraged and the Austrian government knew that if they did not punish Serbia, it would challenge the status and prestige of Austria-Hungary. Furthermore, Serbia had long been a menace to the Austrian government and this was Austria’s chance to eliminate Serbia as a political problem.<sup>232</sup> The German government agreed with their Austrian allies arguing “The Serbian Government has created an atmosphere in which alone such explosions of blind fanaticism are possible.”<sup>233</sup> The German Government resolved to stand behind their ally. Wilhelm II “pledged that Austria-

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 323.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 332- 336.

<sup>233</sup> Baron von Griesinger, Letter to Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, July 6 1914 in *German Diplomatic Documents 1871-1914. Vol IV: The Descent to the Abyss 1911-1914*, ed and trans. E.T.S. Dugdale (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc, 1969) 373.

Hungary could ‘in this case, as in all others, rely upon Germany’s full support’ in dealing with Serbia.<sup>234</sup> By doing so Germany caused an even bigger diplomatic struggle and ultimately war.

Diplomatically, Germany knew that the situation could get out of hand very quickly. While Austria-Hungary was still mulling over decisions about how to handle Serbia, Germany and Great Britain were discussing moderation. The German ambassador told the British that Austria-Hungary “must have some compensation in the sense of some humiliation of Serbia.”<sup>235</sup> Historian P.H.S. Hatton argued Bethmann-Hollweg “assumed in July 1914 that Britain and France would permit Austria to absorb or at least humiliate Serbia. The Austrian Ambassador had asked Grey as far back as 14 November 1912 what action Britain would take if Austria attacked Serbia, and the fact that he received no answer might have encouraged an optimistic frame of mind.”<sup>236</sup>

Furthermore, the German government felt it must support Austria-Hungary or be accused of not supporting Austria or in some way holding Austria back. According to Grey, the German government knew that “if she let events take their course there was the possibility of very serious trouble.”<sup>237</sup> The German government was also worried that Russia could be a major problem and German leaders hoped the British government could influence the Russian government to be civil with Austria-Hungary over the Serbian problem. The British government agreed to mitigate the problems with Russia if they could.<sup>238</sup>

The largest problem that occurred was not a diplomatic struggle but waiting that occurred while Austria-Hungary came to a decision. Public outrage towards Serbia was at an all-time high

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<sup>234</sup> Michael J. Lyons, *World War I: A Short History* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc, 2000) 49.

<sup>235</sup> Sir Edward Grey, no 32 Letter to Sir H. Rumbold, July 6 1914, in *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914. Vol XI: The Outbreak of War* ed. G. P. Gooch and Harold William Vazeille Temperley, (London: H.M.S.O., 1928) 24.

<sup>236</sup> P. H. S. Hatton, “Britain and Germany in 1914: The July Crisis and War Aims” *Past & Present* 36 (Apr 1967): 141.

<sup>237</sup> Sir Edward Grey, no 32 in *British Documents Vol XI: The Outbreak of War*, 24.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 24-25.

in the beginning of July right after the Archduke was assassinated. But the slow steady pace of the Austrian-Hungarian government wore down the support they had. On July 5, Wilhelm II pledge support for Austria in dealing with Serbia. It was not until July 14 that the Hungarian government agreed with the Austrian government that war against Serbia was needed, but only after the Hungarian premier made it clear that Austria-Hungary was not looking to annex any Serbian territory. Eventually the Austro-Hungarian governments agreed to send an ultimatum to Serbia with several demands. Some of the demands were so harsh it was unlikely Serbia would be able to consent to them and Serbian refusal would give Austria-Hungary the pretext to go to war. The ultimatum, however, was not sent to the Serbian government until July 23 and the Austro-Hungarian government wanted a response by July 25.<sup>239</sup>

Part of the reason for Austria-Hungary's delay in issuing the ultimatum was the organization of the Austrian military. The head of the military had instituted a policy of scheduled leaves for soldiers during the harvest to "appease the monarchy's agrarian interests."<sup>240</sup> This allowed soldiers to leave for certain weeks to go home, help in farms and then return at the end of summer for maneuvers. During the July Crisis, sizable portions of the military were gone and if the Austrian government cancelled the leaves it would have altered Europe to looming military action. The Austrian leaders decided to continue the leaves as most of them would end by July 22. Hence, the government could not send any demands or threaten any action until the end of July.<sup>241</sup>

By the end of July, however, the popular support for the Austro-Hungarian government had all but fizzled away. The other Great Powers were now concerned that too much time had

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<sup>239</sup> Lyons, *World War I*, 49-51.

<sup>240</sup> Samuel R. Williamson Jr., "The Origins of World War I" *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18 no.4 (Spring 1988): 808.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*

elapsed and that Russia would back Serbia against Austria-Hungary making the situation even more difficult. The British ambassador in Italy, Rennell Rodd, wrote to Grey stating there was some uneasiness at the German embassy in Italy. Furthermore the German embassy “seem[ed] to anticipate that the Austro-Hungarian Government is about to address a very strong communication to [Serbia], and fear that [Serbia], having a very swelled head, and feeling confident of the support of Russia, will reply in a manner which Austria can only regard as provocative.”<sup>242</sup> The Russian support for the Austrian government had diminished and the Russian government was now willing to back Serbia if the Russian government thought Austria’s demands were too high. Austria had calculated their next move for too long and now any demands were likely to imply that Austria was after more than just justice. The more likely Russia was to back Serbia with the possibility of war, the more likely it became that Germany would have to back Austria.<sup>243</sup>

The ultimatum and list of demands sent to Serbia on July 23 caused shock and outrage by the other Great Powers by the next day. The British Ambassador in Russia, Sir G. Buchanan wrote to Grey that Russia “had just received a text of ultimatum presented by Austria at Belgrade yesterday that demands a reply in forty-eight hours. Step thus taken by Austria meant war...”<sup>244</sup> In addition, the demands to Serbia were unreasonable according to Crowe. He wrote “If Austria demands absolute compliance with her ultimatums it can only mean she wants a war. For she knows perfectly well that some of the demands are such as no State can accept, as they are tantamount to accepting a protectorate.”<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> Sir Rennell Rodd, no 74 Letter to Sir Edward Grey, July 20 1914 in *British Documents: The Outbreak of War*, 60-61.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Sir G. Buchanan, no. 101 Letter to Sir Edward Grey, July 24 1914 in Ibid., 80.

<sup>245</sup> Sir Eyre Crowe, minute note on no. 171 Communication by the Servian Minister, July 27 1914, in Ibid., 121.

Regardless of the Serbian reply, the response to the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum was that war was now likely. Crowe stated “The moment has passed when it might have been possible to enlist French support in an effort to hold back Russia.”<sup>246</sup> The British knew the tide had turned and war was imminent. The only question that remained to be seen was if Britain would join the war. Grey agreed with Crowe stating “The points raised by Sir Eyre Crowe merit serious consideration, and doubtless the cabinet will review the situation.”<sup>247</sup> But Grey was hesitant to join the war outright as there was a growing antiwar sentiment in England. Grey stated “I do not consider that public opinion would or ought to sanction our going to war in the [Serbian] quarrel.”<sup>248</sup>

Furthermore, the British, French and Russian governments already blamed Germany for a possible war. According to Buchanan the Russian minister for Foreign affairs “characterized Austria’s conduct as immoral and provocative. Some of the demands which she had presented were absolutely unacceptable, and she would have never have acted as she had done without first having consulted Germany.”<sup>249</sup> To the Russian foreign minister war could have been averted if Germany had not allowed Austria to provoke Serbia and Russia. Yet again, British Officials hostility towards Germany did not allow them to see events clearly. Political Scientist Samuel Williamson Jr., argues the British Foreign Office failed to realize Austria’s desire for war. British leaders saw Austria “as an appendage of Berlin” and they “believed Berlin could control

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<sup>246</sup> Sir Eyre Crowe, July 25 1914 in William Jannen Jr., *The Lions of July: Prelude to War, 1914* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1996) 91.

<sup>247</sup> Sir Edward Grey, minute note on no 101, Sir G. Buchanan to Sir Edward Grey, July 24 1914 in *British Documents: The Outbreak of War*, 82.

<sup>248</sup> Sir Edward Grey, In Jannen, *The Lions of Jul*, 92.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

Vienna.”<sup>250</sup> But Austria was the third largest state in Europe with a proud monarchy and the Austrians “wanted a resounding defeat of the Serbians.”<sup>251</sup>

Eyre Crowe placed even more blame on the German government arguing that “The point that matters is whether Germany is or is not absolutely determined to have this war now.”<sup>252</sup> Crowe felt that Germany was pushing Austria into this war because Germany thought British public opinion over the assassination would keep England out of the fight. Crowe felt that British “interests are tied up with those of France and Russia in this struggle, which is not for the possession of [Serbia], but one between Germany aiming at a political dictatorship in Europe...”<sup>253</sup> To Crowe and many in the British Government, Germany was using the July Crisis as an excuse to launch a war on France or Russia or both as a way finally to gain control of Europe. The British leaders were suspicious of Germany’s intentions. Those suspicions coupled with British hostility towards Germany made it even more likely that war was unavoidable in the long run.

In addition, conflicting messages from Germany made the British government all the more suspicious that Germany wanted a war. Originally a French newspaper reported that the German ambassador told the Foreign Ministry in France that the German government had “approved the contents and form of Austrian note to [Serbia]” and that the German government hoped it could be a localized affair.<sup>254</sup> But the German ambassador protested stating that the German government had no prior knowledge of the Austrian ultimatum and was informed of its contents only after the note was delivered to Serbia. The distrustful British government was wary

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<sup>250</sup> Williamson Jr., “The Origins of World War I” 814

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Sir Eyre Crowe, Minute note on, no. 101 Sir G Buchanan to Sir Edward Grey, July 24 1914 in *British Documents: The Outbreak of War*, 81.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>254</sup> Sir Francis Bertie, no. 123 Telegraph to Sir Edward Grey, July 25 1914 in Ibid., 92.

that Germany was using the events to gain political ground as both England and Russia were occupied by internal labor strikes.<sup>255</sup> With domestic problems in England and Russia, it would be the perfect time for German leaders to start a war.

The Serbian government collaborating with Russia drafted a reply to the Austro-Hungarian government and presented it two minutes before the deadline expired. Serbian agreed to all but two demands, but Austria wanted nothing less than complete compliance with their ultimatum. Unknown to Austria, both Serbia and Russia had already begun partially mobilizing their armies in anticipation of Austria's response. Austria-Hungary began mobilizing a few days later but no declarations of war were announced.<sup>256</sup>

British leadership knew that events were unfolding quickly. They still, however, believed that war could still be averted if they could get Germany to back down. The French Minister for Foreign Affairs as well as several members of the British Foreign Office believed that a show of solidarity by Great Britain, France and Russia would cause Germany to force Austria to back down. The Triple Entente felt it had to win Germany over to the cause of peace. But Sir G. Buchanan disagreed stating that if England tried to force Germany to back down Germany would "stiffen her attitude, and it was only approaching her [Germany] as a friend...could induce her to use her influence at Vienna to avert war."<sup>257</sup> To British leaders, war rested solely on the shoulders of the German government.

Yet again, Eyre Crowe saw events more clearly. To Crowe the question was not whether the British Government could force Germany to back down, but what would the world do when war broke out. Crowe stated that "the real difficulty to be overcome will be found in the question

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> Lyons, *World War I*, 49-51.

<sup>257</sup> Sir George Buchanan, no 170 Telegraph to Sir Edward Grey, July 27 1914 in *British Documents: The Outbreak of War*, 120.

of mobilization. Austria is already mobilizing...If Russia mobilizes, we have been warned Germany will do the same, and as German mobilization is directed almost entirely against France, the latter cannot possibly delay her own mobilization.”<sup>258</sup> Crowe realized that mobilization was a chain reaction and that if Russia mobilized to defend Serbia, Germany would mobilize to defend Austria.

The nature of German mobilization and attack plans suggested a two front war with France and Russia. To counter this, the German military had devised a plan where they would mobilize quickly and defeat the French army within 39 days. The German army would then move their forces to the east to fight Russia. The German military believed that Russian mobilization would take Russia longer than it would take Germany to defeat the French army. But the German military plan had the Germans going through Belgium to invade France from above, as opposed to fighting them on the Franco-German border. This meant that if Germany could not get a guarantee of French neutrality, war would be forced upon France. Crowe concluded “that within 24 hours His Majesty’s Government will be faced with the question whether, in a quarrel so imposed...on an unwilling France, Great Britain will stand idly aside, or take sides.”<sup>259</sup>

But it was not Austria that should be blamed for the possibility of war breaking out. The British Foreign Office believed the responsibility for war rested on Germany’s shoulders. Germany was playing a two-face game in the minds of the British Foreign office. Germany was preaching moderation to Britain while encouraging Austria to continue the path towards war. Great Britain even suggested putting together a conference of Great Britain, France, Italy and Germany to resolve the matter and that mobilization should be halted till the results of the

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<sup>258</sup> Sir Eyre Crowe, minute note on no 170 Telegraph from Sir George Buchanan to Sir Edward Grey, July 27 1914 in *Ibid.*

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.



conference. Germany, however, “declined to entertain the idea” because it felt the conference would dictate terms to Austria-Hungary.<sup>260</sup> Furthermore Sir Arthur Nicolson stated that he “cannot believe that Austria would have gone so far as she has done without having informed Germany... and secured her promise of co-operation.”<sup>261</sup> This went in the face of the assurance Germany had been making to Great Britain about preaching moderation to Austria. Crowe concurred stating “It is clear that Germany is practically determined to go to war, and that the one restraining influence so far has been the fear of England...”<sup>262</sup> On July 28 Austria declared war on Serbia but a full scale war did not yet break out.

The French Ambassador in Berlin suggested a British mediation proposal, which the German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs consented to if London could keep the Russian Army from mobilizing. Additionally, Germany would only agree to mediation between Austria and Russia and refused to “interfere in Austro-Serbian quarrel.”<sup>263</sup> Crowe regarded the Secretary of State’s remarks as proof that “the German Government has up to now said not a single word at Vienna in the direction of restraint and moderation.”<sup>264</sup>

With Austria declaring war, hostility towards Germany was at an all time high in Great Britain. In the British Foreign Office, everything Germany now did was perceived to be another way for Germany to justify war to the Great Britain. British leaders believed Germany would do anything to keep Britain from aiding of France or Russia. Hostility towards German leaders did not allow foreign officials to see events clearly. When Bethmann-Hollweg told the British ambassador that the Russians were burning houses along the German frontier and were now

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<sup>260</sup> Sir Arthur Nicolson, no. 239 Private Letter to Sir G. Buchanan, July 28 1914 in *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, 156-157.

<sup>262</sup> Sir Eyre Crowe, minute note on no 293 Secret Telegraph Sir E. Goschen to Sir Edward Grey, July 29 1914 in *Ibid.*, 186,

<sup>263</sup> Jannen., *The Lions of July*, 124.

<sup>264</sup> Sir Eyre Crowe in *British Documents: The Outbreak of War*, 186.

taking military measures there, Crowe responded that Germany was looking to throw blame for the mobilization onto the Russians.<sup>265</sup> Arthur Nicolson agreed stating it was a “very reasonable and sensible precaution” for Russia to be taking.<sup>266</sup>

With Austria’s declaration of war, Russia had begun mobilization without declaring war. When Germany learned of this two days later on July 30 they sent ultimatums to Russia and France demanding that Russia cease mobilization within twenty-four hours and for France to stay neutral in the case of war between Germany and Russia. On August 1 the deadlines for those ultimatums passed and Germany openly declared war on Russia and began mobilization. The next day Germany issued an ultimatum to Belgium. Germany stated that if German troops were allowed to go through Belgium on the way to France, Germany would guarantee Belgium’s “territorial integrity.” The Belgian’s declined the offer.<sup>267</sup>

On July 31 1914, Crowe sent a hastily written memorandum to Sir Edward Grey where he detailed Great Britain’s foreign policy. He concluded by stating that it was in Britain’s best interests to stand by France “in her hour of need. France has not sought the quarrel. It has been forced upon her.”<sup>268</sup> Richard Cosgrove asserted in his dissertation that Crowe had little to do with policy decisions including during the July Crisis. Cosgrove argues that it “is difficult to see any direct influence exerted by Crowe during the July Crisis.”<sup>269</sup> Cosgrove dismisses this letter claiming Grey was too busy to read it, but Cosgrove gives no evidence to prove this statement. Furthermore, he disregards all the minute notes that Crowe wrote on foreign office documents, including the ones that Sir Edward Grey made notes under citing Crowe. While Britain

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<sup>265</sup> Sir Eyre Crowe, minute note on no 337 Telegraph Sir E Goschen to Sir Edward Grey, July 31 1914 in *Ibid.*, 214.

<sup>266</sup> Sir Arthur Nicolson, *Ibid.*

<sup>267</sup> Lyons, *World War I*, 52-54.

<sup>268</sup> Sir Eyre Crowe, Memorandum to Sir Edward Grey, July 31 1914 in *British Documents: The Outbreak of War*, 229.

<sup>269</sup> Richard Cosgrove, “Sir Eyre Crowe and the English Foreign Office, 1905-1914” (PhD diss., University of California, 1967) 228.

ultimately joined the war after Germany violated Belgian neutrality, Crowe's influence can hardly be discredited. It was Crowe's arguments surrounding Germany hegemony of Europe that forced Sir Edward Grey and the British government to finally declare war.

With the violation of Belgian neutrality and war being hoisted upon France, the British government could no longer sit idly by. The British government's hostility towards Germany and their suspicion of a German motivation could not allow England to sit out of the war. In fact the growing fear of Germany over the last nine years all but determined that when a war with Germany arose, England would have to join. The war could have come sooner or later, but war between Germany and Great Britain had become almost inevitable. The only thing left had been to sit back and wait for the actual fighting to start. Crowe had realized war with Germany was coming as early as 1906. The British government could not allow German hegemony of Europe, even if that was not what Germany claimed to be after. Sir Edward Grey noted that if "victory came to Germany...our situation at the end of the war would be very uncomfortable."<sup>270</sup> German hegemony of Europe would challenge Great Britain's prestige and interest's world wide and the British foreign office could not allow that. Grey felt that British interests and public opinion meant that he must "deal with it in Parliament."<sup>271</sup> The British Government declared war on Germany on August 6<sup>t</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> Sir Edward Grey, no 447 Letter to Sir F Bertie, Aug 1 1914 in *British Documents: The Outbreak of War.*, 260.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

## Conclusion

Eyre Crowe was an illustrious, inscrutable and intelligent man. Cosgrove was correct when he stated that Crowe “was never a typical member of the Foreign Office.”<sup>272</sup> Crowe was arrogant and opinionated with a tendency to insubordinate. He pushed his opinions even when he was not asked for them, and he certainly could rub people the wrong way. Crowe could never be considered a typical “English gentleman.”<sup>273</sup> He had neither the upbringing nor the personality for it. Crowe preferred to reading or playing the piano rather than hunting or fishing. He was an intellectual and that alienated him from some members of the foreign office.

But above all of this, Crowe was an influential member of the British Foreign Office. He produced a memorandum that was not only correct in predicting a war between Great Britain and Germany but predicted the motivations behind British entry into the war. This does not suggest that Crowe expected World War I to break out in the fashion it did. The Crowe memorandum did not suggest that it would be a world war, rather than a localized conflict between Britain and Germany. The fact that historians are still debating the 1907 “Memorandum on the Present State of British Relations with France and Germany” suggests that Crowe was at least partially correct in what he argued.

Furthermore, Crowe’s legacy has stood the test of time. Anyone reading British Foreign Office documents from this period would clearly see Crowe’s influence. Grey, Nicolson, Hardinge, Bertie and others all agreed with Crowe’s assessments on the German government at one point in time or another. Grey and Nicolson both noted that Crowe’s arguments were useful and valid in determining British Foreign Policy. While Crowe may have never been close friends

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<sup>272</sup> Richard Cosgrove, “Sir Eyre Crowe and the English Foreign Office, 1905-1914” (PhD diss., University of California, 1967) 230.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, 231.

with some of his colleagues in the foreign office, one can not over look Crowe's influence because of that.

Crowe was consistent in his suspicion of the German government. His analysis of German motivations in regards to the naval negotiations, the Baghdad railway, the Second Moroccan crisis and the July Crisis were all correct. In addition, his correct views of the situations created a deep suspicion and hostility towards the German government in the British Foreign Office. While the British Foreign Office might not have jumped to war with Germany over the naval negotiations or the Baghdad railway does not discount Crowe's influence or British suspicion of Germany as Cosgrove asserted. Grey and the British government had to handle public opinion, which was largely pacifistic at the time. The British government could not afford to declare war on Germany without justification. An unruly Kaiser and German government, which under minded negotiations at every turn, were not justifiable reasons to go to war for the British public. They were, however, reasons for the British government to be hostile towards Germany and choose to join the entente when war eventually broke out.

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