

GLOBAL ORIGINS OF WORLD WAR ONE. PART TWO: A CHAIN OF REVOLUTIONARY EVENTS ACROSS THE WORLD ISLAND

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Abstract: The road to the Great War led out of the alignments formed by the Scramble for Concessions in the Far East. The world crisis of 1904-1905 had shaped the alignments. It only remained to shift the locus of the confrontation, by a chain of revolutionary events, across the world island into Europe. After Russia's defeat in the war with Japan, she and her adversary had little difficulty dividing their Asian spheres of influence. Japan made a similar settlement with the French. Japan was at this point in effect a member of the Triple Entente. She also attempted to settle matters with the United States.

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The road to the Great War led out of the alignments formed by the Scramble for Concessions in the Far East. The world crisis of 1904-1905 had shaped the alignments. It only remained to shift the locus of the confrontation, by a chain of revolutionary events, across the world island into Europe. After Russia's defeat in the war with Japan, she and her adversary had little difficulty dividing their Asian spheres of influence. Japan made a similar settlement with the French. Japan was at this point in effect a member of the Triple Entente. She also attempted to settle matters with the United States. By virtue of the American victory over the Philippine insurgents in 1902, the American and Japanese spheres faced each other warily across the Luzon strait that divides the Philippines from Formosa. Wizeden Japanese knew that their relations with America would not go smoothly once the Panama Canal, on which the United States was working and which would be completed by 1914, was able to shift the American fleet to Asian waters. This was underlined when

Theodore Roosevelt sent the Great White Fleet around the Horn, into the Pacific, and around the world in 1908. Roosevelt had hoped that a show of force would quiet Japanese indignation about unfavorable American immigration policies, yet America had neither the wherewithal nor the inclination to oppose Japanese dominance of Asia.

The Great War itself did not finally break out in the Far East, but rather in the Near East, that is, in the Balkans. It began there because of the spread of the international effects of the Russo-Japanese war across the Eurasian ecumene. The vehicle for this was the Russian revolution of 1905. As would be the case in 1917, revolution had grown out of military defeat. It was the defeat of a European great power by a non-European. As such it sent a thrill throughout the third world, or at least through the hearts of the revolutionary intelligentsia of the third world. It was a bigger and more dramatic version of the defeat of the Italians before Abyssinia in 1896. New voices in Asia began to echo the themes of western anti-imperialism, as stated for example in J.A. Hobson's *Imperialism* of 1902. In Japan and China there emerged theorists of Asianism and admirers of socialist and anarchist writers in the west. Liang Chi'-ch'ao, the Chinese nationalist and monarchist, probably had more influence than any other Chinese intellectual on the movement that was to culminate in the revolution of 1911. Liang called Russia, "the one and only genuinely despotic state on the globe." For the young Chinese nationalist Sun Yat-sen, Japanese military success "raised the standing of all Asian peoples." In India, the Brahmin intellectual Bal Gangadhar Tilak, known as "the father of Indian unrest," held a special meeting in Poona to salute the Japanese victories at Mukden and Tsushima. Of the Russian revolutionary model, he said: "once the

government resorts to repressive measures in the Russian spirit, the Indian subjects of England must imitate, at least in part, the methods of the Russian people."¹ The Russian revolution was not generally perceived as a socialist or proletarian revolt but a struggle for liberty and tolerance, even tolerance of Islam. Muslims had achieved representation for confessional parties in the Russian Duma. Two Muslim Congresses were held in Russia in 1905 and 1906, both stating claims for recognition of local religious and educational rights. This impressed the Muslim mosques throughout Asia. In Persia and Turkey, the mullahs turned decisively to the constitutional idea.

Yet the actions of the Russian workers changed the face of European Marxism, up to then a peaceful legal movement of agitation for trade union rights, political parties and campaigns to win representatives to parliament. Anarchists who preached direct action and even terror had been sharply rejected and excluded from the Marxist Social Democratic International. Of the syndicalist slogan of the general strike, The German Social Democrat Ignaz Auer said "the general strike is general nonsense". After the Russian general strike of 1905, however, the line that separated Marxism and anarchism, at least on the tactical level, was less clear. The Polish-German socialist Rosa Luxemburg advanced a theory of "mass strike" as a means to fight for the suffrage and restore the revolutionary side of social democracy. In Russia Lev Trotsky argued that the experience of 1905 had shown that the soviets emerging from a general strike could be the point of departure for a struggle for socialism. He called this heresy to traditional Marxism the theory of the "permanent revolution." Lenin, by contrast, did not yet accept the possibility of socialism in Russia. But 1905 convinced him that the Russians were going to repeat the French revolution and that, when this happened, a socialist party might participate with other radical democrats in a "democratic dictatorship" like that of the French Jacobins of 1793-4. The Jacobin "Revolutionary Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Peasantry" would be the Bolshevik slogan down to April 1917.

This was a shock for the leaders of European social democracy because it meant that a new period of tests of strength between workers and employers was in prospect, something they dreaded. The peaceful evolution of society onto a socialist path would now be jeopardized, many

of them thought, and new possibilities would open for their enemies. They were impressed by the continuing mobilization of counter-revolutionary forces by the Russian Tsar. The gangs that were called Black Hundreds identified modernism as the enemy and the Jews as its agents, conjuring up propaganda imagery that was to prove infectious throughout eastern and central Europe. The popular French writer Georges Sorel, a disciple of Nietzsche who believed in the master morality of the Romans as opposed to the slave morality of modern democracy, exulted about the return of revolutionary violence and its regenerating effect, not only for the left, but for the right. One can see the tendencies toward a new left and a new right gathering strength from the eighteen-nineties. 1905 seemed to sum them up. From then on, meetings of the second international would be debating the general strike and even adopting it in 1907 as a slogan to organize resistance to a European war. When war did come in 1914, these preparations proved to be worthless. The workers did not strike and did not stop the war. Those who said that war and patriotism would be far stronger than proletarian internationalism were shown to be right. This was at any rate the case until the war failed to issue in a brief glorious conclusion. A long war, of the type that would ensue after 1915, would be a different matter altogether.

The Russian revolution spread immediately into Persia. After the general strike of October 1905 had forced to Tsar to offer a constitution, the bazaar and the mosques sprang into action, largely under the influence of the pan-Islamist Jamal-ud-Din el Afghani. This began in December with a general strike and resulted within a few months in the formation of a parliament, the *majlis*. To its supporters Constitutionalism was a "secret of strength"². The Persian revolutionaries knew that the preoccupation of the Russian state with its own revolution precluded the expected Russian intervention to suppress theirs. They saw their whole situation as having arisen from the special circumstances of the British intervention in the Far East. Britain therefore was their model and inspiration. They expected that the British would ward off the Russian counter-revolution. The electoral law provided a restricted franchise and resulted in a *majlis* in which the nobility, merchants and mullahs were in the majority. It was a kind of attempt, on Persian terms, to imitate the British system of constitutional monarchy, as the Italians had done in the

Risorgimento. The *majlis* refused Russian loans and looked to the British for financial as well as political help.

But it was not British policy to help the Persian revolution against Russia. Not that the Persian revolutionaries were foolish to have considered the idea. Britain's traditional impulse, as far as they knew, was to hold the line against Russian influence. Britain still opposed Russia in Afghanistan. She was looking to set herself up in Tibet. But since French money had won the Russian vote at Algeciras, things were proceeding on a different track. Britain was coming to terms with Russia. The Algeciras bloc of 1906 signaled a reversal of alliances. When Aleksandr Izvolskii was appointed Russian foreign minister, the new lineup became more evident. Izvolskii had been an ardent supporter of Witte, whom he regarded as the Russian Cecil Rhodes. But he recognized that the days of the Far Eastern Triplice were over, and Russia must shift her attention westward. He knew that, in view of the increasing American interest in China Russia's interests could only be guarded by rapprochement with Japan. He decided that he must give up Russia's decades-old quest to link its railroads with lines through the Hindu Kush to India or through Persia to the Gulf. If Russia were to regain any influence in Persia, she would have to come to terms with Britain. If not, British support for the Persian revolution might make it impossible to pacify Russia³. So England and Russia reached a meeting of the minds. The Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907 completed the diplomatic revolution. Britain was temporarily precluded from setting up shop in Tibet, and allowed to continue her predominant influence in Afghanistan. Persia was divided into spheres of influence. Britain got a sector in the southeast. She already had a concession to drill for oil at Abadan Island at the Shatt el-Arab, where the Tigris and Euphrates rivers conjoin, a site where oil had been found in 1901. Teheran and the north were left to Russia's wrath.

Persian revolutionaries were disappointed at being left in the lurch by Britain, but they held on against the counter-revolution for several years. One last hope was the appointment of the American W. Morgan Shuster in May 1911 to administer financial affairs for the *majlis*. As the Russian government got back on its feet, suppressing the revolution, taking control over the armed forces and foreign policy back from the Duma, and finally restricting suffrage

drastically, it moved similarly against the Persian revolutionary regime. Shuster resisted this in the name of the *majlis* and, in the minds of some Persians, in the name of an American alternative to Russia and to a pro-Russian Britain. He was ousted six months later when the Russians invaded and closed down the *majlis*. It was the end of the Persian revolution. Shuster angrily denounced the British for "throwing Persia overboard" to please the Tsar⁴. He blamed it all on British maneuvers to adjust the world balance. The British would not succeed in "drawing a circle around Germany" because they had failed to stand up to Russia who, he suspected, was itself coming to terms with Germany. He cited the Potsdam agreement of 1910 between Russia and Germany, whereby Russia accepted the Baghdad railway in return for an arrangement to link it with the Russian railways of northern Persia. Russia, said Shuster, was already slithering out of the Triple Entente! With German assistance she was encircling India! Britain was losing in Persia, losing with the world's seventy million Muslims, and losing in Turkey. Perhaps Shuster was too panicky. And no doubt he viewed with a certain naivete the prospect of taking on, that is, Britain taking on, both Russia and Germany. But he also took the arguable view that monarchic absolutism, from the standpoint of what we would call today neo-liberalism, was a problem rather than a solution. Moreover, he judged that Russian expansion was a fact of nature and that, as soon as the Russian revolution was overcome, it would resume.

1. FROM THE SICK MAN OF THE FAR EAST TO THE SICK MAN OF EUROPE

Yet Russia did not automatically turn her attention from marches to India to the Turkish Near East, that is, to the Balkans. The occasion for this was the spread of the revolution to Turkey in July 1908. The revolt of the Young Turks enjoyed the full support of the Muslim mosques, as had been the case with the Shia mullahs in Persia. Both were profoundly impressed at hearing of a political bloc of Muslims in the Russian Duma. In the Turkish case, the mosques had been in favor of a constitution since 1876 when it was last promised. So the Turkish revolution had the initial character of a constitutional restoration. Its immediate prompting was an intensification of the sporadic revolt that simmered in Macedonia, Armenia, and Crete. The Macedonian revolt was eagerly and

sympathetically observed in Britain, ironically by Gladstonian critics of the “new imperialism,” who despised the cruel Turks. It was led by the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization. James Billington calls IMRO the spark that transferred the European revolutionary tradition of the last century to the Afro-Asian world. All the tactics of the revolutionary movements of the twentieth century were employed by IMRO. It gathered in the support of Social Democrats and anarchists. It carried out terror against local officials, bank robberies, sabotage of trains, bombing of administrative buildings. It wielded an impressive propaganda apparatus and possessed a keen sense of the larger diplomatic setting and the contribution the great powers could make to the movement’s success⁵. In fact, the Germans and the Turks were convinced that Russia, with British help, was ready to use the moment to seize Macedonia for itself.

As in the past, the British pressured the sultan for reforms. The Sultan’s authorities used gentle and not so gentle methods to reassert authority. Their policing at first was probably not much more atrocious than the British employed against the Boers, or the Americans against the Philippine forces of Aguinaldo, or the Germans against the Hereros in German Southwest Africa. To Europeans, however, the atrocities of the Sultan were infinitely more heinous. This was especially the case with the crusading Pan-Slav press in Russia. In its propaganda, a new orientation began to take hold; called neo-Slavism, it registered the same old complaints but advocated, perhaps naively, a Russian-led and voluntary federative polity in the Balkans, in a spirit which later might have been called Wilsonian. It was not easily discernable at the time whether the Balkan Slavs felt the same way about Pan-Slavism as the nationalist press in Russia. Yet the insurgent peoples were impressed with the contrast between their own condition and that of the already independent states of Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, and even Bosnia, which had been occupied by Austrian troops since 1878. And they appreciated the role that Russian pressure on Turkey had played, ever since the Greek war in the eighteen twenties, in the liberation of their fellow Christians.

The attitude of the European powers toward Turkey was at the same time rapacious and sanctimonious. In a series of nineteenth century conflicts they had seemed to disagree about

partition of the entire estate of the Sultan, and could only express their reluctance to do so, in a compromise that took some bits of territory and demanded reforms in the rest. The prospective victim was usually dealt with, even by its defender Britain, in a mood of high moral indignation. This was more pronounced with Gladstonian liberals than others, but also quite general. British statesmen seemed to feel, moreover, that a wave of revolution that was sweeping the world, soon to engulf China and Mexico, was less of a threat and more of an opportunity. It had seemed to have worked out that way in Russia and Persia. Only Germany seemed to stand up for the principle of monarchy and religion with Sultan Abdul Hamid. That was enough to earn the Germans the hostility of the Young Turks, who wanted to save Turkey from its fate by making a new start toward internal renovation.

The Young Turks shared the attitude of the self-strengtheners in the Far East. They sensed their own decadence by virtue of their lower position on the cultural slope. They saw this as the cause of their political and military weakness before those who stood ready to partition their land. They hoped to win the sympathy of the latter by becoming more like them. The parallel with Gorbachev’s and Yeltsin’s Russia in 1989-91 is striking. A multinational empire with restive constituent nationalities, seeking a new Union with them on a voluntary basis, seeking as well to ward off threats from its enemies by convincing them that its own reform is genuine. With Lord Grey and the liberals in power, the Young Turks sought to appeal to the British love of liberty. They felt that the idea of liberty was afoot in the world, in the Russian and Persian revolutions. It was necessary for Turkey to keep up with the pace already set. They did their best to patch up relations with the Balkan nationalist insurgents by a show of good will and promises of a parliament of the subject peoples. But the subject peoples wanted freedom from central administration and refused to accept Turkish as the only language. When this would not pass, the Committee was forced to crack down, and they proved to be as fierce as the Sultan had ever been. Their main idea was a revival of Turkish national consciousness. This was fatal. Gorbachev’s Russia went through the same deadly process. When the Baltic republics began to raise complaints about their role in the Soviet Union and made demands on Moscow, Russian nationalists answered reflexively: “Let them go their way, see how far they will get.” But the

Soviet Union existed by virtue of two things, force of habit and the "Soviet idea" presumably transcending nationalism. Russian nationalism was poison; it meant the emergence of Russia and the breakup of the Soviet Union. So it was with Turkish nationalism. Naturally it gained no ground for its proponents with the Christian peoples, and for the Muslims it crippled the idea of the Caliphate.

The Young Turks did not foresee this in 1908. Quite the contrary. They were too threatened by the Anglo-Russian alliance and the model of the partition of Persia. When England's Edward the Seventh and Russia's Nicholas the Second met at Reval (Tallinn) in June, the Young Turks were certain it meant a common Anglo-Russian policy on Macedonia and the prelude to loss of the Straits or worse. Austrian and German diplomats thought the same thing.⁶ The Young Turks seized power and restored the constitution of 1876, retaining Abdul Hamid as a figurehead. For the new Austrian foreign minister Aehrenthal, eagerly awaiting an opportunity to expand at the expense of a weakened Turkey, this was a "windfall"⁷. Aehrenthal was already working on an idea for a railway to Salonika (Thessaloniki) through the Sanjak of Novi Pazar that divides Serbia and Montenegro. Austria would thus be on the Aegean and Serbia would be weakened for future pickings. Russian objections killed the project. But then the Turkish revolution presented another window of opportunity. Aleksander Izvolskii had become Russian foreign minister. He was a believer in the Russian mission in the Near East. He and Aehrenthal arranged that summer that Russia should have the Straits in return for Austrian annexation of Bosnia plus the Sanjak railway. In October, while Izvolskii was canvassing the British and French for further and more solid support, which he could not get, Aehrenthal marched into Bosnia and, to boot, encouraged Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria to proclaim himself the Tsar of an independent Bulgaria.

Izvolskii thought he had been had. Bosnia was bad enough, but it raised as well the question of an Austrian deal with Bulgaria to partition Serbia. At any rate, Serbia thought she had earmarks on Bosnia, backed, as we know from the events of the nineteen nineties, by passionate ethnic claims. With Russian encouragement, the Serbs tried in March 1909 to mobilize a little army to attack into Bosnia. Germany came down hard on Serbia and Russia as well. Bulow demanded that Izvolskii restrain Serbia, and

more than that, that Russia agree openly to the Austrian annexation of Bosnia. He put in the tone and form of an ultimatum. As a result, Izvolskii had to back down and to make Serbia back down too. Serbia was livid. As were the Russians. They resolved to look to their armed forces to prepare them against the possible recurrence of something like this in the future. That is, they resolved to prepare for war with Germany.

Even Britain was indignant at the Russian "climb-down" over Bosnia. There was nothing for Britain in Russian seizure of the Straits, and the British had a certain moral credit with the Young Turks, so Grey had not been encouraging to Izvolskii about that. But the British nevertheless wanted Russia to stand up to Germany on matters in which there was a British interest, such as the Baghdad railway project. It was only safe to assume that the Russians were the most threatened by German penetration of what we would today call the middle east, and to assume moreover that Russia would protect its own interest in a way that would serve British interests. After Bosnia, this assumption was no good. Russia, on the contrary, while it built up war preparations, felt weak and did its best to make nice with both Austria and Germany. At Potsdam in 1910 the Tsar and the Kaiser agreed on the Baghdad railway and for its extension into north Persia. This gravely depressed the British. Morgan Shuster was not wrong to point out the decline of British fortunes. Britain even lost ground with the Young Turks. This despite the fact that Germany supported Abdul Hamid's attempt at a counter-revolution in 1909. It was crushed and Abdul Hamid officially deposed and packed off with his harem to a comfortable house arrest in Salonika. "It is Kismet," the Sultan said of the end of his career as a religious and civil beacon, "but will my life be spared?" Even the Kaiser decided he was a lost cause and turned against him, but urged that his life be spared⁸. In summer 1910, the Ottoman finance minister Djavid Bey ventured to Paris to raise a loan of 30 million dollars. He found that the condition was French assumption of Ottoman finances. He went to London. He was informed that the Baghdad railway threatened British interests in Mesopotamia. The Germans stepped in at this point and assumed the loan on essentially the French terms⁹. Germany greatly increased her influence over the Ottoman Empire at the expense of Britain.

It was not fatal. The Germans had won a round in one theater of the worldwide confrontation. It might prove to be necessary for the British to share out Turkey as indeed she might have to share out the world with Germany. Managing the rise of German power might in fact be an urgent task for Britain. For this a continental coalition against Germany might also be an indispensable instrument. It was thinkable to admit Germany to world power status and even permit Germany to catch up to some degree, that is, to regard her as a "have not" imperial power with special claims due to her inferior status. That would have been difficult enough. But the basis of German power was the naval buildup in the North Sea. In 1898 when the problem first arose it was not in the form of a German challenge to Britain in the oceans of the world. It was hard to see Germany alone mounting a real challenge to Britain. On the other hand, things might not go so easy if Britain were at war with France or Russia over some African or Asian matter and Germany were joined to the Franco-Russian alliance in some kind of continental league. That menace had brought Britain out of Salisbury's "splendid isolation." At the time of the Kruger Telegram, the Kaiser's expression of support for the Boers against Britain, in 1896, there was consideration of a three power standard. By 1898 a Franco-Russo-German combination would have outnumbered the British battleships. Tirpitz's Risk Navy depended on a continental league. But by the time of the Russo-Japanese war, the British outnumbered the Germans and French; and Japan outnumbered (and outfought) the Russians. With Japan, Britain could confront a continental league in the Far East. But the German naval buildup was in the North Sea directly opposite the British coastline. Confronting Britain with this direct threat of naval defeat and possible invasion was essential to the German "dry war" strategy to bid for an upgrade in world status. But Britain could not face this prospect without reaching out for allies on the continent. Germany had started the whole thing by threatening a continental league, the answer to which turned out to be a continental coalition against Germany. This was forced by the North Sea threat of defeat and invasion.

The British had not taken an extreme fright at the first two German naval bills in 1897 and 1900, but by the time King Edward visited Germany for the Kiel regatta in 1904, fear was rising. The Kaiser collected a great many ships

in the bay to impress him, and Edward came away convinced that the Germans were doing everything they could to end the British naval supremacy. Two sensational books, August Niemann, *Der Weltkrieg* (translated with the title *The Coming Defeat of England*) and Erskine Childers, *The Riddle of the Sands*, considered the prospect of the naval defeat and occupation of Britain by a continental league. The press raised a scare about possible British inferiority in the looming naval race. The influential foreign office expert Sir Eyre Crowe offered the view that in Germany "the union of the greatest military power with the greatest naval power would compel the whole world to combine for the riddance of such an incubus". Sir John Fischer became First Lord of the Admiralty at the end of 1904. Under cover of the recent entente with France, his hands were free to scrap obsolete ships and concentrate his forces from the North Atlantic, North Pacific, the Mediterranean, and China coast in the North Sea and Channel. The first Dreadnaught was laid the following year and launched in February 1906. An all big-gun ship, with ten twelve inch guns and a speed of twenty-one knots, it was thought by Fischer and others to be worth two to three of the existing battleships. The naval race began anew.

The Germans were encouraged to think that they had in effect gained ground from the need to start from zero. They were also thought to have an advantage in what in the nuclear arms race would be called lead-time, the interval from the blueprint stage to deployment. There might be a future Dreadnaught Gap. That was in effect the message of the navy panic of 1909 in Britain, when it was thought that the Germans would have more Dreadnaughts by 1911. This was based on mistaken estimates of German capacity. By 1912 the British would still have 30 to the Germans' 19. And among the former were "Super Dreadnaughts" with 13.5 inch guns. Nevertheless the Germans could not help but notice the effect of their naval building on British nerves, which did not cause them much anxiety, rather, on the contrary, a certain satisfaction. It was predictable that Germany would suppose that gains were to be made from the increase of their naval threat.

German imperialists had before them the model of Japanese prowess in Manchuria and Korea. Japan had defeated and reduced the Russian navy to insignificance. Even if it may have seemed in 1905 that the United States had

imposed peace at Portsmouth, it was no real check on Japanese power. The Panama Canal would not be completed until 1914. The poor state of the American forces, cried the Japanese press, suggested that the American navy was no mightier than the Russian, and might get the same treatment after it had come around South America and into far eastern waters for a rerun of Tsushima. There was a war scare in 1907 that resulted from some anti-Japanese legislation in San Francisco and its perceived insult to Japanese pride. President Roosevelt sent the Great White Fleet into the Far East and around the world in order to make an impression. But the Japanese were convinced only that their entente with Russia would protect them from any complications in finessing the American threat. They promised the US that nothing was afoot in 1908. American business interests were encouraged to hatch a number of far-reaching plans for investment in China. But when Korean nationalists rose up against the status of a Japanese protectorate in 1910, they were suppressed brutally and Korea was annexed. American compromise proposals were ignored. Nor was there any Anglo-American Far Eastern bloc to limit Japan. The Anglo-Japanese treaty was renewed in 1911 without any mention of the events in Korea. The Japanese had demonstrated an ability to overturn a local balance and elbow their way into the emerging club of the world powers.

Germany tried to do the same thing when the French made their move to take control of Morocco in 1911. Moroccan nationalists rose up against the French and were met by an invasion of French troops that occupied Fez. Germany sent the gunboat Panther to the port of Agadir to seize it and demand compensation for the French upsetting the Algeciras agreement of 1906. This was nothing more than a German attempt to get something in Africa that was comparable to the French getting Morocco, which they had got in return for leaving Egypt to Britain. And that something had to be comparable to Morocco or Egypt! The area of the present Congo Brazzaville was suggested. The French bristled. And it was also too much for British to accept. Even the Liberal and reputed pacifist Chancellor of the Exchequer, David Lloyd George, was moved to denounce the threat to British primacy and historic right. It looked for all the world as if Germany might seize an Agadir or a Kioachow or any other port in the world whenever it liked. But in the end after all the bluster Germany had to be served

with compensation in French Equatorial Africa. The German Cameroon was extended to the south and to the west with a finger of land reaching to the Ubangi river as "Caprivi's finger" had extended German Southwest Africa to the Zambezi in 1890. Germany took, but remained dissatisfied.

The French seizure of Morocco prompted the Italians to move on Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. Delcasse had promised this to them in 1900 in return for Italian recognition of French primacy in Morocco. Italy got Austria's blessing when the Triple alliance was renewed for the fourth time in 1902. Germany was not on board because she viewed the matter in terms of her attempts to have the Ottoman Empire included as a kind of partner to the Triple Alliance. But the Young Turk revolution forced the issue. Austrian annexation of Bosnia threatened Italian earmarks on the Dalmatian coast and the heritage of the Venetian empire of the Renaissance. There was reason for Italy to sympathize both with Serbian resistance to the Austrians and Russian support for Serbia. Italy's protests were in part answered by Austria's withdrawal from the Sanjak of Novi Pazar. When Tsar Nicholas visited Italy in 1909 he signed an agreement at Racconigi, the royal palace near Turino, promising Russian support for Italian action in North Africa in return for Italian support of Russian interests at the Straits. It had all been cleared with the great powers, or at least with several of them, for some time. Italian naval power in the Mediterranean was relatively increased with the transfer of most of the British ships to the Channel and North Sea. In this sense the German challenge to Britain was an opportunity for Italy. Agadir made things more urgent. The moment was fast approaching when someone else, perhaps Germany, would move in her stead. In September the Italians delivered an ultimatum to Turkey, followed rapidly by the dispatch of troops to Tripoli. In April Italian troops occupied the Dodecanese islands which they were to keep henceforth. Italian ships bombarded the Dardenelles and forced the closure of the Straits for a few weeks. It was brought home to Russia that her life line at the Straits, which carried half of her exports and almost all of her grain, had to be secured in the future on a more permanent basis. Moreover this might be just the right time for Russia to act, in view of the excitement stirred up by the Italian campaign in Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria.

The Agadir crisis seemed to be part of a frightful pattern. Every expansion of the power of one state was met by a war scare introduced by another with the demand for compensation. Some one had to back down to avoid war. France had backed down over Morocco in 1905 in the face of German threats; then Germany had to back down at Algeiras. Russia had backed down on Bosnia in 1908-9. Despite having got some reward for her belligerence, Germany still felt she had backed down when she left Agadir. Critics of what seemed to be a conscious policy of confrontation and tests of nerve became more vocal. In England Grey was under fire from his left to do something to quiet things down. There was a demand for better relations with Germany. After all, it was pointed out, there really was no outstanding quarrel with Germany over anything specific, only a generalized quarrel over everything, symbolized by the naval race.

Grey decided to send Lord Haldane, the War Minister to get an Anglo-German agreement on what would in the Cold War be called arms control, that is, not arms reduction, but a regulation of the pace of arms building. Haldane was, he said, prepared to consider German ambitions outside Europe. Big business and high finance, whom some critics on the left saw as pulling the strings behind a race toward war, instead weighed in on the side of détente. For the Germans, Albert Ballin of the Hamburg America steamship line, and for the British, the financial magnate Sir Ernest Cassel, both did their best to use their connections to promote an agreement. In the abstract, the naval issues seemed amenable to compromise. The Germans had a naval bill pending, the *novelle*, to use as a bargaining chip. Even so, they were willing to compromise on the precise ratio of British supremacy. But the agreement foundered on "linkage," the price that the British were expected to pay in Africa or elsewhere for German recognition of the permanence of British superiority on the seas. Hitler thought he had put the British in such a position in 1935, when he traded recognition of British naval supremacy for what he thought was a free hand in Eastern Europe. The Kaiser fully expected to get what he crudely called "a large chunk of colonial territory". Haldane found that embarrassing and difficult to sell at home. Domestic pressures also loomed on the other side. The German Social Democrats had emerged in the elections of 1912 as the biggest party in the Reichstag. Ironically this worked for greater tensions. Tirpitz had long advertised the

navy and the gains it could achieve for Germany on the high seas as a "prophylactic" against the success of the Social Democracy, which he considered the end of civilization as hitherto known. Each crisis was a challenge for the Tirpitz theory to produce real results.

As with the Agadir crisis, linkage to colonial gains was to produce disappointment in Germany. In the end it became a kind of alibi in the form of "we can't get something like Egypt or Morocco, so we have to build more Dreadnaughts." There was also linkage to Europe and a future war. The discussions about the naval ratios gave way to discussion about a political agreement to guarantee Germany against war with Britain. That meant a promise of British neutrality in case of a war between the Triple Alliance and the Franco-Russian Alliance. The Kaiser looked hard at Grey, Churchill, and Lloyd George and hoped to see in them the Salisbury of 1895 who had sought a way to stand clear of the continental alliances and commitments. But this time had long passed. Britain could not eschew the allies who would be capable of balancing German power by war. A promise of British neutrality would mean a deal to permit German superiority on the continent, to be won by force, in return for a British pseudo-superiority at sea, to be negotiated away in the future under even less favorable circumstances. Only if Britain thought the Franco-Russian alliance to be clearly superior militarily could she stand clear of a future war. But she had no such confidence. It was just the opposite. She was afraid that France would cave in to German threats. She harbored similar fears about Russia. If war were to come, she would have to be in it. Once you will the end you will the means. Once you say balance of power you say what is necessary to achieve it.

The French also worried about Russian weakness and irresolution in the face of German threats. Since the first Moroccan crisis there had been an extraordinary growth of national romanticism on the French right, where everyone seemed to want to be Cyrano de Bergerac. The rightist paper, *Action Francaise*, led the agitation for a more muscular foreign policy. As in Germany this was thought to produce domestic peace. French leaders were not sure how to deal with a wave of violent strikes, which they met with fierce government action. Briand called out the troops against the railway workers in 1911, an act that may have prevented a general strike. When Raymond

Poincare came to power in January 1912, French foreign policy showed new resolution. It took the logical step of bolstering the entente with Britain by military and naval talks. These promised a British "continental commitment" to send troops to Europe and a transfer of more British and French ships between the Mediterranean, to be assigned to the French, and the Channel, where the British would take over the defense of the French coastline.

Poincare went to Saint Petersburg in August 1912 to discuss with Sazonov, who had replaced Izvolskii in 1910, the activities of Russian diplomats in the Balkans. The Ambassadors in Belgrade and Sofia, Hartwig and Nekludov, ardent Pan-Slavists both, had given their approval to an alliance between Serbia and Bulgaria. Greece then entered the pact along with Montenegro, who was getting half a million rubles a year from Russia. Had the Russians organized a Balkan League for war against Turkey? Sazonov and Nekludov later denied it. Sazonov had boasted only of "500,000 bayonets to guard the Balkans," from German and Austrian invasion. But Sazonov would have had to be rather fey to mistake the intent of the alliance to destroy Turkey's power in Europe. His real desire of course was to gain some ground at the Straits. He had preferred the gambit of his ambassador in Constantinople, Nikolai Charykov, at the end of 1911. Charykov offered a Balkan League to include Turkey and protect it against Austria, in return for opening the Straits to Russian warships. But the Turks did not bite. So the alternative was to frighten them with a Balkan League from which they would have to seek Russian protection.

When Poincare saw the Balkan treaties he immediately identified them as "une convention de guerre." He was not at all unhappy to discover this. He gave assurances of support to Russia and even encouraged them that Britain would back them. Because of this, Poincare was later called the architect of the world war, "Poincare la guerre". But he was guilty mostly of wanting the Russians to avoid a repeat of their humiliation in the Bosnian affair and wanting to show them that France was not intimidated by the possible consequences of a firm stand against Germany. Even so, he also opined that "the time will come when the partition (of the Ottoman Empire) will take place...and we will have to organize ourselves so as not to be absent"¹⁰.

The Balkan states started to make their move. Bulgaria made threats to Turkey over Macedonia. This immediately brought a response from the great powers. Austria warned Bulgaria to back off. Russia had to take this seriously, at least to get some distance and deniability. She acted jointly with the other powers in October, to warn against changing the status quo in the Balkans. But the Balkan states saw no reason to take these warnings seriously. They were in the grip of a nationalist fervor of revolutionary proportions. These were all states steeped in the traditions of the European nationalist struggles of the nineteenth century. In a sense these had arisen in the Balkans for the same reason as they had in the rest of Europe, the French revolution and its messenger, Napoleon. He had created a Poland and a North Italy but also an Illyrian state, the real ancestor of Yugoslavia. In the nineteenth century nationalist revolutionary ideas had not in the end been realized by revolution, but by the Machiavellian method, that of one powerful state gathering the others around it by its own efforts, as work of art. Thus did Piedmont create Italy and Prussia Germany. Now Serbia saw itself following in a great tradition as the "Piedmont of the south Slavs". Nationalist revolutions seemed to lead to statehood and statehood to expansion to its natural limits, Greater Serbia, Greater Bulgaria, Greater Greece under the Phil-Hellenic idea. There was nothing standing in the way, or so it appeared to these states, except the Turks and their unraveling power, distracted and held at bay by Italian forces in North Africa. A tepid Austro-Russian warning against war was issued on 7 October 1912. It was answered the next day by Montenegro declaring war.

The rest of the Balkan League quickly followed Montenegro into war against Turkey. No one took their military threat seriously. The great powers all expected that Turkey would defeat them. Especially as the Turks freed themselves from the war with Italy by relinquishing Tripoli. But they learned that they had underestimated the Balkan League. When they charged the Bulgarian lines the Turks were halted and driven back into Thrace, ultimately to within 30 kilometers of Constantinople. This alarmed Russia who warned feebly that she would send her fleet to keep Bulgaria from taking Constantinople. The Serbs raced down the Vardar river valley through Macedonia toward Salonika. The Greeks got there first, just hours ahead of the jealous Bulgarians.

Epirus and Aegean Macedonia were in Greek hands. Serbia took part of Macedonia and the Sanjak, drove into Albania, and reached the port of Durazzo. "They brought their steeds to water in the Adriatic," said King Nicholas of Montenegro. His own forces took the Albanian port of Scutari. The Balkan League had given the Turks a bad beating and essentially driven them out of Europe.

Austria realized she had lost along with Turkey. Count Berchtold, who had replaced Aehrenthal in 1910, announced that he would not tolerate Serbia as an Adriatic power and came out for an independent Albania. In this he was backed by Italy, who had her own reasons for feeling the same way. After some hesitation, the Germans threw in their support. The Triple Alliance was starting to look functional after all. Even Grey sided with them and sent some cruisers to threaten Montenegro over Scutari. Russia stood by the Serbs, at least for the moment. Austria mobilized some troops to threaten Serbia, and Russia sent some to the Caucasus to threaten Turkey. The two alliance systems seemed ready for a showdown. Poincare was encouraging Russia to be firm in support of Serbia. However, this time he could not say, as he had in August, that the British were on board. Russia was in fact more worried about the Bulgarians approaching Constantinople and was considering fighting them over it. For this she would have to seek transit rights from Romania, and Romania would have to have compensation, in this case the town of Silistria. Moreover, Russia was not keen to stand up to the Austrian-Italian-British armada. When asked about a Serbian-Montenegrin port on the Adriatic, Sazonov said: "I am not prepared to collaborate with Montenegro in setting the world on fire so that King Nicholas might cook an omelet." About King Nicholas a story was told, no doubt apocryphal, that a journalist once asked him: How great were the Montenegrin armed forces? He answered that "Together with our Russian ally, we are one million strong." "But how many without Russia?" asked the journalist. "Ah," said the King, "But Montenegro will never desert its allies."

Russia had to back down again, as she had in the annexation of Bosnia in 1908. It was difficult not to see a pattern in this and tempting for the Germans and Austrians to think it was a congenital pattern. The two alliance systems would face off, Britain would warn generally and tilt toward the Triple Alliance, and Russia

would back down. In this case, why not? Russia was a net gainer, one had to think, from the first Balkan war. And Austria and Germany were net losers. The great powers would have to codify the gains made by Balkan middle rank powers. In May 1913 the Treaty of London made peace on the basis of "the principle of effective occupation," more or less the principle they had applied in the scramble for Africa and in international life generally.

But there was a very sharp reaction on the part of the losers. The extreme nationalists in Turkey made a *coup d'etat* and established the pro-German Enver Pasha in power. Austria looked toward Bulgaria to break up the Balkan League. She had already given a powerful indirect push to the process, by turning Serbia away from the Adriatic. Serbia was bound to want compensation for the loss of Albania and bound to seek it in Macedonia and conflict with Bulgaria. For her part Bulgaria was unhappy at having done most of the fighting and having got less of Macedonia than expected. The Tsar who was originally designated by the Balkan League to oversee the settlement and division of spoils, refused to help. Actually in order to prompt Russia to intervene, the incredulous Bulgarians attacked Greece and Serbia. But this time Bulgaria was herself attacked by Romania and Turkey as well. Austria had tried to guide Bulgarian diplomacy, suggesting that she buy off Romania, but without success¹¹. Bulgaria was rapidly defeated by the combination that would later produce a Balkan entente in 1934, that is, all of her neighbors against Bulgaria. The Greeks and Serbs held on their gains in Macedonia, Turkey got back Adrianople and East Thrace. Failing to fend off this bloc, Bulgaria managed only to hang on to its little stretch of coast in West Thrace. At the end of it, the Austrians were not satisfied that they had got a proper revenge for the first Balkan war.

The great powers had tried their best to restrain the little states of the Balkans but had to realize that they were losing control of the process of the partition of the Ottoman Empire. The Albanian problem continued to fester, with Serbia conducting periodic raids. Austria warned and warned. She had got only confused response to her appeals to the Germans for backing, but now, inexplicably the Kaiser was fed up with Serbia and ready for war. "Now or never," he said, "we must finally have order down there." He told the Austrians: "I stand by you and am ready to draw the saber whenever

your action makes it necessary.” Ready to draw the saber against Russia, once must suppose, and over Albania! On his side, Sazonov told the Serbs to leave Albania alone and be content for the moment with their other gains, in order to be ready “when the time comes to lance the Austro-Hungarian abscess, which has not yet come to a head as has the Turkish one.” Ready for the partition the Habsburg Empire!

Bulgaria now gave up on the Tsar and turned more and more toward the Triple Alliance, which gave an appearance of health after its renewal in December 1912. Romania, excited by its first easy military victory, began to think about Transylvania, with its three million Romanians. To get it from Austria-Hungary, the support of Russia and a general war would be needed. Thus Romania, Serbia and Greece leaned toward the Triple Entente for backing against Austria, Turkey and Bulgaria, while Turkey and Bulgaria leaned toward the Triple Alliance. It was a situation of which we have seen a recent echo, in 1993-4 when an independent Macedonia was opposed by Greece, who looked to Serbia and Romania for support, with Croatia, Germany, and Turkey on the other side. In 1913 Turkey looked to Germany. Enver Pasha asked for German help to organize his army, and the German General Liman von Sanders took command of the garrison at Constantinople. When the French and the Russians learned of this, they thought they were being faced with German control of the Ottoman Empire. They protested vehemently. Germany had to back down and remove von Sanders from his post.

Even so, there was ample reason for Germany to think that its diplomatic situation had improved as a result of the Balkan wars. It was impressive that Britain, Italy and Austria had forced Serbia and Montenegro to evacuate Scutari and the Adriatic port of Durrazzo. It was tempting to think that Britain was taking its distance from the Triple Entente and the idea of *revanche*. German foreign Minister Bethman-Hollweg thought he saw “a new orientation in English policy,” with “a mediating element, a calming and retarding influence upon Russia”¹². It looked for all the world like the lineup produced by the Mediterranean agreement of 1887, when the three powers had joined in resolving to protect the status quo in the Mediterranean, at that time threatened by Russian pressure against Bulgaria. It had been a crowning moment of Anglo-German cooperation directed by the two

giants, Salisbury and Bismarck. It had been so spellbinding that Holstein and the other German leaders who succeeded Bismarck were subsequently tempted to think in terms of permanent action against Russia, to the point that they dropped their Reinsurance treaty with Russia in anticipation of a shining future of Anglo-German amity. Were things returning to that in 1914? To be sure, Italy continued to show signs of slipping out of the Triple Alliance. But, Germans were tempted to think, if the Italians were capable of seeing it from the German point of view, they might one day have all of North Africa presently owned by France. Italy would thereby rise to the rank of a world power.

Britain, the center piece of all these vague German hopes, had to consider the same possibilities. Grey relished his role as leading statesman of the European concert and honest broker between the blocs. But he also followed through on the decision to move the British fleet to the Channel and turn the defense of British interests in the Mediterranean over to the French, who would move their Channel fleet there. It may have looked to German observers as if Britain would have been available to the Triple Alliance had it just been a question of Russia. But Britain had to defend France and France needed Russia. Grey also had to think about Italy: was she ready to cast in her lot with the Triple Alliance in a bid for great things? Fear of that possibility was another reason for Britain to participate in the defense of the Franco-Russian Alliance in war against the Triple Alliance. If Britain actually tried to stay out of a general European war, the French would have to bring their fleet out of the Mediterranean to defend their Atlantic coast. The Mediterranean would be left to Italy. The vital British trade routes through the Mediterranean would be threatened. This was a little like the situation Britain would later have had to face if she had attempted to stay out of war with Hitler. It was with this in mind, said Grey in the House of Commons on 3 August 1914, as the war was breaking out, that British ships were committed to protecting the French Atlantic coast from any German attack¹³. Churchill had complained to Grey that “we have the obligations of an alliance without its advantages.”¹⁴. He did not mention the one great advantage: that Britain had gained France and Russia for a war of continental coalition.

So world war one has to be recorded as a balance of power war, a war of continental coalition against a threatening European "hegemon" who was also a rival of Britain on the high seas. Not that Britain expected it when it finally came. Grey entertained illusions about his freedom of action between the blocs. In the first months of 1914 it appeared that an Anglo-German détente had been solidly forged. Britain and Germany agreed on the legacy of the Portuguese colonies in Africa. They divided spheres of influence along the "road to India," or at least that part of it that was paved by the Berlin-to-Baghdad railway. This was not a durable solution but really only a prelude to further disputes that would have involved the fate of the Ottoman Empire. In fact, the Anglo-German détente was quickly followed by war between the partners. In the aftermath of the Great War and down to our time, historians have pondered the path not taken, an Anglo-German settlement, perhaps in the 1898-1901 period when attempts to that end were made¹⁵. How much better the twentieth century would have been for the British Empire. The assumption is that Anglo-German agreement would have brought peace and quiet. But it would have done the opposite. If the British granted Germany equal status as a world power, good relations would have required mutual support, for example, against the United States in Manila Bay in 1898, in Hawaii in 1899, in Venezuela in 1902, in China, in Mexico, and later on, in the Middle East. In fact, because of German naval inferiority, Britain would have had to take the lead against the United States. Often this would mean finishing something the Germans had started. Much easier and more in keeping with British traditions to keep its American cousins happy and to keep faith with its European allies. There was not so great a choice as regret for the carnage of 1914-18 later led many to conjure. In the end Britain had to follow the logic of commitments built up between 1902 and 1907.

The lineup in the world war was determined as much by world politics as by purely European disputes. War broke out on the southeastern edge of Europe where the Near Eastern Question had prompted a succession of crises and wars since the mid-eighteenth century. But the crisis that produced the war originated in the dawn of world politics in the Far East at the turn of the century, and evolved through a chain of wars and revolutions that returned the focus of conflict to the question of the partition of the Ottoman Empire. Since this had been on the

agenda throughout the nineteenth century a general war over it could not have been regarded as a surprise. It was most likely that the European powers would fight "where the Austrian road to Salonika crossed the Serbian road to the Adriatic"¹⁶. That was where it finally happened. But, had it not, there were other roads and crossings where the interests of the expanding prospective world powers would have intersected.

2. TWO REVOLUTIONS

Had it not been the Balkans it might have been in the domains of the other world sick man, China. After 1905, Japan and Russia were ready to defend their spheres of influence. A month before the Anglo-Russian Entente, in July 1907, Russia and Japan agreed on northern Manchuria and Outer Mongolia as a Russian sphere, with Japan getting a free hand in Korea, southern Manchuria and Inner Mongolia. Britain and France looked on this benignly. The Chinese feared the worst. Like the Young Turks, the clique around the Empress Dowager decided that a vast program of westernizing reforms, the centerpiece of which was abolition of the traditional civil service examinations, was necessary to preserve China and protect her from partition. They even tried to revive ethnic Manchu militarism. They also sought to consolidate China's rail system. This of course could not be achieved against the will of the foreign powers but perhaps their interests in financing the project could be played off and balanced in such a way that Japan and Russia would have to submit. Thus China in effect wagered on the Open Door to stave off partition along Russian and Japanese lines.

China looked to the United States to provide the fulcrum of the balance. This made sense in the day of President Taft's Dollar Diplomacy, when there was a continuing business interest on the American side. The New York Central Railway tycoon E.H. Harriman dreamed of a round the world railway linking up the existing steamship and rail lines, and looked for a link to the Trans-Siberian railway. He drew up a memo proposing Japanese-American control of the South Manchurian railway directly after the Portsmouth peace in 1905, but failed to win Japanese assent. Then he and the former State department official Willard Straight, who had become Harriman's agent, proposed a line to run from Chihli gulf north through the Japanese and Russian spheres of Manchuria, to the Amur

river, bypassing Vladivostok and Port Arthur. The Chinese saw this as a possible competitor for the business of the South Manchurian railway. Russia and Japan sent up a howl of opposition, and the idea had to be dropped. Where Roosevelt thought it important to recognize Japan's "vital interests" in Korea and Manchuria, his successor Taft, rather less impressed with Japanese power, thought that economic arrangements could still be pursued as a normal extension of the idea of the Open Door. The Japanese and the Russians cared nothing for the Open Door. Their treaty of July 1910 took note instead of the two powers' "special interests" in the region. One month later Japan annexed Korea. Russia established a protectorate in Outer Mongolia the following year.

The Chinese attempted to break up the British monopoly on the commerce of the Yangtse river. They offered a rail concession to Germany for a line from Hankow, the Yangtse port at the center of British industrial holdings, to Canton on the coast. When the British protested this, the Chinese moved the Germans into the upper Yangtse valley and satisfied the British by granting future earmarks on extensions of the line, the "Hukuang concession"¹⁷. This was a little like the division shaping up in Mesopotamia in 1914. But Taft insisted on inclusion in the deal. He suggested that the powers raise a loan for China to allow it to buy back the Chinese Eastern and Manchurian railways. Japan protested and Russia threatened to send troops. Grey backed off, pledging British respect for Japanese interests, promising the Australians, who were worried about Japanese expansionism, that Japanese power and immigration would now be headed in the opposite direction, toward the Asian mainland. The British were not very enthusiastic about rail lines linking to the area of their special interests, the Yangtse valley. The American press, encouraged by the rambunctious American diplomat Willard Straight, denounced the British flabbiness. Yet the problem was being settled peacefully when a revolt of Chinese provincial gentry, who were outraged at the railway concessions to the foreign powers, rose up to form a Provincial Railway League demanding cancellation of the foreign loans and concessions. With the aid from the Kuomintang of Sun Yat-sen in the south, they overthrew the Manchu dynasty. The republic was proclaimed on New Year's Day, 1912 with Sun as its first President. Ironically,

despite the desperate hopes of the Manchus that the Open Door would prevent partition, the Chinese revolution began as a revolt against the Open Door and Dollar Diplomacy.

Sun had long been supported by the Japanese, whom he had regarded as the mainstay of the revolt against the western imperialists ever since their glorious victories over Russia in 1905 and the resulting Russian revolution. Sun was a bit of a dilettante, to put it mildly. When he was in England in 1896-7, he had expressed admiration for various strands of western radicalism, including the single-tax theories of Henry George, the American IWW, the works of Kropotkin, and ordinary social democracy. Years later he was enthusiastic for the traditions of Russian *narodnichestvo* and for Bolshevism. Like the Balkan radicals of various ideological tendencies, Chinese rebels marched behind the banner of the nationalists¹⁸. These looked to Japan as their main source of consistent support. In fact the Chinese revolution did not mean consolidation of the country but continued conflict. The cause of Chinese unity under the rubric of the Open Door was ruined. It may be that the revolution was driven more by racial motives against the Manchus than by democratic republicanism. If the foreigners could have been expelled it would probably have mattered little to the average Chinese whether the country would be run by Sun or by Beijing¹⁹. At any rate, American policy was foiled. It seemed that Japan and Russia, representing partition into spheres of influence, had won out. Russia tightened its grip on Mongolia. Britain did the same in Tibet.

Revolution in China was highly congenial to Japanese interests. The Japanese saw nothing but opportunities, so many that they could hardly choose among them. Many Japanese officials favored Yuan Shih-kai, but the army wanted to support Sun Yat-sen and the nationalists. Japanese officers in Manchuria lobbied for getting tough with Russia and moving them out of north Manchuria and Mongolia. There was no one policy line in Tokyo, rather a "diversity of sub-imperialisms"²⁰. A Japanese project to support a Manchu revival actually drove Sun into the hands of Yuan Shih-kai, to whom he eventually deferred. But the Japanese correctly saw that Sun and Yuan could not live together. A second Kuomintang revolt soon broke up the cohabitation. Japan knew that Chinese central power could not be easily consolidated. There

would no doubt be years of civil war in China's future, in which Japan was splendidly placed to intervene. Of course, other powers might back anti-Japanese forces. America might have been expected to play this role, but President Woodrow Wilson, who recognized the revolutionary regime just as civil war between Yuan and the Kuomintang erupted, was not at all disposed toward Dollar Diplomacy in the Far East. Even so, how long could the United States have looked with indifference on the prospect of Japan dominating China? If Japan had an easy time of that would they look toward India, or Mexico?

Wilson was in fact much more interested at this time in the world politics of the Mexican revolution. American conceptions of the Monroe Doctrine were undergoing transformation because of strategic considerations such as those cited by Alfred Thayer Mahan in 1890. In the age of a new navalism, the United States must not only keep all other naval powers further off than 14 days from the American West Coast. It must control Hawaii. It must prevent an isthmian canal being built by anyone else, and preferably build one itself. It must deny another power any greater access to ports in the Caribbean or on the coast of the Central American states. The Monroe Doctrine had not prevented numerous British and French interventions during the age of sail. But Mahan's admonitions were taken more seriously after they had to be considered in terms of German *Weltpolitik* or Greater Britain. The dispute over Venezuela in 1895-6 had presented the European powers with a new and more aggressive theory of the Monroe Doctrine. Somehow, however, American fiat was still not necessarily considered to be law, as secretary Olney had asserted in 1895. In 1902, the Germans, followed by the British, French, and Italians, decided to test it by asserting their right to collect debts from the rebel Venezuelan President Cipriano Castro.

It was distressingly similar to the crises in Tunis, Egypt, or on the China coast. Gunboat diplomacy might end with some kind of non-American control over customs revenues, or some other device for wedging a new Kiaochow into the Caribbean. When the coast was bombarded and Venezuelan ships were attacked, Roosevelt sent American ships to the area and insisted on arbitration. First Lansdowne and then Bulow backed down²¹. When Roosevelt had completed the process of separating Panama

from Colombia, he declared the Roosevelt Corollary of the Monroe Doctrine, according to which the United States would collect debts owed to others and maintain an exclusive right to preventive intervention. Americans had to have vivid memories of the debt collecting expedition of 1861, when the British, French, and Spanish fleets had landed at Vera Cruz. This had been a prelude to French troops setting up Maximilian the Habsburg as Emperor of Mexico. After the civil war was over, the United States demanded an end to this project, which, had the North not won the war, would certainly have served as a point of departure for European intervention in a North American balance of power including perhaps five states. In 1904 Roosevelt was in effect saying to Europe: no more Vera Cruzes. This story is usually told by historians as a morality play illustrating the impositions made by the powerful United States against its hapless neighbors. The international context of the era of navalism and *Weltpolitik* is not always taken into account.

The United States monitored the sometimes intense commercial and financial competition between Americans on the one hand and Germans, British and French on the other, a competition it accepted in places like Haiti and Nicaragua. But it brooked no rivals in the strategic field. It was easy enough to observe this distinction when it came to investment in various Caribbean products, but less easy when it came to oil. By 1910 Mexico had emerged as a major oil producer soon to be second in the world (that is, second only to the USA who had perhaps three quarters of the total). Firms under the directorship of Sir Weetman Pearson, Lord Cowdray, controlled half of the Mexican oil, mainly through his Mexican Eagle Oil Company. This at a time when the British navy had taken the decision to convert from coal to oil. Every British capital ship laid down after the Haldane mission in 1912 was fueled by oil. But where was Britain to find a truly secure supply of this oil? German firms had already got a foothold in Romania. The British looked to the Gulf and to Persia, but Mexico was already supplying one quarter of the world's needs. So it seemed that the British navy was to be dependent for its oil on the holdings of Lord Cowdray. And Cowdray was dependent on the regime of Porfirio Diaz, who was overthrown in 1911. The American ambassador, Henry Lane Wilson, expressed fear of the succeeding revolutionary government of Francisco Madero,

which he later told Congress was in the pay of Standard Oil. For him there was a direct connection between the business rivalries and the clash of British and American security interests²².

At any rate, Madero's regime shortly let loose a series of revolutionary and counter-revolutionary warlord regimes in north Mexico. The Zapata brothers, Pancho Villa, the Yaqui tribe and other regimes held sway over various sections of the country. Madero proved unable to rein them in and was soon overthrown and shot in a putsch by one of his generals, Victoriano Huerta. In the view of American officials like Ambassador to London Walter Hines Page, Huerta was a puppet of Lord Cowdray. William Jennings Bryan complained that the wickedness of the British Empire was such that it had handed over its Mexican policy to the "oil barons". Wilson's closest confidant, Colonel House, wrote to Page that, in view of the fact that revolutions could be easily arranged "for the purpose of loot," the United States should not recognize and thus legitimize any regime so constituted. This was a new "Wilson Doctrine" redefining the Monroe Doctrine in a way that might be hostile to the idea of the Open Door. It set the United States in principle against revolution and dictatorship in Latin America.

It also implied an attempt to overthrow Huerta. Ambassador Wilson and President Taft had been willing to live with Huerta and try to keep American arms out the hands of his potential opponents, but Wilson set himself on removing him, removing the arms embargo and turning to the *Constitutionalistas* of Venustiano Carranza. Standard Oil men thought that Cowdray's money was keeping Huerta in power. Wilson on his side was ideologically attracted to the idea of a constitutional alternative. Britain recognized Huerta and tried to negotiate 50-100 year contracts for the supply of oil for the British navy. Wilson was adamant and his Republican opponents were pressing him for action to defend American interests. He sent Huerta an ultimatum in November 1913, to resign or face the consequences. Grey and the British had to try to mollify Wilson. Grey assured the President that Lord Cowdray did not make British foreign policy. Grey would join with Wilson in urging Huerta to step down. But the German Ambassador, Admiral von Hintze, quickly offered to step into the breach and support the failing Huerta. Within days three German freighters with weapons for Huerta

were on their way. In order to intercept them, Wilson scrambled to blockade and then invade Vera Cruz in April 1914²³.

This was about the time when Britain and Germany were arranging their entente on the Baghdad railway and the Portuguese colonies. But the Anglo-German contacts did not mean, could never mean, what the Germans needed them to mean, that Germany and Britain might see eye to eye outside Europe against the United States. For his part, the Kaiser was delighted that things had reached the point where the Americans had been driven to intervene in Mexico. He supposed that all of Latin America would be rising up against the Yankees in the same way that he imagined the Muslim world would be rising up against the British and French. He urged collaboration with Britain to thwart the American designs on Mexico and suggested to the British that in the future they would have no trouble delineating German and British spheres of influence there. The Kaiser thought it was 1861 again. This time he imagined that the Japanese would be useful in the project. German agents did their best to reconnoiter ports on the Central American coasts, sniffing around the Santa Margarita isles off Venezuela in 1901 and Magdalena Bay in Lower California in 1902. Washington had to weigh constant rumors, some of them floated by German agents: the Japanese were buying a Mexican base, or landing troops for an invasion of the United States, or planning to seize the Panama Canal site, or negotiating for a canal across Nicaragua, or for a Tehuantepec railway lease. The Japanese Admiral Yashiro created a stir by his visit to Mexico in 1911, when he told a banquet in his honor of the similarity of the two states, both possessing volcanoes which can erupt at any moment and make the world tremble with their fury²⁴. Japanese relations with America were then embittered by a sharp dispute about discriminatory legislation against Japanese in California. Two years later Japan was shipping weapons to Huerta to help him resist America.

Wilson soon realized that Vera Cruz was a dead end, unless he intended to conquer Mexico. When Huerta fled to Spain in a German ship, the American troops left as well. The Carranza government, having benefited from the U.S. invasion, nevertheless turned sharply against the Americans afterward. They welcomed help in their distress but feared the impositions of the chivalrous. Then the war in Europe broke out.

It was not long before German influence in the Carranza government increased dramatically. Germany subsidized 23 newspapers, sent small arms and planes to Carranza, even encouraged Japanese ships to show the flag off the Mexican coast in 1916. Carranza's supporters spoke worriedly about his being blatantly pro-German and too much impressed with the Japanese political model. He approved a German submarine base and even carried on vague discussion about military action against the U.S.²⁵

Like the Kaiser's Germany, Imperial Japan was not at all chagrined at the rumors about its ambitions and possible liaisons, assuming that these only demonstrated that she had arrived as a world power and came with the advantage of increasing her "alliance value." Yet, while the world war was raging, American officials were already dreading the threats of the post war world. Secretary Lansing worried in 1916 that "if German militarism and autocratic government survive the war, they will renew the attack on democracy and the two powers they will approach will be Russia and Japan, equally autocratic and expansionist"²⁶.

The world politics that led to the world war was driven by aggressive and expansionist actors in a scramble that knew no limits, in effect, a scramble for the world. A causal chain links the Sino-Japanese war, the Anglo-Japanese alliance, the Russo-Japanese war, the Russian revolution, the Persian revolution, the Young Turk revolution, the seizure of Bosnia, Morocco, and Tripoli, the Balkan wars, and the world war. Thus the scramble moved like a whirlwind between the spheres of the two "sick men" of world politics, China and the Ottoman Empire. The chain of wars and revolutions would extend through the following decades. Once this point emerges, the conflict unleashed in 1914 by the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand seems less accidental. It might be thought that war had to come when it did and could only come in the Balkans; anywhere else the stakes were sufficiently low that cooler heads prevailed. It used to be argued this way with regard to the "settlement" of the disputes over the Baghdad railway or the Portuguese colonies. But the Balkan crisis was also "settled" in 1909, and again in 1912. As with most of the other disputes, to settle it, someone had to back down. It was not settled in 1914 because Russia did not back down as she had in 1909 and 1912. If she had, war might have had another locus of

outbreak, in China, perhaps even in Mexico or Mesopotamia, or Manchuria, Ethiopia, or Pearl Harbor.

NOTES

¹ Cit. en: Spector, Ivar, *The First Russian Revolution: Its Impact on Asia*. Engelwood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, 100.

² Keddie, Nikki, *Roots of Revolution*. New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1981, 72.

³ Cf. Lieven, D.C.B., *Russia and the Origins of the First World War*. New York, St. Martin's, 1983, 32; McDonald, McClaren, David, *United Government and Foreign Policy in Russia, 1900-1914*. Harvard, Harvard University Press, 1992), 13.

⁴ Cf. Shuster, W. Morgan, *The Strangling of Persia*. New York, Century, 1912, 252-261.

⁵ Billington, James, *Fire in the Minds of Men*. New York, Basic Books, 1980, 505-506; Nadine Lange-Akhund, *The Macedonian Question, 1893-1908*. New York and Boulder, Columbia University Press, 1998, 327.

⁶ Cf. Schmitt, Bernadotte, *The Annexation of Bosnia*, New York, Fertig, 1970 (First ed. 1937), 9.

⁷ Cf. Albertini, Luigi von, *Origins of the War of 1914*. London, Oxford University Press, 1952, vol. 1, 195.

⁸ Cf. Lord Eversley; Chirol, Sir Valentine, *The Turkish Empire*. London, Fisher Unwin, 1917, 350-351.

⁹ Cf. Meade Earle, Edward, *Turkey, the Great Powers, and the Baghdad Railway*. New York, Macmillan, 1924, 226-229.

¹⁰ Cit. en: Keiger, John, F.V., *France and the Origins of the First World War*. London, Macmillan, 1983, 119.

¹¹ Cf. Williamson, Samuel R., *Austria-Hungary and the Origins of the First World War*. London and Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1991, 144-145.

¹² Cf. Bethman-Hollweg to Berchthold, 10 February 1913. *Grosse Politik*, vol. 34, n° 12818, Cit. in Seton-Watson, R.W., *Britain and Europe, 1789-1914*. Cambridge, Cambridge, University Press, 1945, 641.

¹³ Text in Rohrbach, Paul, *Germany's Isolation*. Chicago, McClurg, 1915, 155-176

¹⁴ Churchill to Grey, 23 August 1912, Text in *The World Crisis* (New York, Scribners, 1949) (first published 1923), 70.

¹⁵ Vid. D'Agostino, Anthony, "Revisionist Tradition," 274-5. For a recent statement of the thesis, Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War*. New York, Basic Books, 1999.

¹⁶ Pears, Edwin, *Forty Years in Constantinople*. New York, Appleton, 1915, 334.

¹⁷ A term denoting the Hupeh and Hunan districts. Vid. Morinosuke Kajima, *The Emergence of Japan as a World Power, 1895-1925*. Tokyo, Charles Tuttle, 1968, 195, 365-367.

¹⁸ Cf. Lange-Akhund, *Macedonian Question*, 32-33; Martin Bernal, "The Triumph of Anarchism over

Marxism, 1906-7". In Wright, Mary (ed.) *China in Revolution: The First Phase, 1900-1913*. New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1968, 97, 125.

¹⁹ Cf. Ch'en, Jerome, *Yuan Shih-kai, 1899-1916*. Stanford University Press, 1961, 135.

²⁰ The phrase of W.G. Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism, 1894-1945*. Oxford, Clarendon, 1987, 104.

²¹ Ferguson curiously counts the naval demonstration as evidence of an Anglo-German community of interest. Vid. "What if Britain had 'Stood Aside' in August 1914?", in Ferguson, Niall, *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals*. New York, Basic Books, 1997, 239.

²² For Diaz's business with Lord Cowdray, Vid. Webster, Arthur, *Woodrow Wilson y Mexico: Un caso de intervención*. Mexico city, Ediciones de Andrea, 1964, 6-13; and Hill, Larry, *Emissaries to a Revolution: Woodrow Wilson's Executive Agents in Mexico*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1973, 92-100, 107.

²³ Cf. Quirk, Robert, *An Affair of Honor: Woodrow Wilson and the Occupation of Vera Cruz*. Louisville, University of Kentucky Press, 1962, 3-8.

²⁴ Cf. Tuchman, Barbara, *The Zimmerman Telegram*. New York, Ballantine, 1966, 32.

²⁵ For German interests in Mexico, Vid. Richmond, Douglas, *Venustiano Carranza's Nationalist Struggle, 1893-1920*. Lincoln and London, University of Nebraska Press, 1983, 203-209; and Martin, Percy Alvin, *Latin America and the War*. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1925, 522-37.

²⁶ Tuchman, Barbara, *Zimmerman Telegram...*, op. cit., 60.