

**Friendship at Any Cost?
Russian Influence on Anglo-Germans Relations, 1890-1914**

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with Honors in History

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Introduction

The history of European diplomatic relations in the years prior to the First World War has continued to fascinate historians and engender scholarly research. One area of particular interest has been the history of Anglo-German relations. Numerous analyses have been made trying to decipher and explain the factors that caused the startling deterioration of Anglo-German relations from good relations in the 1890s and negotiations for a possible alliance in 1901-1902 to the British declaration of war on Germany on August 4, 1914. The majority opinion holds that Britain's foreign policy decisions from 1900 to 1914 were rational responses to the growing power and threat of the German Empire. The minority view, most prominently championed by Sir Herbert Butterfield, argues that an irrational anti-German sentiment gripped the Foreign Office from 1900 to 1914 and that Britain attempted to turn Russian ambitions away from the Far East and Central Asia, where it could threaten vital British interests in China and India, by adopting pro-Russian policies to the detriment of Anglo-German relations. In my thesis, I intend to analyze the veracity of this minority view and evaluate whether it should be incorporated into the existing historical analysis of European diplomatic relations from 1890 to 1914. My research is not intended to necessarily supplant the current scholarly work on this subject, but it is intended to add another perspective on British foreign policy of the period.

One of the most controversial figures in the study of Anglo-German relations in the years leading up to the First World War remains Sir Edward Grey. Whether he was a balanced and wise statesman who attempted to retain the European balance-of-power or an indecisive puppet to Germanophobes in the Foreign Office, Russian diplomats, or British public opinion has proven to be an extensive and interesting debate. Zara Steiner and F.H. Hinsley represent the majority view that Britain's foreign policy actions resulted from a rational calculation of German

power and the threat it potentially posed to Britain, but some of their arguments rest on the misleading and propagandistic work of British historians writing during the war such as Gilbert Murray.

F.H. Hinsley defends the policies of Edward Grey as reasonable and measured in his analysis of Grey's foreign policy. Hinsley points out that Grey did believe that Germany was a threat, but he also says that Grey only considered Germany a threat if it worked in concert with Russia. So, Grey's foreign policy was oriented to prevent a rapprochement between Germany and Russia that could destroy the European balance-of-power. Therefore, Grey concluded naval agreements with Russia over the Baltic and stymied Russo-German negotiations on railroad construction in the Middle East in order to prevent the two powers from becoming closer.¹ While Grey feared Russo-German cooperation, he attempted to maintain cordial relations with each power individually. After Grey achieved the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, the British helped Germany quell a rebellion in Namibia, concluded a secret agreement with Germany dividing up the Portuguese colonies, and cooperated with Germany to defuse the Bosnian Crisis in 1908 to the chagrin of the Russians.² Hinsley also attacks one of the primary positions of those who believe that Grey capitulated to the Russians, that Grey made too many concessions in the negotiations over Persia, by stating that Britain's seemingly paltry share of Persia, the Seistan Triangle, was all that was necessary for Grey to achieve his primary objective: the defense of India. Hinsley's assertions that Grey initiated diplomatic deals with Russia to prevent a Russo-German rapprochement echoes Gilbert Murray's argument that Grey approached Russia in a pragmatic way and that he did not initiate deals out of fear of Russian power in Central Asia.

¹ F. H. Hinsley, *British Foreign Policy under Sir Edward Grey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 219-224.

² Hinsley, 246.

While Hinsley's argument has merit in the period of 1905-1908, when Russia was severely weakened by its defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, but it does not hold after the Bosnian Crisis of October 1908. After the Bosnian Crisis, Germany became far more focused on the maintenance of its alliance with Austria-Hungary and more fearful of Russia after its rapid recovery from the Russo-Japanese War, so a rapprochement between the two powers was highly unlikely.

Finally, Zara Steiner argues that the *Entente Cordiale* was purely a negotiation between France and Britain over longstanding colonial disputes and not a concerted effort to encircle Germany and that the Entente only moved closer to an alliance in character as a result of the defeat of Russia in the Russo-Japanese War, which severely limited Russia's ability to cause trouble for Britain.³ She also points out that Grey pursued cooperation with Germany at the expense of Russia in the Bosnian Crisis and during the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913.⁴ She also explains that the Foreign Office had become anti-German long before Grey took control. She argues that Lord Hardinge stacked the Foreign Office with Germanophobes, but she also argues that Grey was not significantly swayed by their arguments, pointing to the Crowe Memorandum of 1907.⁵ Though it was circulated to the Cabinet by Grey, Steiner asserts that the memorandum did not significantly alter Grey's previous views on Germany. The major proponents of Grey's basic integrity maintain that Germany's avarice for colonies and the naval race made an *entente* with Germany impossible. Since better relations with France and Russia were possible at the

³ Zara Steiner, *Britain and the Origins of the First World War*, The Making of the 20th Century (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), 32.

⁴ Steiner, 89-111.

⁵ Steiner, 51.

same time, Grey pursued those avenues instead of dealing with the Germans who remained intractable on the two above points.

In contrast, some scholars believe that outside forces had an undue effect on Edward Grey's decisions. Paul Kennedy argues that the British press and the electoral politics of Britain influenced the considerations of the Foreign Office. He argues that Liberal politicians such as Rosebery were pressured by the press and interest groups to take a harder stance against German colonial squabbles because of the historical dominance of foreign policy by the Conservative Party.⁶ So, in order to ensure that votes for the Liberals were not lost because of a perceived weakness in foreign policy, Liberal British politicians refused to negotiate as easily as they might have. Kennedy suggests that these political considerations may have influenced Edward Grey to pursue a tougher foreign policy against Germany. However, Kennedy concludes that though the press and interest groups might have stoked fears of Germany for personal gain, the fears that they stoked were justified. German expansionism, especially in the naval race, necessitated Grey's decision to pursue closer ties with France and Russia as well as to adopt an anti-German stance.⁷

On the other hand, Sean McMeekin argues that Grey was entirely outmatched and outwitted by Russian diplomats, especially the wily Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Sazonov. One of the most egregious blunders in McMeekin's eyes was the final negotiation on Persia in 1914. Sazonov was able to convince Grey to recognize the current status quo in Persia, which unequivocally violated the 1907 Convention, and guarantee the Russian claim on Constantinople and the Straits in exchange for Russian recognition of British suzerainty in Egypt, which Britain

⁶ Kennedy, 215.

⁷ Kennedy, 467.

had occupied since 1882.⁸ Not only did Sazonov convince Grey that this was a good deal but he also manipulated Grey into delivering the Russian argument to the British Cabinet for him.

McMeekin also argues that Grey inadvertently gave the Russians a motive to prepare a preventative strike against Constantinople, Russia's primary strategic interest. Britain's aid in the modernization of the Turkish navy, it was going to supply Turkey with a dreadnought that would alone outclass all of the Russian vessels in the Black Sea Fleet, terrified Russia, and it accelerated secret Russian plans for a naval invasion of Constantinople.⁹ The fact that Grey did not seem to recognize that Russia would fear the strengthening of the Ottoman navy reveals that Russian fears and intentions were unknown to Britain and the rest of Europe, making Russia more likely to break the fragile peace.¹⁰ By threatening to deny Russia its primary strategic goal for the past few centuries, Grey accidentally put Russia into a situation in which it could not afford to back down in a diplomatic crisis.

Strangely enough, Zara Steiner occasionally offers an interpretation that argues against her overall thesis. She is very critical of Grey's conduct in Persia, and she accuses him of unnecessarily conceding several points to the Russians in the negotiations over Persia just because of Grey's fear that Russia will back out of the negotiations.¹¹ While she acknowledges the Anglo-German cooperation in the Balkans in 1908 and 1912-13, she argues that Britain was not as forceful as it should have been in maintaining the status quo in the Balkans because Grey feared alienating the Russians.¹² However, when discussing British policy toward Germany,

⁸ Sean McMeekin, *The Russian Origins of the First World War*, ACLS Humanities E-Book (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013), 124.

⁹ McMeekin, 35.

¹⁰ McMeekin, 36.

¹¹ Steiner, 81-82.

¹² Steiner, 117-120.

Steiner is much more supportive of Grey's policies. This could be because Steiner does not connect the two policies in any meaningful way. *Vis a vis* Germany, she believes that Grey was a tough but fair diplomat. *Vis a vis* Russia, she believes that Grey was too trusting and too generous to the Russian government. She never considers whether the two policies are connected. For example, Steiner gives relatively little importance to the Anglo-Russian naval talks of 1914 and how they influenced Anglo-German relations. Steiner notes that Grey did consider the German reaction to the talks, but she asserts that Grey had already made up his mind to support France and Russia against German ambitions, so Germany's reaction was not important.¹³ No amount of German protest would sway Grey's decision to pursue the talks. Therefore, Steiner concludes that the negotiations were unimportant because the two great camps of Europe had already been determined.

Christopher Clark provides a well-constructed argument against the ability and character of Edward Grey. He asserts that Grey's attempts to construct a four-power peace conference, which did not include Austria-Hungary or Russia, were half-hearted because of its total indifference toward the reality of the situation in Austria-Hungary.¹⁴ Clark also posits that Grey and his allies held too many influential posts in both the Foreign Office and the British government. Coupled with Grey's anti-German outlook, his monopoly on foreign affairs dictated how the Anglo-German, as well as the Anglo-Russian, relationship developed.¹⁵ Clark also charges that Grey was responsible for several underhanded maneuvers designed to further his own personal policy initiatives. Grey did not inform the Cabinet that he had made a military

¹³ Steiner, 123-124.

¹⁴ Christopher M. Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914*, 1st U.S. ed (New York: Harper, 2013), 495.

¹⁵ Clark, 383.

commitment to France to intervene if the First Morocco Crisis resulted in war between France and Germany, and Grey made sure that pro-German members of the Cabinet were not present when the Cabinet approved the measure that Britain would militarily intervene on the side of France if the Agadir Crisis came to war.¹⁶ According to Clark, these events show that Grey let his determination to stand by the Entente and to oppose Germany outweighed his duty to consult the Cabinet about decisions that could drag Britain into a Continental war. Clark also tries to uphold the idea of Hebert Butterfield that Grey feared the rise of Russian power and forced Britain into the Entente to appease the Russians. In Clark's view, whether Grey viewed Germany or Russia as the bigger threat was irrelevant. Only by staying loyal to the Entente could Grey help defeat one threat, Germany, and gain favor with another, Russia, thereby securing British interests.¹⁷

A large portion of the arguments offered by those who believe that Grey was influenced by outside forces relies on a reinterpretation of the arguments forwarded by those who believe that Grey was a shrewd statesman. The most popular example is the Anglo-Russian Convention over Persia in 1907. Defenders of Edward Grey argue that it achieved all of the strategic aims that Britain set out to achieve and that allowing the Russians to gain more land in Persia afterward fostered further goodwill between the two power as long as Russia maintained a slim neutral zone between its territory and British territory. However, Edward Grey detractors point to the situation in Persia as the clearest sign of Grey's weakness. He did not get a large enough buffer zone to keep the Russians entirely in check, and he did nothing when the Russians completely disregarded the terms of the Convention of 1907, eventually capitulating altogether

¹⁶ Clark, 151-155.

¹⁷ Clark, 375.

during the Great War. They argue that he did this out of fear of Russian reprisal and of the deterioration of the “friendship” that he had built with the Russians. The negotiations over Persia either show that Grey was a rational statesman who knew when to make a deal to extricate Britain from an untenable position, trying to oppose further Russian expansion into Persia by force, or that Grey was a Machiavellian schemer who held no qualms about carving up the carcass of Persia in order to get the Russians on his side and to divert their attentions elsewhere.

Another major debate in the study of Anglo-German relations is the question of whether Britain viewed Germany or Russia as the bigger threat to British security. Much of this debate revolves around the German naval buildup starting in 1898 and the recovery of the Russian armed forces after the defeat in the Russo-Japanese War. The question of when the British became worried about the German naval buildup is an important component of this debate as well. There is widespread disagreement on when the British became concerned about the Germany navy. Volker Berghahn argues that the British became concerned as soon as the German Naval Bill of 1898 was passed.¹⁸ G.R. Searle points out that invasion literature, stories that chronicled a possible German invasion of Britain, first became popular around 1901-1902, but he attributes this to paranoia resulting from the dispatch of so many British troops to South Africa for the Boer War.¹⁹ Zara Steiner concurs with Searle that the British became aware of Germany naval program in 1901, but she also notes that the British were not yet distressed by it.²⁰ The first primary document to discuss the naval race between Britain and Germany is a 1906 dispatch from Fairfax Cartwright to Edward Grey, and Cartwright identifies it as the only major

¹⁸ Volker R. Berghahn, *Germany and the Approach of War in 1914*, 2nd ed (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 61.

¹⁹ G. R. Searle, *A New England?: Peace and War, 1886-1918*, The New Oxford History of England (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 298-299.

²⁰ Steiner, 31-32.

obstacle to better Anglo-German relations.²¹ The timing of this dispatch is very important. Cartwright's analysis of the situation was made after the destruction of the Russian fleet and the humiliation of its army in the Russo-Japanese War. Several proponents of the idea that Britain feared Russia more than Germany point out that it was natural for Britain to look at Germany as the most credible threat in the years 1905-1906 since the Russians were crippled in the war with Japan.

Paul Kennedy and Volker Berghahn, who focus heavily on the naval race between Britain and Germany, conclude that the naval competition represented an unavoidable and insurmountable obstacle to Anglo-German relations. Kennedy says that the proximity of the German fleet in Wilhelmshaven to the British Isles superseded any concern about Russian expansionism toward Britain's colonial possessions.²² However, proponents of Russia as the biggest threat to British security point to the rapid recovery of the Russian armed forces after the Russo-Japanese War. Sean McMeekin argues that Russia becomes far more aggressive after 1911 with its colonial exploits in China and Central Asia as well as its schemes in the Balkans, which coincides with the recovery of its armed forces.²³ McMeekin also suggests that Britain regarded Russia as a bigger threat than Germany because Britain was willing to make deals with Russia and concede to its demands. He attributes the supply of dreadnoughts to the Turkish navy in direct violation of Russia's vital strategic interests to the blundering ignorance of Edward Grey, and in fairness the rest of Europe, to Russia's fears.²⁴ After the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, Britain only sided against Russia when it threatened to ignite a general European war.²⁵

²¹ Great Britain. Foreign Office, *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914* (London: HMSO, 1926-1938), 370-372.

²² Kennedy, 419-421.

²³ McMeekin, 12.

²⁴ McMeekin, 36

²⁵ McMeekin, 32.

In contrast, Britain confronted Germany several times over both Continental and colonial issues. Britain felt comfortable confronting Germany because it did not fear open war with Germany as much as it feared open war with Russia.

Herbert Butterfield comes to much the same conclusion as Steiner, Hinsley, and Kennedy that the more immediate threat of Germany's ambitions obscured the farther off threat of Russia's rise to predominance on the Continent, but he does argue that there were two "monsters" in Europe: Germany and Russia. Butterfield rejects outright that Grey was blinded by personal anti-German bias, and he states that Grey was well aware of the threat posed by the Slavs.²⁶ Butterfield does believe that Grey behaved rationally in his foreign policy before 1914 and before the July Crisis, but he states that Grey does deserve criticism for his lack of diplomatic flexibility.²⁷ Grey, especially in the period of 1912-1914, failed to realize the immense bargaining power held by Britain because he allowed himself to be convinced that Britain would be isolated if he remained flexible.²⁸ Russia and France successfully kept Britain in the Entente camp by challenging Britain's reliability as an ally, as explained by Eyre Crowe's Minute from July 25, 1914.²⁹ Butterfield also blames Grey's policy of moving closer to Russia to secure Central Asia and the Far East for forcing Britain into the Entente camp. The fact that Britain could not afford to back up her interests with force in Central Asia represented one of the primary reasons for the conclusion of the Convention of 1907. This deal made British security contingent on appeasing the Russians. British diplomats reasoned that once the inevitable struggle between the two "monsters" of Europe came, it would be best for Britain to enter on the side of Russia. If Russia beat Germany by itself then Russia would become hostile to Britain, but

²⁶ Herbert Butterfield, "Sir Edward Grey in July 1914," *Historical Studies*, v, (1965): 1-25. Pg. 6.

²⁷ Butterfield, 19-20.

²⁸ Butterfield, 20.

²⁹ Butterfield, 13.

if Britain assisted Russia in defeating Germany then the new predominant power on the Continental would not threaten British interests out of gratitude. Therefore, fear of alienating Russia caused Britain to overlook and downplay continued Russian aggression in places like Persia, which in turn made aggressive moves by Germany look even worse.³⁰ Ultimately, Grey attempted to divert Russian attention away from Central Asia and toward the Balkans, sending the Russians into conflict with the other powers who held interest there: Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire.

Despite the well-researched and argued debates that continue to rage regarding the nature of Anglo-German relations, further research into several lingering questions is required. The question of the degree to which Grey was influenced by anti-German officials in the Foreign Office as well as the dispute over whether the British thought that Germany or Russia was the more menacing threat deserve more research. My further research will concentrate on the link between Anglo-German and Anglo-Russian relations since that link has rarely been pursued in the prevailing scholarship. How Anglo-German relations influenced Anglo-Russian relations and *vice versa* has rarely been explored, and it needs to be explored further in order to fully analyze the relationships between the powers. My research will analyze this link and evaluate the current perspective on Anglo-German relations. As I have shown, portions of the theory that Russia played a major role in Anglo-German relations have been explored by several scholars, but no comprehensive, unified case for this theory has yet been written. I will endeavor in my thesis to provide that comprehensive view of Russia's influence on Anglo-German relations.

³⁰ Butterfield, 21.

Chapter 1: Heligoland-Zanzibar to the Entente Cordiale

A number of factors contributed to the rapprochement between Great Britain and Germany from 1871 to 1890, culminating in the signing of the Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty on July 1, 1890. A mutual cultural affinity grew between the two nations after the creation of the German Empire in 1871, and growing Anglo-German business enterprises helped to solidify the positive images that the two countries had for one another.¹ In fact, by 1914 one-half of all international producer cartels were Anglo-German.² The British admired German efficiency and discipline, while the Germans respected Britain's glorious history of conquest and empire.³ A large exchange program developed between British and German universities.⁴ The conception of a shared heritage and history between Anglo-Saxon England and Teutonic Germany also inspired a sense of kinship between the two nations. So, both the British and German public were eager for a settlement that would cement good Anglo-German relations.

Though the Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty represented the highpoint of British and German citizens' opinions of each other, the politicians of Britain and Germany concluded the agreement for more pragmatic reasons. Britain relinquished control of Heligoland, a small archipelago in the North Sea, and in exchange Germany conceded claims in East Africa that would allow Britain to construct a railroad to Lake Victoria and gave the British a free hand over the Sultanate of Zanzibar.⁵ Also, Britain and Germany resolved border disputes between German

¹ Zara Steiner, *Britain and the Origins of the First World War, The Making of the 20th Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), 7.

² G. R. Searle, *A New England?: Peace and War, 1886-1918*, *The New Oxford History of England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 517.

³ Searle, 304.

⁴ Steiner, 7-8.

⁵ Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860-1914* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1980), 207-208.

Togoland and the British Gold Coast and between German Kamerun and British Nigeria.⁶ From the British perspective, the Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty served to eliminate future colonial squabbles over the land ceded by Germany in East Africa. Since Britain also faced colonial troubles with France in Africa and Russia in Central Asia, the elimination of one more potential colonial crisis by coming to an agreement with Germany helped to alleviate the growing economic strains of imperial defense.⁷ In Britain's view, this settlement preemptively settled future territorial disputes and allowed the British to focus on its disputes with Russia and France. The Conservative Party also desired a Continental ally to thwart Russian ambitions in Central Asia and the Far East and provide a counterbalance to the developing Franco-Russian rapprochement.

Leo von Caprivi, the German Chancellor, pursued the treaty in order to manipulate the domestic political situation in Germany. The specter of Bismarck, who had been ousted from the position of Chancellor by Wilhelm II in March 1890, haunted von Caprivi's government. Both von Caprivi and the German Foreign Office wanted to prove that Germany could execute a successful diplomatic deal without the Iron Chancellor.⁸ The treaty also helped to unify the fractious Reichstag and engender support for the government among the public. Though the more radical colonial interest groups soon began to criticize the deal, almost every major German newspaper praised the treaty.⁹ Most importantly, the deal acquired a valuable strategic point in the North Sea from which a hostile power could easily blockade Germany's North Sea ports.¹⁰ The Conservatives praised the reclamation of traditional German territory, Heligoland,

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Christopher M. Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914*, 1st U.S. ed (New York: Harper, 2013) 138.

⁸ Kennedy, 205-206.

⁹ Kennedy, 208-209.

¹⁰ Kennedy, 205.

while Liberals praised the abandonment of what they saw as useless colonial adventures in Africa.¹¹ The Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty represented the first time in Anglo-German relations that the two nations viewed a deal from radically different perspectives. The British regarded the treaty as a means of resolving foreign policy concerns over future colonial conflict with Germany and as a check against France and Russia while the Germans primarily saw the treaty as a way to alleviate the building political pressure between Conservatives and Liberals within the Reichstag as well as a way to pave the way for a future naval program.

Though the treaty was not explicitly intended by the Conservatives to drum up support for Germany among the British public, it subsequently caused a wave of pro-German fervor in the British press. Numerous Conservative British newspapers, such as *The Morning Post* and *The Standard*, hailed Germany as Britain's "natural ally" in Europe.¹² Though the Liberal Party also feared Russia for its oppressive autocratic government, the Conservative Party became the banner-carriers of the idea of Germany as Britain's "natural ally" against the threat of Russia. The "natural ally" notion based not only on legitimate foreign policy considerations but also on the perceived cultural similarities between Britain and Germany became a frequent talking point of Conservatives and Liberal Imperialists, Liberal politicians who were concerned with the maintenance of the British Empire and disapproved with their own party's preoccupation with domestic affairs, in subsequent diplomatic overtures. However, official government policy toward Germany changed very little as a result of the Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty. The Conservative leaders of Britain were concerned about potential attacks from the Liberal Party if Britain became too close to a Continental power.¹³ Additionally, Prime Minister Lord Salisbury

¹¹ Kennedy, 208-209.

¹² Clark, 129.

¹³ Kennedy, 211-212.

hesitated to move toward closer Anglo-German relations because of continuing trouble in Ireland and his personal distrust of the erratic Kaiser Wilhelm II.¹⁴ Though the Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty represented the highpoint in Anglo-German relations, it also revealed some of the critical weaknesses in the relationship between the two nations. Neither nation pursued an understanding out of a genuine desire to improve relations or to pave the way for an alliance, and domestic politics represented a primary for Germany and a significant consideration for Britain.

The Conservatives remained Germany's advocates in England for the first half of the 1890s, but the subsequent disruptions in South Africa beginning in 1894 caused a dramatic shift within the Conservative Party from being Germany's champion to its most ardent critic in Parliament. The Jameson Raid was regarded as particularly reprehensible by the German people. Leander Jameson, employed by industrialists Cecil Rhodes and Alfred Beit, led 600 troops of the British South Africa Company into the South African Republic and attempted to incite a rebellion against the South African Republic's Afrikaner government.¹⁵ The raid proved to be a complete debacle for the British, and it turned the German public against Britain. Though the German government took no official stance, German newspapers disseminated a wave of anti-British propaganda in the wake of the Drifts Crisis and the Jameson Raid.¹⁶ More importantly, the Jameson Raid turned Kaiser Wilhelm II against Britain, and he promptly sent a telegram to Paul Kruger, President of the South African Republic, congratulating him on repelling the British invaders.¹⁷ The resulting press war Britain and Germany soured relations further, and severe Anglophobia gripped Germany as the public became more sympathetic to the plight of the

¹⁴ Kennedy, 212.

¹⁵ Kennedy, 220.

¹⁶ Kennedy, 219.

¹⁷ Steiner, 25.

Boers.¹⁸ The Kaiser's tactless telegram and Britain's vociferous response to it created the first war scare in Germany, and official military plans for a war with Britain were drafted in 1896.¹⁹

German public opinion turned against Britain again once the Second Boer War broke out in 1899. The British press, especially the Conservative press, retaliated by becoming predominantly Germanophobic. While the rest of the Great Powers equally denounced Britain's conduct of the war in South Africa, the Conservative press focused on Germany's criticisms. The British were accustomed to opposition from its traditional foes France and Russia, but Germany's opposition made the British, and the Conservatives in particular, acutely aware of a new potential enemy in Europe.²⁰ The British public reacted drastically to the agitation of the Conservative Press. The transfer of troops from Britain to distant Cape Colony left Britain relatively defenseless, and despite the unmatched superiority of the Royal Navy fears of a German invasion of the British Isles grew.²¹ Invasion literature, which would become very popular during the Anglo-German naval race, emerged during the Boer War and fed on the British public's fear of Germany's growing power.²² While the public and the press turned sharply against Germany, the British government remained pragmatic. The Earl of Salisbury had protested the Kruger Telegram and objected to Germany's criticism of Britain's conduct of the war, as well as the criticisms of the other powers, but he remained optimistic that Britain and Germany could continue to work together in colonial deals and on the Continent.²³ The Earl of

¹⁸ Steiner, 25-26.

¹⁹ Kennedy, 221.

²⁰ Kennedy, 246-247.

²¹ Kennedy, 221.

²² Searle, 504.

²³ Clark, 107-108.

Salisbury pursued Britain's traditional policy of maintaining a free hand in the politics of Europe.

Though the Boer War exacerbated tensions between Britain and Germany, it did not create a lasting enmity between the governments of Britain and Germany. Tirpitz's naval scheme and the subsequent naval race caused the first true deterioration of relations between the British and German governments. The Naval Bill of 1898 was conceived as a solution to two of Germany's most pressing problems: its lack of colonial possessions and its fractious electorate. Alfred von Tirpitz, the Secretary of State of the Imperial Navy Office, was inspired by Alfred Thayer Mahan's seminal work *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*, which claimed that large and powerful fleets were essential for a nation that wished to exert its influence on a global scale.²⁴ Both Mahan and Tirpitz believed that the 20th century would be dominated by large colonial empires, necessitating the creation of large naval fleets to protect those colonial possessions.²⁵ Bernhard von Bülow, then Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs, aided Tirpitz in persuading Kaiser Wilhelm II to support the introduction of a bill to dramatically increase the size of the German navy, explaining to the Reichstag that Germany needed a larger navy to protect the export markets provided by colonies and needed the colonies to maintain its position as a great power.²⁶ Tirpitz argued that Britain would always utilize the Royal Navy to block any concerted effort by Germany to acquire significant overseas possessions and to claim its "place in the sun."²⁷

²⁴ Volker R. Berghahn, *Germany and the Approach of War in 1914*, 2nd ed (New York, N.Y.: StMartin's Press, 1993), 32-33.

²⁵ Berghahn, 33.

²⁶ Berghahn, 43.

²⁷ Berghahn, 49.

Tirpitz and the other admirals of the German navy calculated that the Germans could only hope to defeat the Royal Navy in a defensive battle with a ratio of 2:3.²⁸ The 1898 Naval Bill presented to the Reichstag fulfilled Tirpitz's ambition for a navy that was two-thirds the size of the Royal Navy, and he expressed satisfaction with the bill when he introduced the Second Navy Bill in 1900.²⁹ From the German perspective, the new German navy was never intended to realistically challenge Britain's domination of the high seas, but it was intended to provide a powerful bargaining chip in future colonial disputes. From Tirpitz's point of view, the German naval program was a political weapon intended to promote German *Weltpolitik* and convince Britain to grant colonial concessions to Germany.³⁰

Volker Berghahn argued that the naval program was also designed to unify the German people behind a foreign policy goal in order to distract the electorate from domestic issues. The emergence of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), they won the second highest number of Reichstag seats in the June 1898 federal election, and the traditional concentration of the Liberal parties on domestic issues inspired the German government to propose a naval expansion. Together with a tariff on imported Russian grain, the Navy Bill of 1898 helped to create a stable middle-class and Conservative alliance that alleviated growing social tensions.³¹ Tirpitz also sponsored the creation of the Navy League, which supported subsequent navy bills and became one of the largest naval organizations in the world.³² The Navy League not only brought many middle-class and working-class people into the government camp but it also helped bring

²⁸ Berghahn, 51-52.

²⁹ Berghahn, 53.

³⁰ Kennedy, 224.

³¹ Berghahn, 54-55.

³² Kennedy, 370.

moderate parties like the Center Party into Bülow's coalition by labelling them unpatriotic for not supporting the navy laws.³³

From the British perspective, the German naval program represented a direct challenge to British naval superiority at a time when British dominance was being challenged around the world. The Fashoda Crisis of 1898 caused a brief war scare between Britain and France, and the nations continued to squabble over colonial boundaries in Africa and Southeast Asia.³⁴ The Colonial Office advised the Cabinet that the garrison of India would have to be increased to 100,000 men due to Russian encroachment in Central Asia.³⁵ The Royal Navy also became the victim of strategic overstretch. The Royal Navy opted to reorient its positions in the Eastern Mediterranean toward Egypt after it was decided that the Royal Navy would not be able to defeat a Russian attack on Constantinople.³⁶ The Russian remilitarization of the Black Sea, which had been forbidden after the Crimean War, caused great concern within the Royal Navy, and potential conflict with France heightened their awareness of the navy's vulnerability.³⁷

Though the first plan for an attack on the nascent German navy was drawn up in 1898 soon after the passage of the Naval Bill, few politicians in Britain considered the German program a major threat to Britain's position until 1902.³⁸ Lord Selborne, First Lord of the Admiralty, penned a memorandum in 1902 that outlined Britain's growing concern about the German fleet. He argued that the German fleet was not intended for colonial defense but rather for openly challenging Britain's naval supremacy.³⁹ However, Selborne did not think that

³³ Kennedy, 383.

³⁴ Clark, 132-133.

³⁵ Clark, 138-139.

³⁶ Steiner, 22.

³⁷ Clark, 136-137.

³⁸ Searle, 323.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

Germany would initiate an attack on Britain without an advantage. He believed that Germany would wait for a conflict between Britain and the Franco-Russian Alliance and strike at the weakened Royal Navy after that conflict ended.⁴⁰ Germany would then demand its “place in the sun” alongside Britain as one of the foremost naval and colonial powers. Though Selborne had very little evidence that his theory was correct besides the fact that Germany was expanding its fleet, the idea that Germany was expanding its navy as a direct challenge to British hegemony spread throughout the Admiralty and, more importantly, the Foreign Office.⁴¹

The shift of the Foreign Office from a primarily anti-French and anti-Russian office to a staunchly anti-German bastion began with the Anglo-German naval race. Several members of the Foreign Office not only wrote scathing memoranda on the German naval buildup but also published articles in the already anti-German Conservative press stoking fears of a German preemptive strike on the British Isles. Invasion literature popular during the Boer War saw a resurgence in 1902 and 1903, and some government officials attempted to profit off of the hysteria by penning invasion novels of their own.⁴² Even though Britain faced several challenges from both France and Russia from 1898 to 1904, the Foreign Office began to focus on Germany as the primary enemy of the British Empire. The proximity of the German fleet to the British Isles caused the shift. France and Russia threatened Britain’s colonial empire, but the German navy threatened the homeland.⁴³ As long as Germany continued to build its navy, Britain saw it not only as a colonial threat but also a threat to the British Isles. The bargaining chip that Tirpitz believed would convince Britain to negotiate with Germany only made Britain more resolute in its opposition to the growth of German power. Tirpitz’s plan could only have succeeded under

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Kennedy, 252-253.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Kennedy, 420-421.

the unrealistic presumption that the British would not realize Germany's until it was too late. The German program was nowhere near completion in 1902-1903, and it only succeeded in making Britain distrustful of Germany's ambitions.

John Fisher, Second Sea Lord of the Admiralty in 1903, suggested that the Royal Navy should "Copenhagen" the German fleet at Wilhelmshaven, a reference to the Royal Navy's destruction of the Danish fleet stationed in Copenhagen harbor during the Napoleonic Wars.⁴⁴ When he became First Sea Lord in 1904, Fisher concentrated the Royal Navy in the North Sea so that it could be close to the new naval base at Rosyth in Scotland and so that it could rapidly respond to any aggression by the German navy.⁴⁵ The Germans took the threat of a preemptive strike very seriously, and they prepared for a possible British attack in 1904.⁴⁶ Fisher's preparations could have easily applied to the French navy as well. France's navy was much larger and more advanced than Germany's, most non-British naval advances had occurred in France, and Britain had a plan already in place to destroy the French navy while it was in port.⁴⁷ Combined with the Russian navy, the French presented the most significant challenge to British naval supremacy even though they did not concentrate their navy in the Channel ports. However, the French and Russian navies were already accounted for in British strategic planning. The new German navy was not. It was a new challenge from a young and innovative nation that Britain saw as a future threat to Britain's traditional role as the sole global superpower.

Despite its growing distrust of Germany and its fear of a powerful German fleet within striking distance, Britain came closest to signing a formal alliance with Germany in 1901.

⁴⁴ Searle, 324.

⁴⁵ Searle, 323-324.

⁴⁶ Searle, 325.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Support for a colonial understanding with Germany had been building since the war scare between Britain and France during the Fashoda Crisis in 1898, but Russian meddling in China transformed the movement for an understanding similar to the Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty into one for an alliance. While Britain and France gained more and more trade ports on China's eastern coast, Russia extended its influence into Manchuria during the 1890s. It came into conflict with the Japanese in 1895 after Russia, aided by France and Germany, intervened in the Sino-Japanese War and stripped Japan of its concessions around Port Arthur on the Liaodong Peninsula.⁴⁸ Instead, Russia bullied China into granting it a lease for Port Arthur and the Liaodong Peninsula, providing Russia with an extremely valuable warm water port in the Pacific. Once the Russians began to extend the Trans-Siberian Railway toward Port Arthur, the British became alarmed that Russia might attempt to usurp control over all of northern China.⁴⁹ Britain remained doubtful of Japan's ability to effectively challenge a European power, so several politicians pointed to Germany as a potential partner in the Far East.⁵⁰ Joseph Chamberlain, one of the most influential Liberal Unionists and a supporter of Germany as Britain's "natural ally," endeavored for an explicitly anti-Russian alliance with Germany to thwart Russian ambitions in the Far East.⁵¹ The Liberal Unionists split from the Liberal Party in 1886 in protest against William Gladstone's Home Rule Bill for Ireland and allied with the Conservatives, and they became very supportive of Conservative foreign policy.⁵² Chamberlain began to advocate for an understanding with Berlin in 1899 during the Boer War in order to ease the tension caused by Germany's pro-Boer stance.⁵³ Both the Marquess of Salisbury, the Prime

⁴⁸ Kennedy, 231-232.

⁴⁹ Kennedy, 234.

⁵⁰ Kennedy, 235.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Searle, 141.

⁵³ Searle, 299.

Minister, and the Cabinet, which was still largely pro-German, agreed to allow Chamberlain to speak to Bülow about the possibility of an alliance.⁵⁴ To Chamberlain's disappointment, his mission to procure an Anglo-German alliance as a safeguard against Russia came to naught.

The German refusal of an Anglo-German Alliance in 1901 was due to several factors. First Bülow was concerned that an alliance with the British so soon after the widespread outcry in Germany against Britain's conduct in the Boer War would alienate several parties, particularly the Conservatives, that Bülow desired to incorporate into the Bülow Bloc, his political coalition within the Reichstag.⁵⁵ Bülow also wanted to maintain a free hand in Europe in the same vein as Otto von Bismarck, and he felt that any alliance with Britain would permanently alienate Germany from France and Russia.⁵⁶ Additionally, Bülow was not confident that Britain would be able to effectively aid Germany in a European war against France and Russia.⁵⁷ Also, Bülow did not want to risk a two-front war in Europe to protect British interests in China. He also wanted to postpone the agreement on spheres of influence in China, which Joseph Chamberlain had included in his deal. German business interests in China were growing rapidly, so any immediate settlement might prevent future German expansion into Chinese markets whereas if Germany waited it might receive a larger sphere of influence.⁵⁸ Finally, Bülow knew that Britain was desperate for a counterbalance to Russian influence in the Far East, and he wanted to receive as many concessions from the deal as possible. Aside from an increased sphere of influence in China, Bülow demanded a renegotiation of the deal on the Portuguese colonies that Britain and Germany had agreed to in 1898.⁵⁹ Fearing that the Portuguese Empire would soon collapse,

⁵⁴ Steiner, 25.

⁵⁵ Kennedy, 226.

⁵⁶ Berghahn, 58.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Kennedy, 244.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Britain agreed to partition Portugal's colonies with Germany after Portugal went bankrupt.⁶⁰ This point was heavily endorsed by imperialist organizations and newspapers in Germany, and Bülow eventually bowed to public pressure and demanded the colonies outright in exchange for an alliance.⁶¹ However, the British believed that Germany had more to gain on the Continent in the event of an Anglo-German alliance. Thomas Sanderson, the Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, believed that any convention with Germany, no matter the exact wording, would amount to a British endorsement of the German occupation of Alsace-Lorraine.⁶² Implicitly, Britain would be obliged to enter a war on the side of Germany if France attacked Germany to reclaim the lost provinces.⁶³ Sanderson was concerned that compared to the guarantee of Alsace-Lorraine, Britain would receive very little in return.⁶⁴

Instead of ending its period of "Splendid Isolation" with an Anglo-German Alliance, Britain ended it with the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902.⁶⁵ Because of Bülow's preoccupation with domestic politics and greed for more colonial concessions, Germany lost the best chance it had for an alliance with the world's sole global superpower. Britain initiated the deal and was willing to compromise with the Germans to check Russian aggression, but Germany remained shortsighted. The Anglo-German alliance talks revealed a crucial factor determining British foreign policy during the late 1890s. Despite the fact that Germany had come under severe scrutiny from the British press during the Boer War and was beginning its naval buildup, Britain appealed for an alliance against Russia. Russia, not Germany, was Britain's primary adversary

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Kennedy, 235.

⁶² Memorandum of T.H. Sanderson, 27 May 1901, *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914*, 11 vols. (London: HMSO, 1926-1938) 66.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Steiner, 28.

on the world stage, and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 was an explicitly anti-Russian agreement. Though the Conservative press became anti-German during the Boer War, the Conservative Party still feared Russian expansion toward British possessions in China and India. That is why the conservatives pursued an alliance with Germany despite the fact that Germany supported the Boers.

The Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 not only secured the Far East against Russian expansionism, but it also inspired France to pursue a *détente* with Britain. Like Germany, France did not want to risk becoming embroiled in a war over Manchuria, so it decided to come to an arrangement with Britain. Lord Lansdowne, the British Foreign Secretary, first acknowledged the possibility of arbitration over colonial disputes in a May 1903 letter written to Sir Edmund Monson, Britain's ambassador to France.⁶⁶ Lansdowne expressed his enthusiasm for negotiations on colonial disputes, but he also remarked that some territories were not up for negotiation.⁶⁷ Sir Monson responded that the faction within the Chamber of Deputies that favored an agreement with Britain was quite small and that Théophile Delcassé, the French Foreign Minister, regarded the offer to mediate territorial disputes as completely unofficial.⁶⁸

The idea of negotiations remained largely unofficial until July 2, 1903 when Lansdowne spoke to Eugene Etienne, a French Deputy, about the possibility of arbitration. However, Lansdowne reported that Etienne spoke instead about his conviction that only a coalition of England and France could stop the avaricious designs of Germany, the greatest threat to the general European peace.⁶⁹ Lansdowne remained neutral on Germany during the conversation,

⁶⁶ Lansdowne to Monson, 19 May 1903, *British Documents*, vol. II, 289.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Monson to Lansdowne, 22 May 1903, *British Documents*, vol. II, 290.

⁶⁹ Lansdowne to Monson, 2 July 1903, *British Documents*, vol. II, 292-293.

preferring to talk about territorial disputes in Nigeria and Siam, but Etienne offered a caveat that made a possible deal with France very alluring. Etienne claimed that if Britain signed an agreement with France, then France would be able to resolve all of Britain's disputes with Russia.⁷⁰ Soon after, Lansdowne spoke to Delcassé about a possible deal between Britain and France, which Delcassé found amenable.⁷¹ Delcassé agreed to support the British claim on Egypt if Britain would allow France total suzerainty over Morocco, to which Lansdowne agreed.⁷² On July 21, 1903, Lansdowne wrote to Paul Cambon, the French ambassador to Britain, informing that he had presented the idea of a deal between Britain and France to the Cabinet and that it received a warm reception.⁷³ After settling the minutiae of the agreement, Lansdowne and Cambon signed the Entente Cordiale on April 8, 1904.

The Entente served to resolve several longstanding disputes between Britain and France. It gave Britain undisputed control over Egypt and France a free hand in Morocco.⁷⁴ The French relinquished their rights to the west coast of Newfoundland, and Britain ceded territory in West Africa to France.⁷⁵ Finally, Siam was divided into spheres of influence, and Britain and France resolved their dispute over jurisdiction of the New Hebrides.⁷⁶ The treaty was in no way an alliance; it did not bind the two nations to support each other in conflicts, but it did pave the way for future détente. By removing most of the causes of Anglo-French animosity, the Entente Cordiale guaranteed an improvement in Anglo-French relations. However, the degree to which Eugene Etienne's suggestion that France could alleviate the tension between Britain and Russia

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Lansdowne to de Bunsen, 15 July 1903, *British Documents*, vol. II, 298.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Lansdowne to Cambon, 21 July 1903, *British Documents*, vol. II, 302.

⁷⁴ Text of the Entente Cordiale, 8 April 1904, *British Documents*, vol. II, 393-395.

⁷⁵ Text of the Entente Cordiale, 8 April 1904, *British Documents*, vol. II, 396.

⁷⁶ Text of the Entente Cordiale, 8 April 1904, *British Documents*, vol. II, 397-398.

influenced Britain's willingness to sign a treaty with France remains debatable. The British seemed to have regarded the offers of a treaty as rumors or unofficial overtures until Etienne offered Lansdowne the tangible benefit of smoothing things over with the Russians. After Lansdowne's conversation with Etienne, the British began taking the French offer seriously and within a month the Cabinet approved official negotiations. Certainly, Britain wanted to resolve the disputes with France so that it could focus on conflicts elsewhere, but the majority of those other conflicts facing Britain were with France's ally, Russia. Perhaps Lansdowne and Salisbury believed that they could alleviate tensions with France and pave the way to alleviating tensions with Russia with a single treaty. Fear of Russian expansion dominated Conservative foreign policy, and the chance to eliminate that fear would have been alluring.

Germany decided to do nothing about the Anglo-French negotiations because of two reasons. First, Bülow remained confident that no entente was possible due to ongoing colonial disputes. Second, Bülow believed that if a deal was made between Britain and France then it would mean the end of the Franco-Russian Alliance. He argued that the Russians would break their alliance with France because of the Entente Cordiale, allowing Germany to conclude an alliance with Russia.⁷⁷ Bülow even hoped that Russia would win the war against Japan and force Britain to offer more concessions to Germany in order to gain an alliance to secure the Far East.⁷⁸ The Entente caused despair in the German Foreign Office since they believed that the Entente had succeeded in achieving France's goal of moving Britain closer to the Franco-Russian Alliance.⁷⁹ Germany prepared to offer an alliance to Russia after the Dogger Bank

⁷⁷ Kennedy, 266-268.

⁷⁸ Kennedy, 268.

⁷⁹ Berhahn, 59.

Incident in 1904, but a quick resolution of the crisis and Russia's crushing defeat at Tsushima ended any hopes of a new European equilibrium.⁸⁰

Though the Entente Cordiale brought Britain and France closer together than the Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty had brought Britain and Germany, it was not a formal alliance in the same vein as the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902, and it was not explicitly anti-German.⁸¹ It did not contain any clauses that required Britain to aid France if she was attacked by Germany, and it did not officially bring Britain into the Franco-Russian bloc. The main purpose of the treaty was to resolve existing colonial disputes and relieve pressure on Britain's strategic situation. Without the threat of conflict with France in Africa or Southeast Asia, Britain was free to concentrate its defenses in India against the Russians and in the North Sea against the new German fleet. Textually, it performed the same duty as the Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty by relieving colonial tensions between the two powers.

The text of the Entente Cordiale does not set it apart from the Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty, but the subsequent events do. From Britain's perspective, Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese War disrupted the international balance-of-power.⁸² It removed a significant threat to Britain's colonial possessions which accentuated the threat to the British Isles: the German fleet. Without the support of Russia, France did not have the military strength to defeat Germany in a war, so Britain moved closer to France to prevent Germany from becoming the dominant power on the Continent.⁸³ As long as the balance-of-power between the Triple Alliance and the Franco-Russian Alliance remained equal, Britain focused on Russia as its primary threat because of its

⁸⁰ Steiner, 30.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Steiner, 32.

⁸³ Kennedy, 280.

expansion toward India and Britain's trade ports in China, but once the equilibrium was broken, such as after the Russo-Japanese War, Britain became wary of Germany's power and ambitions on the Continent. The signing of the Entente Cordiale in 1904 and the subsequent defeat of Russia in the Russo-Japanese War brought Britain closer to the Franco-Russian Alliance and pushed it away from Germany out of a desire to preserve the European balance-of-power.

Anglo-German relations vacillated considerably from the signing of the Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty in 1890 and the signing of the Entente Cordiale in 1904. While both treaties were very similar on paper, the contextual events surrounding them reveal that their effects were very different. The Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty represented a highpoint in Anglo-German relations, but no subsequent events took place to help the treaty evolve past an arbitration of territorial disputes. In fact, the controversies in South Africa starting in 1895 undermined most of the mutual admiration and respect cultivated by the British and German people since 1871. On the other hand, the Entente Cordiale succeeded in drawing Britain and France closer to one another because of the defeat of Russia in the Russo-Japanese War as well as Britain's fear of Germany's naval program.

Two core themes define the fourteen years between the Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty and the Entente Cordiale. The first is Germany's preoccupation with domestic politics and short-term gain at the expense of Britain over cultivating a long-term relationship. The naval program, the most damaging policy enacted by Germany to Anglo-German relations, was enacted in part to galvanize the German electorate behind the government and stave off the rise of socialism. Bülow's rejection of the British offer of an alliance in 1901 was also based in part on his concern that some parties would split from his delicate Bülow Bloc. The Kaiser also severely damaged Anglo-German relations when he sent the Kruger Telegram in 1895. The naval program was also

enacted to gain Germany's "place in the sun" with the other naval empires, but the quest for colonies was not only unrealistic but was also irreparably damaged its relations with Britain. Bülow also rejected Britain's offer of an alliance because he desired more concessions for Germany. Germany's shortsightedness in the 1900-1901 talks and its indecision toward the Entente Cordiale cost Anglo-German relations dearly. It threw away its best chance of an alliance with Britain, and it became the primary threat to British security.

The second theme is Britain's fear of Russia. Britain's fear of Russia stemmed from Britain's realization that its forces were stretched too thin around the world to effectively defend the British Empire from every threat. Britain abandoned the Ottoman Empire, which it had traditionally defended, because its admirals realized that the Royal Navy could not face the Russian Black Sea Fleet and maintain its other strategic commitments. Britain attempted to broker an alliance with Germany and entered an alliance with Japan, ending its "Splendid Isolation," because it feared Russian expansion into China. Finally, Britain agreed to pursue negotiations with France partly on the guarantee that France would be able to help resolve Britain's quarrels with Russia. Britain's movement toward France and Russia was not made because of Britain's fear of Germany; it was made because of Britain's desire to resolve its differences with Russia and secure its empire from Russian aggression. These two themes pervade Anglo-German relations up to the beginning of World War I, and they become more and more important to the question of why Great Britain and Germany went to war on August 4, 1914.

Chapter 2: The Anglo-Russian Convention and the Second Moroccan Crisis

Though the Entente Cordiale resolved several of Britain and France's most contentious colonial disputes, the link between the two nations remained tenuous. In a message to Sir Edward Monson, the British ambassador to France, the Marquess of Lansdowne noted the opposition that had emerged within the French Chamber of Deputies surrounding French rights to the Newfoundland fisheries.¹ The French wanted to expand the boundaries of their fishing territory to include waters closer to the coast than had been agreed upon in the Entente Cordiale.² Though the cries for a renegotiation of France's rights to the Newfoundland fisheries came from a small minority within the Chamber of Deputies, Lansdowne thought that it was serious enough to instruct Edmund Monson, the British ambassador to France, to keep him informed of developments.³ The dispute was peacefully settled, but it revealed that the British and French could still get into arguments over issues as trivial as fishing rights.

Initially, Britain had no reason to believe that Germany, or any other European power, would see the Entente Cordiale as anything more than a settlement of colonial disputes. In May 1904, Frank Lascales, the British ambassador to Germany, reported a conversation with Kaiser Wilhelm II in which the Kaiser remarked that his government was preparing to propose an arrangement with Britain similar to the Entente Cordiale.⁴ The Kaiser expressed his desire to resolve Germany's colonial disputes with Britain, but the negotiations were never initiated because of Germany's demand that German bondholders in the South African Railway be

¹ The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir Edward Monson, 5 July 1905, *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914*, 11 vols. (London: HMSO, 1926-1938), vol. III, pg. 7-8.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Sir Frank Lascales to Lansdowne, 18 May 1904, *British Documents*, vol III, 1.

compensated for the losses incurred by the Boer War.⁵ Lascalles noted that this demand would not be accepted in the British Cabinet, and the idea of an agreement akin to the Entente Cordiale between Britain and Germany was dropped.⁶ This occurrence indicated that, at least initially, Germany did not necessarily see the Entente Cordiale as a threat to German interests or as a sign that Britain was moving closer to the Franco-Russian bloc.

However, Germany's outlook toward the Entente Cordiale changed rapidly from April 1904 to March 1905. The ongoing naval race between Britain and Germany soured the British public's view of Germany, and the British military became warier of German intentions in the North Sea.⁷ Only the Foreign Office and the Cabinet remained open to better Anglo-German relations.⁸ The growing discontent within the Triple Alliance also influenced Germany's decision to try to break up the Entente Cordiale. Austria-Hungary and Italy quarreled over the Italian-speaking territories of Austria-Hungary, especially the area around Trieste and the Dalmatian coast, and Italy pursued closer relations with France in the Franco-Italian Entente of 1902.⁹ Neither Bülow nor General Schlieffen, Chief of the German General Staff, trusted Italy to aid Germany in a Franco-German war, and Bülow threatened to cancel the Triple Alliance altogether if the Italians did not proclaim their loyalty to the Triple Alliance in the toasts raised during the French President Emile Loubet's visit to Italy.¹⁰ The disputes between Austria and Italy over the Dalmatian coast and influence in the Balkans got so bad that Italy transferred the bulk of its military forces from its positions on the French border to the Austrian frontier.¹¹

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Zara Steiner, *Britain and the Origins of the First World War*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), 34.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Eugene Anderson, *The First Moroccan Crisis: 1904-1906*, (Camden, Connecticut: Archon Bools, 1966), 143-144.

¹⁰ Anderson, 144-145.

¹¹ Anderson, 182.

Germany hoped to solidify the unravelling Triple Alliance through a diplomatic victory over France.¹² Finally, the string of stunning Russian defeats in the Russo-Japanese War from February to early March 1905 weakened the power of the Franco-Russian Alliance and provided an opportunity to put diplomatic pressure on France alone.¹³ Without the threat of pressure from two fronts, especially after the 1905 Revolution broke out in Russia, Bülow felt confident that neither Britain nor France would risk war without the possibility of Russian aid.¹⁴ The defeat of Russia emboldened Germany to take a diplomatic risk and reassured Bülow that the time had come to sever the connection between Britain and France without having to worry about Russia.

Bülow seized on the concerns from German firms about France's monopolistic control of Moroccan trade and finance as a result of the Entente Cordiale, and he demanded that France negotiate to resolve these concerns.¹⁵ However, Théophile Delcassé, the French Foreign Minister, refused to even consider negotiation even though France was engaged in similar negotiations with Spain.¹⁶ Therefore, Bülow decided to concentrate on the notion that the French were infringing on German economic interests within Morocco as his *casus belli* for the coming crisis. Paul Metternich, the German Ambassador to Britain, met with Lansdowne in August 1904 to lay out Germany's case for a confrontation with the French in Morocco.¹⁷ Metternich pointed out that Germany had signed a treaty with Morocco that recognized Germany's most-favored nation status in Morocco, and he stated that the German government believed that France was preparing to monopolize the railroad concessions and industrial enterprises within Morocco.¹⁸

¹² Anderson, 147.

¹³ Steiner, 32.

¹⁴ Anderson, 181.

¹⁵ Anderson, 153-154.

¹⁶ Anderson, 154.

¹⁷ Lansdowne to Frank Lascales, 1 June 1904, *British Documents*, vol III, 53-54.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Metternich also took the time to probe the limitations of the last part of Article IV, which concerned Morocco, and Article IX, which established mutual diplomatic aid between Britain and France, of the Entente Cordiale.¹⁹ He asked if the Moroccan government, at the instigation of France, were to unfairly treat a German concessionaire then would Britain be obliged to support France's actions.²⁰ The end of Article IV of the Entente Cordiale declared that concessions for roads, railroads, and ports were to be given "only on such conditions as will maintain intact the authority of the State over these great undertakings of the public interest."²¹ Though he refused to define Britain's obligation in Article IX concretely, Lansdowne did remark in regard to Morocco that, "it was not probable that, if any Third Power were to have occasion to uphold its Treaty rights, we should use our influence in derogation of them."²² Metternich concluded from his conversation with Lansdowne that the British would not intervene in a Franco-German quarrel in Morocco as long as Germany did not subvert the authority of the Moroccan Sultan and only pursued its economic rights in Morocco.²³ He warned Bülow that the British would intervene on the side of France if Germany attempted to procure a harbor or gain political influence in Morocco, and he argued that staying within those parameters represented the only chance of success for Germany's Morocco policy.²⁴

With a reason to intervene in Morocco and a plan to cause a diplomatic dispute without invoking Article IX of the Entente Cordiale, Bülow next had to engineer a flashpoint for the crisis. The dispatch of a French trade mission to Fez in January 1905, which would signal the complete domination of Morocco's economy by France, and the convocation of an assembly by

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Anderson, 156-157.

²⁴ Anderson, 157.

the Sultan of Morocco to consider French demands for reform increased tension between Germany and France.²⁵ Bülow encouraged the Reichstag to show solidarity with the Sultan by proclaiming in March 1905 that Germany would protect its economic interests and attempt to maintain the *status quo* in Morocco.²⁶ German newspapers then announced that the Kaiser would visit Tangier, which aroused strong opposition in the French and British press.²⁷ Upon hearing of the controversy, Bülow decided to use Wilhelm's visit to Tangier as the flashpoint for his diplomatic *demarche* in Morocco.²⁸

The Kaiser arrived in Tangier on March 31st, 1905. After riding through the city on a white horse, he gave a speech fully endorsing the sovereignty of the Moroccan Sultan and condemning any attempt by a foreign power to abrogate the rights of the Sultan.²⁹ Bülow demanded an international conference to settle grievances in Morocco, but the French obstinately rejected any possibility of an international conference.³⁰ Attitudes toward a conference were more mixed in Britain. There was some sympathy toward Germany's stated reason for wanting a conference in the House of Commons. Earl Percy, Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, was bombarded with questions on whether the British government properly notified Germany of the details of the Entente Cordiale and whether Britain ever consulted Germany on German interests in Morocco during the negotiations with France.³¹ Percy replied that a copy of the Entente Cordiale had not been sent to the German government and that there had been no communication

²⁵ Anderson, 182.

²⁶ Anderson, 186.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Anderson, 188.

²⁹ Anderson, 193-194.

³⁰ Anderson, 198.

³¹ Question asked in the House of Commons to Earl Percy, Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 6 April 1905, *British Documents*, vol. III, 64-65.

between the British and German governments in regard to Morocco during the Entente Cordiale negotiations.³²

However, in the Foreign Office, there was more confusion over Germany's demand for a conference than objections to one. Sir Edwin Egerton, the British Ambassador to Spain from 1903 to 1904 and to Italy from 1905 to 1908, expressed his belief to Lansdowne in April 1905 that French fears of a conference were entirely groundless.³³ In any international conference, France would have the support of Britain, Russia, and probably Spain and Italy, easily defeating any attempt by Germany to gain an advantage.³⁴ Meanwhile, Lansdowne himself professed to Sir Mortimer Durand, the British ambassador to the United States, that there was no great cooperation between Britain and France in regard to Germany's move in Morocco.³⁵ According to Durand, the German ambassador approached Secretary of War William Howard Taft with concerns that Britain and France were planning to coordinate both diplomatically and even militarily to defeat Germany in the unfolding crisis, and the German ambassador suggested that the United States should step in and mediate the dispute.³⁶ Lansdowne expressed uncertainty about why Germany would want to have an international conference at all, and he instructed Durand to assure both Taft and the Germans in Washington D.C. that Britain did not have any intention of attacking Germany.³⁷

Though Lansdowne officially took the stance that the Moroccan Crisis was insignificant and that France would be able to settle with Germany alone during the first few weeks of the

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Sir Egerton to Lansdowne, 12 April 1905, *British Documents*, vol. III, 66.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Lansdowne to M. Durand, 27 April 1905, *British Documents*, vol. III, 68.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

dispute, by late April he changed his mind. Lansdowne wholly opposed any German acquisition of a port in Morocco, and he told Francis Bertie, the British ambassador to France, to inform Delcassé that Britain would provide “strong opposition” to Germany in conjunction with France if Germany attempted to gain a port.³⁸ Bertie relayed Lansdowne’s oath of support in even more emphatic terms, and from then on the British fear of a war between France and Germany only grew.³⁹ General Grierson, director of military operations, inspected the Franco-Belgian borderlands in May 1905 to determine the conditions for a British expeditionary force, and Admiral John Fisher drew up plans for a British attack on the Kiel Canal.⁴⁰ Before Lansdowne and Bertie informed him of the possibility that Germany might seek a port in Morocco, Delcassé had not considered the possibility.⁴¹ Britain’s support for France during the First Moroccan Crisis stemmed from Lansdowne’s suspicion about Germany’s aims in Morocco.

Théophile Delcassé, the French Foreign Minister, continued to reject the idea of an international conference, but he offered Germany trading concessions in Morocco if the Germans abandoned any further claims.⁴² Lansdowne became more willing to support France actively after Germany rejected the proposal, despite the fact that Delcassé’s offer resolved Germany’s stated grievances in Morocco. In a dispatch to Sir Francis Bertie, the ambassador to France, Lansdowne cited Germany’s reticence over the Morocco negotiations as the primary reason why the British and French governments should work more closely together to resolve the crisis.⁴³ He concluded that Britain and France should keep each other informed of any developments and

³⁸ Lansdowne to Bertie, 22 April 1905, *British Documents*, vol. III, 72-73.

³⁹ Clark, 160.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Clark, 159-160.

⁴² Anderson, 198-199.

⁴³ Lansdowne to Bertie, 17 May 1905, *British Documents*, vol. III, 76.

plan in advance their responses to continued German agitation over Morocco.⁴⁴ This dispatch represents a shift in the relationship between Britain and France. Lansdowne's decision to actively support France in the First Moroccan Crisis transformed the Entente Cordiale from a settlement of colonial disputes into a pledge of support.

Delcassé's policy lost support in the French Cabinet, and he was forced to resign in June 1905.⁴⁵ Delcassé blamed his downfall on German intrigue, and he claimed that the Germans orchestrated his ouster as revenge for negotiating the Entente Cordiale.⁴⁶ Under increasing German pressure for an international conference, France finally agreed to a conference in Algeciras, Spain.⁴⁷ Sir Edward Grey, who succeeded the Marquess of Lansdowne as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs after the collapse of Arthur Balfour's government and the Liberal landslide in January 1906, continued Lansdowne's policy of supporting France in the conference without question.⁴⁸ Grey also worked with Jules Cambon, the French ambassador to Spain, to maintain cooperation among Britain, France, and Spain to foil Germany at the conference.⁴⁹ Despite all German efforts to turn the other Powers against France, only Austria-Hungary sided with Germany.⁵⁰ The final agreement signed in April 1906 failed to achieve any of Germany's aims.

The First Moroccan Crisis represented yet another blunder in Germany foreign policy post-Bismarck. The Crisis did not transform the Entente Cordiale into a formal alliance, but it did move Britain closer to both France and Russia. Both Lansdowne and Grey maintained and

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Bertie to Lansdowne, 10 June 1905, *British Documents*, vol. III, 78.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ F. H. Hinsley, *British Foreign Policy under Sir Edward Grey* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1977), 217.

⁴⁸ Steiner, 36-37.

⁴⁹ Steiner, 43.

⁵⁰ Hinsley, 217.

even emphasized Britain's diplomatic support for French claims on Morocco, but they also clarified Britain's reluctance to go to war over Morocco. Both Lansdowne and Grey were unwilling to support France in a Franco-German war if France was the aggressor and if vital British interests were not at stake. However, the Crisis also began a change in the Foreign Office. After the First Morocco Crisis, the Foreign Office began to view the security of France as a vital British interest, guaranteeing Britain's involvement in future Franco-German disputes. The Algeiras Conference also revealed the extent of Germany's isolation in Europe. Only Austria-Hungary sided with Germany, which disproved Bülow's belief that the Entente Cordiale would weaken Franco-Russian relations and confirmed that Italy was an unreliable member of the Triple Alliance. Germany utterly failed to break the nascent alliance between Britain and France, and it severely weakened its own alliance. The extensive scholarship on the First Moroccan Crisis almost unanimously supports these conclusions.

The closer relationship between Britain and the Franco-Russian Alliance resulting from the First Moroccan Crisis allowed Edward Grey to pursue his desire for an agreement with Russia over Central Asia. Though Grey and Lansdowne both agreed on Britain's stance during the First Moroccan Crisis, the Foreign Office of Edward Grey engendered a major ideological shift within British foreign policy. Grey was one of the leading members of the Liberal Imperialists. The Liberal Imperialists were a faction of the Liberal Party that believed that the mainstream party had become too sectional and too focused on domestic issues.⁵¹ In response, they embraced the idea of National Efficiency, the abandonment of old ideas that were perceived as holding Britain back from competing with more economically dynamic nations like Germany,

⁵¹ Steiner, 39.

and they fully endorsed the maintenance of the British Empire.⁵² Sir Edward Grey partnered with other Liberal Imperialists, such as Herbert Asquith, Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and Richard Haldane, to create a powerful alliance within the Liberal Party after the January-February 1906 elections.⁵³

While willing to stand up to Germany when he believed that it threatened British interests, the Marquess of Lansdowne had maintained a relatively pro-German and anti-Russian stance during his tenure in the Foreign Office. Throughout the First Moroccan Crisis, Lansdowne maintained his willingness to negotiate on friendly terms with Germany, and he only agreed to provide military support to France in the event of a German attack on France.⁵⁴ However, Grey took almost the opposite view of British foreign policy. Grey disdained the “free hand” policy of some of his Liberal Imperialist colleagues such as Lord Rosebery, and he believed that Britain required powerful friends on the Continent if it were to survive a future conflict among the Great Powers.⁵⁵ Grey was thoroughly convinced that the friend Britain needed was Russia. He enthusiastically supported the Entente Cordiale as an opening for a future agreement with Russia, and he advocated for an agreement with Russia as early as 1895 to not only solve the border disputes in Central Asia but to create a powerful partnership, if not exactly a formal alliance, on the Continent.⁵⁶

In contrast to his conciliatory attitude toward Russia, Grey rejected any suggestion of a rapprochement with Germany. Grey vehemently opposed Joseph Chamberlain’s bid for an alliance with Germany, and Grey wrote in 1903 that Germany was the greatest threat to British

⁵² Steiner, 39-40.

⁵³ Steiner, 37-38.

⁵⁴ Steiner, 39-40.

⁵⁵ Steiner, 40.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

interests and should be considered an enemy.⁵⁷ Grey advocated for a stronger relationship with the United States based on the shared Anglo-Saxon heritage of the two countries, but he did not extend the same racial friendship to Germany.⁵⁸ Grey became convinced that Germany endeavored to challenge British hegemony by creating a powerful Continental empire through which it could circumvent Britain's naval superiority.⁵⁹ Convinced that Germany was a threat to British interests, Grey became dedicated to maintaining the Entente Cordiale with France and fostering better relations with Russia in order to contain what he believed to be the German menace.

The other operatives in the Foreign Office reinforced Grey's worldview and cemented the transition of the Foreign Office into a strictly anti-German sector of the British government. Charles Hardinge, Grey's Permanent Under-Secretary and former ambassador to Russia, became one of Grey's most trusted operatives in the Foreign Office. Hardinge vehemently believed that Germany's only aim in building a navy was to challenge British supremacy without even considering any possible peaceful motivations, and he advocated a total containment policy with France and Russia to deter any aggressive German actions.⁶⁰ Hardinge disagreed with even the possibility of renewed Anglo-German talks, and he made sure that any pro-German diplomats, such as Frank Lascales, were quickly replaced or transferred to insignificant posts.⁶¹ Hardinge stacked the Foreign Office with anti-Germans and guaranteed that dissenting viewpoints from the new Foreign Office orthodoxy were silenced.⁶² Hardinge saw an agreement with Russia as a solution to Britain's European and Middle Eastern troubles, and he was one of the first British

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Steiner, 40-41.

⁶⁰ Hinsley, 29.

⁶¹ Hinsley, 27.

⁶² *Ibid.*

officials to equate friendly relations with Russia with permanent British security.⁶³ While defending the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 he declared, “Our whole future in Asia is bound up with the possibility of maintaining the best and most friendly relations with Russia.”⁶⁴ Likewise, Arthur Nicolson and several other officials in the Foreign Office showed open disdain for any notion of rapprochement with Berlin and an enthusiasm for an agreement with Russia.⁶⁵ By 1908, the ambassadors to Paris, St. Petersburg, Vienna, and Berlin were all anti-German.⁶⁶

Sir Eyre Crowe best articulated the growing anti-German sentiment in the Foreign Office with his January 1, 1907 memorandum on Germany. Crowe traced Germany’s international aggression and ambition back to Bismarck, and he claimed that Bismarck engineered the Reinsurance Treaty between Germany and Russia, Russian expansion into Central Asia, and even the British occupation of Egypt in order to keep Britain, France, and Russia from becoming allies united against Germany.⁶⁷ According to Crowe, the Germans secretly manipulated every imperial quarrel Britain had with another power. He also stated that Germany inherited its diplomatic strategy from Prussia. According to Crowe, Prussia began as a small state but was able to become a Great Power because it demanded territory.⁶⁸ Crowe linked Prussia’s territorial ambitions in Europe to Germany’s territorial ambitions on the world stage, and the advocates for *Weltpolitik* echo the sentiments of Frederick the Great that only territorial expansion can make a nation a Great Power.⁶⁹ He believed that only the scope of Germany’s ambitions changed. Crowe argued that the Entente Cordiale was signed between France and Britain to settle differences and

⁶³ Hinsley, 29.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Hinsley, 43.

⁶⁶ Hinsley, 25.

⁶⁷ Crowe Memorandum, 1 January 1907, *British Documents*, vol. III, 399.

⁶⁸ Crowe Memorandum, 404-405.

⁶⁹ Crowe Memorandum, 405.

that the Germans should not have had a reason to object to the situation in Morocco.⁷⁰ Crowe believed that not only did the Germans want to try to break up the Entente during the Moroccan Crisis, but they also wanted to gain a permanent foothold in Morocco to expand their African empire.⁷¹ Crowe also notes that the quarrels between Britain and its traditional rivals, France, Russia, and even the United States, were very old disputes, unlike those between Britain and Germany.⁷² Germany was a new nation searching for its “place in the sun,” and that fact made Germany the most dangerous threat to the established European *status quo*. However, Crowe does not endorse the idea of a preemptive strike on Germany since an unchecked Franco-Russian alliance would be just as dangerous to British interests.⁷³

Crowe also offered a possible defense for Germany’s policies. Crowe argued that if Germany peacefully gained trading concessions and built a navy without upsetting the balance of power or embarking on aggressive actions against Britain would not stand in Germany’s way.⁷⁴ He conceded that the blunders of German foreign policy may have been the result of clumsy diplomacy from a new and inexperienced nation.⁷⁵ Crowe concluded that either Germany planned to endeavor for political hegemony and directly challenge Britain’s position in the world or Germany intended to peacefully expand its influence and commerce around the world free of any greater ambitions.⁷⁶ However, Crowe determined that Britain would have to prepare for the worst since German policy could at any time move from the second course to the first course.⁷⁷

⁷⁰ Crowe Memorandum, 397-398.

⁷¹ Crowe Memorandum, 398.

⁷² Crowe Memorandum, 408.

⁷³ Crowe Memorandum, 417.

⁷⁴ Crowe Memorandum, 417-418.

⁷⁵ Crowe Memorandum, 415.

⁷⁶ Crowe Memorandum, 417.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

Crowe's memorandum coupled the best evidence Britain had to indicate that Germany was a rising power intent on challenging the *status quo* with the worst assumptions on Germany's motivations. He accused Bismarck of playing Britain, France and Russia against each other in order to maintain the *status quo*, but Crowe neglects the fact that Bismarck's policy was nearly identical to the British policy of maintaining the balance-of-power and a "free hand." Crowe made statements on the attitude and intentions of German political leaders and the German people that he could not possibly know. Crowe characterized Germany's policies up to 1907 as those of a "professional blackmailer."⁷⁸ He argued that the German people's self-assurance in their own imperial destiny and in the strength of their national ideals compelled them to aggressively expand their borders.⁷⁹ Crowe imagined that a typical German's response to the declaration that territory for colonization could not be procured except by taking from another power would be, "We cannot enter into such considerations. Necessity has no law. The world belongs to the strong."⁸⁰ Crowe caricatured the German race as a people invigorated with an almost Social Darwinian desire for imperial expansion. Crowe does accurately judge German motivations behind singular events such as the First Morocco Crisis and the Anglo-German naval race, but the evidence that he uses to connect each event to a broader narrative is reliant on assumption. Several prominent scholars, including Zara Steiner and F.H. Hinsley, regard Crowe's memorandum as an insightful and realistic analysis of German motivations, but Crowe's blatant assumptions and willingness to connect each event as some smaller part of a grand conspiracy against British power undermine his more accurate analysis of singular events.

⁷⁸ Crowe Memorandum, 416.

⁷⁹ Crowe Memorandum, 406.

⁸⁰ Crowe Memorandum, 405.

Not everyone in the Foreign Office was vehemently anti-German, but they were quickly sidelined. Lord Fitzmaurice, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs from 1905 to 1908, remained fearful of Russian encroachment into central Asia and unconcerned with the German naval program throughout his tenure.⁸¹ Frank Lascales, ambassador to Germany, worked for a rapprochement between Britain and Germany until he was removed in 1908 and replaced with the anti-German Edward Goschen.⁸² One of the rising stars in the Foreign Office, Ralph Paget, was transferred to the inconsequential Belgrade office after Hardinge decided that Paget was too sympathetic to Germany.⁸³

One of the most enduring debates on British foreign policy in the years leading up to 1914 has been the influence of the officials within the Foreign Office on Sir Edward Grey and British foreign policy. The ideological shift within the Foreign Office after Edward Grey became Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs is undeniable. After January 1906, the Foreign Office rapidly transformed into the most staunchly anti-German office in the Cabinet. Those who dissented were transferred or ejected entirely. While Lansdowne and the Conservative Foreign Office had remained open to a rapprochement with Germany even as they opposed them in Morocco, many in Grey's Foreign Office regarded even the idea of rapprochement unthinkable. The notion that Germany could have benign intentions in any international action became anathema in the Foreign Office. From his writings, even as early as 1895, it is clear that Edward Grey held anti-German views. The argument that the officials at the Foreign Office influenced Edward Grey to take a more anti-German stance is wrong. The officials at the Foreign Office did not influence Grey's ideas about Germany, they reinforced them.

⁸¹ Hinsley, 25.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

By July 1914, the traditional foreign policy positions of the Foreign Office and the rest of the Cabinet had reversed. Whereas the Cabinet, especially the domestic ministers who were more susceptible to public opinion, proved reluctant to commit Britain decisively to the Franco-Russian Alliance and turn their back completely on the prospect of friendly relations with Germany, the Foreign Office led by Edward Grey became one of the principal forces behind Britain's commitment to the Triple Entente and Britain's turn away from Germany as a viable partner. With his own clear vision of where British foreign policy should go and a Foreign Office full of officials who shared his worldview, Edward Grey embarked on his mission to obtain an Anglo-Russian agreement.

The Russians made the first move in establishing an Anglo-Russian Entente. Cecil Spring-Rice, the British ambassador to Persia, reported a conversation with Alexander von Benckendorff, the Russian ambassador to Britain, in which Benckendorff expresses Russia's desire for an agreement with Britain in the same vein as the Entente Cordiale.⁸⁴ Edward Grey, realizing that the chance to achieve his dreamed-of agreement with Russia had come, initiated negotiations centered on the partition of Persia. The "Indian Problem" had plagued British strategists and colonial administrators for most of the nineteenth century. From as early as 1890 the British government became acutely aware of India's vulnerability to Russian aggression from Central Asia after Russia began to build strategic railroads toward the border of Afghanistan.⁸⁵ The Colonial Office estimated that 100,000 additional troops at minimum would be needed to effectively defend India against a Russian invasion.⁸⁶ In early 1907, the War Office issued a

⁸⁴ Cecil Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey, 26 January 1906, *British Documents*, vol. IV, 222.

⁸⁵ Christopher M. Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914*, 1st U.S. ed (New York: Harper, 2013), 139.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

report that concluded that Russia's railway projects in Central Asia were intended to threaten India and that the burden of adequately garrisoning India to defend it against a Russian attack called into question the logic of retaining India as an imperial possession. Both Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India from 1899 to 1905, and his successor Lord Minto demanded that Seistan, a strategic location in southeastern Persia, come under British influence and that a neutral zone be set up to protect the Indian frontier from further Russian encroachment.⁸⁷ Grey himself did not believe that Russia was capable of threatening the Afghan or Indian border because of Russia's losses in the Russo-Japanese War.⁸⁸ However, Russia's economy rebounded from the defeat very quickly, and defense spending rose significantly from 1906 to 1914.⁸⁹ However, Grey was more concerned with the threat of Russian encroachment in Central Asia than any actual encroachment. He realized that Russia had used its threat to India to get numerous concessions in the past, and that if Grey refused an agreement over Persia then Russia might cause more trouble in Central Asia to either force the British to offer more concessions or relinquish India.⁹⁰ While the government of India was concerned with the defense of Britain's most valuable possession, Grey worried about Russia's willingness for a rapprochement that would achieve his vision of an Anglo-Russian partnership.

Unlike the government in India, Grey had almost no interest in extending British influence in Persia. Persia was dependent on loans from both Britain and Russia, but when it applied for a new loan in 1905, Grey rejected any possibility of extending another loan to Persia.⁹¹ The Indian government sent Grey a memorandum urging him to reconsider, saying that

⁸⁷ Hinsley, 135.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Keith M. Wilson, *Decisions for War, 1914* (New York: StMartin's Press, 1995), 102.

⁹⁰ Hinsley, 137.

⁹¹ Hinsley, 143-144.

the loan could be used to increase British influence in Persia and secure the Seistan region from Russian encroachment, but Grey again refused, remarking that it was a good argument if he planned to extend British influence in Persia, which he did not.⁹² Grey later told Cecil Spring-Rice in a letter from 1906 that even if Anglo-Russian talks broke down he would not pursue greater influence in Persia.⁹³ Grey changed his mind about the loan, and he offered the Russians the chance to jointly finance the loan in order to show that he was earnest in his desire for an agreement.⁹⁴

Though talks were initiated in January 1906, each country in question, Tibet, Afghanistan, and Persia, was negotiated separately, so the first draft of the agreement was not produced until April 1907.⁹⁵ The negotiations were relatively easy, and only a few minor issues threatened the conclusion of the Anglo-Russian Convention on August 31, 1907. Alexander Isvolsky, the Russian Foreign Minister, feared German intervention, but the German ambassador declared that any agreement between Russia and Britain that did not affect German interests was a welcome one.⁹⁶ The expansion of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance to include British India caused some controversy in St. Petersburg, but it ultimately did not harm negotiations.⁹⁷ The agreement confirmed Persian independence, and it carved Persia into a British sphere of influence, a Russian sphere of influence, and a neutral zone between the two.⁹⁸ It also forbade Russia and Britain from seeking concessions in the sphere of the other, and it forbade concessions to a third

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Hinsley, 143.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Steiner, 81.

⁹⁶ Steiner, 80.

⁹⁷ Sir Hardinge to Edward Grey, 6 January 1906, *British Documents*, vol. IV, 622.

⁹⁸ Full text of Convention between the United Kingdom and Russia relating to Persia, Afghanistan, and Tibet, 31 August 1907, *British Documents*, vol IV., 618-620.

party in the British and Russian spheres.⁹⁹ Russia gained the northern half of the country, which included the capital Tehran, as its sphere of influence, and Britain gained the strategic Seistan Triangle to secure India.¹⁰⁰ Russia recognized the special positions of Tibet and Afghanistan to British interests, and Russia promised not to interfere in those two countries.¹⁰¹

Russia profited immensely from the deal, but Grey had purposefully pursued the minimum British demands to appease Russia. Russia received half of Persia, while Britain received only the Seistan Triangle because Grey ignored the recommendation from the Indian government and only demanded the minimum territory required to secure British interests. Tehran, the Persian capital, lay within the Russian sphere of influence, which not only gave the Russians inordinate influence over the government of Persia but also guaranteed that Russia could use the British embassy in Tehran as leverage in any future disputes. Grey did not pursue the Indian government's desire for a restriction on Russian ports in the Persian Gulf.¹⁰² Since Russia could obtain a port in the Persian Gulf, the neutral zone was rendered useless. If the Russians could obtain a port on the Persian Gulf, they would inevitably be able to exert influence inland and absorb the neutral zone into the Russian sphere of influence. Grey, in a bid to accelerate the agreement and win over the last fanatical Slavophiles in the Russian General Staff, suggested that Britain would reconsider the Rule of the Straits if Russia agreed to the convention. Grey's offer would overturn one of the last protections for the Ottoman Empire and allow Russian warships to enter and exit the Black Sea without fear of reprisal from Britain.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Steiner, 81.

Despite the fact that Grey's suggestion was not a serious one and he had no intention of pushing the question with the Ottomans, Grey's offer to reconsider a lynchpin of British foreign policy illustrated how desperately he wanted to conclude the negotiations. He wanted to conclude the negotiations for two reasons. First, he wanted to preempt any Russo-German agreement. The Foreign Office was paranoid about any Russo-German agreement that could detach Russia from France. Germany had offered to co-finance a loan with Russia to Persia in 1905, and the prospect of Russo-German cooperation in Persia was a driving force behind Grey's attempt to reach an agreement. Second, Grey wanted to secure India at any cost so that he could resolve the Anglo-Russian disputes in Central Asia and turn his, and Russia's, attention back to Europe. Grey knew that Russia was pivotal to British security in the Middle East. He certainly agreed with Hardinge's sentiment that "our whole future in Asia is bound up with the possibility of maintaining the best and most friendly relations with Russia."¹⁰³ Grey knew that the Russians could force greater concessions from Britain later if it chose to threaten British interests in the Middle East and Asia, so he sacrificed the greater part of Persia to prevent Russia from demanding more later. Grey chose not to pursue the best deal possible for Britain because he did not want Russia to walk out on the deal, and he wanted to secure Russia's loyalty with concessions. He believed that Russia would not take any other deal than the one he presented, and he repeatedly expressed his belief that the deal would secure "us forever, as far as the treaty could secure us, from further Russian advances in the direction of the Indian frontier."¹⁰⁴ Unlike with Germany, Grey was willing to stake Britain's security on Russian goodwill.

¹⁰³ Hinsley, 29.

¹⁰⁴ Hinsley, 147

Despite Edward Grey's attempts at appeasement, the Russians began violating the Convention almost immediately. In December 1907, Mohammed Ali Shah, the shah of Iran, attempted his first coup against the national assembly with the backing of the Russian ambassador to Persia, Nicholas Hartwig.¹⁰⁵ The coup was unsuccessful, but it did reveal the Russian influence on Iranian politics. In March 1908, Russia sent troops into northern Persia in response to incidents on the Russo-Persian border and demanded concessions from the nationalist government.¹⁰⁶ When the nationalist government appealed to Britain, their traditional patron, for help, Charles Marling, the British ambassador to Persia, told them to acquiesce to every Russian demand.¹⁰⁷ The second confrontation between the shah and the nationalists confirmed Grey's reluctance to enforce the Anglo-Russian Convention. In June 1908, the nationalist government deposed the shah and invited the shah's great uncle to assume the regency.¹⁰⁸ After Grey provided only half-hearted support to the deposed shah, Isvolsky accused Britain of supporting the usurper, and Grey responded by issuing a declaration to the nationalists demanding that the shah be restored.¹⁰⁹ Hartwig then ordered the Cossack Brigade, a unit loyal to the shah that was commanded by Russian officers, to surround the British legation where many members of the national assembly had fled.¹¹⁰ Only a threat by Grey to send British troops to the Gulf port of Bushire caused Hartwig to stand down and defuse the crisis.¹¹¹

Within a year of signing the convention, Russia violated the explicit terms of the Anglo-Russian Convention guaranteeing Persian independence and sovereignty, and Grey only took

¹⁰⁵ Steiner, 84.

¹⁰⁶ Hinsley, 239.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Hinsley, 239-240.

¹⁰⁹ Hinsley, 240.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

action once armed soldiers besieged the British embassy. Grey knew that any intervention by Britain in Persia was useless. Northern Persia was firmly in Russia's grasp, and Britain could not effectively challenge Russia from India. Grey himself was content with the neutral zone, but the neutral zone became a focal point in subsequent Anglo-Russian squabbles in Persia. These incidents revealed that Grey could not count on Russian goodwill to maintain the Anglo-Russian Convention, the unequal partition of Persia paved the way for future disputes, and that Russia could break the treaty with impunity without significant objections from Britain. Grey wanted so desperately to maintain Russian "friendship," whether to prevent Russia from turning to Germany or to secure the vital interests of the British Empire from Russian aggression, that he let the Russians repeatedly violate the agreement that was supposed to establish that friendship. Instead of establishing a stable partnership between Britain and Russia in the same mold as the Entente Cordiale, the Anglo-Russian Convention further strained Anglo-Russian relations and set a precedent for Russia to get concessions from Britain in exchange for a treaty and then break the treaty.

Though the crisis that erupted in the Balkans over Bosnia in 1908 overshadowed the events in Persia, Russian aggression in Persia drastically affected the outcome of the Bosnian Crisis. In violation of the Treaty of Berlin of 1878, Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina in October 1908. Though the Austrians had occupied the two provinces since 1878, the move deeply embarrassed the Young Turk government.¹¹² Britain, which was particularly supportive of the Young Turks, France, and the Ottoman Empire were shocked by Austria's bold move, but Germany and Russia knew about the plan beforehand to prevent an international

¹¹² Ralph R. Menning, "Dress Rehearsal for 1914? Germany, the Franco-Russian Alliance, and the Bosnian Crisis of 1909," *Journal of The Historical Society* 12, no. 1 (2012): 2.

incident.¹¹³ Isvolsky had met with Baron Aehrenthal, the Austrian Foreign Minister, at Buchlau on September 16, 1908 to discuss the possibility of Austria's annexation of Bosnia.¹¹⁴

Aehrenthal and Isvolsky came to the understanding that if Russia supported Austria's annexation of Bosnia then Austria would likewise support an opening of the Straits to Russian warships.¹¹⁵

Aehrenthal agreed to the revision of the Straits rule on the conditions that Russian warships would pass through one at a time and the possession of Istanbul by the Ottomans would not come into question.¹¹⁶ He also declared that Austria would not even consider negotiations with Serbia or Montenegro over cession of territory at the expense of the Ottoman Empire.¹¹⁷ On September 30th, Aehrenthal informed Isvolsky that the annexation would take place on October 7th. Once the Austrians proceeded with the annexation on October 7th, Isvolsky immediately claimed that he did not know that the annexation was imminent and that he thought that Austria would bring the question of annexation to a conference of the Powers.¹¹⁸ Isvolsky believed that he would have time to arrange a Russian move on the Straits before Austria annexed Bosnia.¹¹⁹ Feeling swindled by Aehrenthal's *coup d'etat*, Isvolsky began to disseminate misinformation to France and Britain to hide Russia's involvement and rally the Entente to oppose Austria.¹²⁰ The Ottomans, outraged at the loss of two provinces, demanded financial restitution from Austria-Hungary.

On October 14, 1908, Isvolsky approached Grey with a promise to support the Ottoman claim to monetary compensation in exchange for a reconsideration of the Rule of the Straits, and

¹¹³ Menning, 3.

¹¹⁴ Bernadotte Schmitt, *The Annexation of Bosnia 1908-1909*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1937) 20.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Schmitt, 21.

¹¹⁸ Schmitt, 23.

¹¹⁹ Schmitt, 25.

¹²⁰ Schmitt, 25.

Grey agreed that if Russia supported the Ottoman Empire then Britain would support the revision of the Rule of the Straits.¹²¹ Isvolsky lied to Grey and told him that he had not consented to Austria-Hungary's action in Bosnia and that his conference with Aerenthal was only an exchange of ideas about the fate of Bosnia to be decided at a future international conference in London or Paris.¹²² Isvolsky stated that if Russia could convince the Ottomans to agree to a revision of the Straits, then Britain should not oppose it.¹²³ He also declared that "it would be fatal to a good understanding with England if, when the question of the Straits was raised, it was found that England blocked the way."¹²⁴ Grey reported that he expressed his doubt that the prime minister would consider Isvolsky's proposal and that it was not an opportune time to consider the question.¹²⁵ However, Grey wrote a memorandum on the very same day as his conversation with Isvolsky in which he declared that the opening of the Straits was reasonable and that Britain would not oppose any negotiations.¹²⁶ He did place two caveats on Britain's acquiescence to a deal. First, the Straits would have to be open to all nations equally, Isvolsky had originally proposed that they only be open to Russian and the Danube powers.¹²⁷ Second, the willing consent of the Ottoman Empire was a prerequisite for any proposal.¹²⁸ Grey noted to Arthur Nicolson that he provided a copy of his memorandum to Isvolsky, who accepted Britain's terms.¹²⁹ Austria-Hungary acquiesced to demands to provide restitution and purchased Ottoman recognition of the annexation.¹³⁰

¹²¹ Grey to Nicolson, 14 October 1908, *British Documents*, vol. V, 442-443.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ Memorandum of Edward Grey, 14 October 1908, *British Documents*, vol. V, 441.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ Grey to Nicolson, 14 October 1908, *British Documents*, vol. V, 442.

¹³⁰ Menning, 5.

However, Isvolsky decided to demand territorial concessions for Serbia and Montenegro, and he refused to recognize the Austrian annexation until the demand was met.¹³¹ The Russian demand was a complete bluff, and the Russian General Staff, despite their fervent Slavophilia and Russia's recovery from the Russo-Japanese War, recognized that Russia could not hope to win a war against Austria-Hungary and Germany even with the aid of France. Grey had very little enthusiasm for Russia's demands. In October 1908, Grey told the Serbian Foreign Minister, Milonanovitch, that he would support Serbian territorial claims, but he confessed that he would not press for more than was absolutely necessary since he was supporting Serbia just to curry favor with Russia.¹³² On November 10, 1908, Count Benckendorff asked Edward Grey if Britain would support Russia if war broke out over the Bosnian Crisis, and Grey answered that he could not answer such a hypothetical question.¹³³ The Cabinet reinforced Grey's conclusion by declaring that Britain would not go to war over trouble in the Balkans.¹³⁴ However, Grey remained determined to support Isvolsky's policy irrespective of the Cabinet's opinion. Serbia remained defiantly attached to territorial compensation, and both Grey and Isvolsky worried that Serbia would provoke a forceful response from Austria-Hungary.¹³⁵ Both Bülow and Kiderlen-Wächter, Deputy Secretary of Foreign Affairs, both expressed a desire to peacefully resolve the crisis. Though both Grey and Bülow agreed that Serbia should give up its claims on territorial compensation, Grey refused to pressure Russia to back down first.¹³⁶

Meanwhile, Russian meddling in Persia strained the Anglo-Russian partnership in the Balkans. A large force of nationalists seized Tabriz, the economic center of Russian activity in

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² Sir Edward Grey to Sir Arthur Nicolson, 29 October 1908, *British Documents*, vol. V., 473.

¹³³ Sir Edward Grey to Sir Arthur Nicolson, 10 November 1908, *British Documents*, vol. V, 494.

¹³⁴ Steiner, 87.

¹³⁵ Hinsley, 187.

¹³⁶ Hinsley, 188.

northern Persia, and Russia prepared to send troops into Persia to retake the city for the shah.¹³⁷ Uncharacteristically, Edward Grey threatened to withdraw British support for Serbia's territorial claims if Russia did not pull back its troops.¹³⁸ Initially, the Russians pulled back, but Grey allowed them to reenter the country in exchange for a reform program when the shah refused to call off his attack on Tabriz.¹³⁹ Russia's troops never left northern Persia, and Russia steadily extended its occupation until the outbreak of World War I despite Grey's pleas to pull back.¹⁴⁰ Though Grey scored a momentary victory when Russia was in desperate need of British diplomatic support, Russia was still able to flaunt the Convention of 1907 and ignore Grey because it knew that Britain would not enforce the treaty.

Besides its half-hearted attempt to negotiate with Britain, Germany remained aloof during the Bosnian Crisis, only providing implicit support for Austria-Hungary. Finally, in March 1909 Germany issued an ultimatum to Russia and Britain; recognize the Austrian annexation of Bosnia, or Germany would give Austria a free hand to deal with Serbia by force.¹⁴¹ With his bluff called, Isvolsky quickly deescalated the crisis and recognized Austria's annexation of Bosnia, despite Grey's continued support for Russia.¹⁴² Grey, left alone in his opposition to the Bosnian annexation, continued his protests for several weeks until he submitted to the German demands.¹⁴³ Grey did not care about Serbian territorial ambition in the Balkans, but he did care about Russia's support for Serbia. In an attempt to curry favor with the Russians, Grey maintained his support for Russia's support of Serbia even after Russia withdrew its support in

¹³⁷ Hinsley, 241.

¹³⁸ Steiner, 84-85.

¹³⁹ Hinsley, 241.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Sir Francis Berie to Edward Grey, 24 March 1909, British Documents, vol. V, 731.

¹⁴² Menning, 5.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

the face of the German ultimatum. Grey agreed with Germany that Serbia had no legitimate claim to territory and agreed that Britain would not go to war over Bosnia, but he decided to continue his support even after the German ultimatum to show Russia that Britain was loyal to the Convention.

The Bosnian Crisis highlighted the fragility of the Anglo-Russian Convention in the same way that the First Moroccan Crisis highlighted the unity of the Entente Cordiale. While Germany stood resolutely behind Austria, France and Britain decided that they would not wholeheartedly support Russia's gamble. Britain and Russia also quarreled in Persia in the middle of the crisis, eroding the unity of their cause. When Austria and Germany called Russia's bluff, Russia was utterly humiliated since neither France nor Britain were willing to go to war over Serbian territorial claims. Russian military and diplomatic weakness became a focal point in Russian policy in the succeeding years. Russia became distrustful of Britain's loyalty to the Triple Entente, even though Grey had supported Russia and Serbia's territorial claims, because Grey refused to pledge his support to Russia if war broke out. The Russian General Staff, and the increasingly Slavophilic ministers in the Russian government, learned from the Bosnian Crisis that brinkmanship had to be pursued to the end and resolved that they would not let Austria call Russia's again.¹⁴⁴ The Bosnian Crisis severely damaged Anglo-Russian relations and called into questioned the resiliency of the Triple Entente. Germany, reinvigorated from its unquestionable victory in the Bosnian Crisis, endeavored to unify its people and deal another harsh blow to the Triple Entente.

¹⁴⁴ Lieven, 36-37.

The Second Moroccan Crisis began as a measure to rally the German people behind a diplomatic victory. Bülow had engineered a great victory over the Social Democrats in the 1907 elections when he violently put down the Herero Revolt.¹⁴⁵ Alfred von Kiderlen-Wächter, now the German Secretary of State, hoped to score a meaningful diplomatic victory that would guarantee the victory of the pro-government parties in the 1912 elections.¹⁴⁶ Though victory over the SPD remained the primary motivator for intervention in Morocco, Kiderlen-Wächter also hoped to score another diplomatic victory over the Triple Entente.¹⁴⁷ Kiderlen-Wächter assumed that the Triple Entente was weak after the diplomatic defeat in Bosnia and that neither Britain nor Russia would be willing to go to war over a colonial squabble. In 1911, a rebellion broke out against the Sultan of Morocco, and France took the opportunity to declare a protectorate over Morocco under the guise of protecting the European citizens within the country.¹⁴⁸ In response to the French *fait accompli*, Kiderlen-Wächter resurrected the old claim of German economic interests in Morocco.¹⁴⁹ Jules Cambon, the French ambassador to Germany, offered to negotiate a deal with Kiderlen-Wächter.¹⁵⁰ Cambon declared that France was willing to cede territory in Central Africa to Germany in exchange for total French hegemony over Morocco, but any concessions in Morocco was out of the question.¹⁵¹ However, Kiderlen-Wächter wanted to see what other concessions France was willing to offer if Germany called France's bluff, and while

¹⁴⁵ Geoffrey Barraclough, *From Agadir to Armageddon: Anatomy of a Crisis* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1982), 36.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Barraclough, 37.

¹⁴⁸ Barraclough, 95.

¹⁴⁹ Barraclough, 103.

¹⁵⁰ Barraclough, 104.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Bethmann Hollweg was away from Berlin on vacation he sent the gunboat *Panther* to the port of Agadir on July 1, 1911.¹⁵²

France immediately called upon Russia and Britain, hoping to intimidate Germany into backing down by wielding the full might of the Triple Entente, for help as the German intervention caused controversy around Europe. Isvolsky replied, perhaps in revenge for the lack of French support in the Bosnian Crisis, that Russia would not risk war over North African territories, and Edward Grey responded that a military commitment might look like a formal alliance and cause the downfall of the Liberal government.¹⁵³ Though Grey initially ruled out the possibility of direct British aid to France, he was determined to show support to the Entente Cordiale because of the perception that Britain had failed to fully support Russia in the Bosnian Crisis and the Franco-German agreement over Morocco in 1909. Germany and France concluded a treaty resolving trade issues in Morocco in 1909 without alerting Britain.¹⁵⁴ Indignant at the double standard shown by France, since France would have been outraged if Britain concluded a treaty with Germany without France's knowledge, Grey became determined to prove Britain's loyalty to the Entente by supporting France.¹⁵⁵ David Lloyd George delivered a speech at Mansion House on July 21 that illustrated the escalation of the crisis. He declared that Britain could not allow its vital interests to be threatened and that any concession to Germany would mean a loss of international prestige.¹⁵⁶ The fact that Lloyd George, a politician who was almost wholly devoted to domestic politics, gave the Mansion House speech revealed the extent to which Asquith's cabinet had become concerned about German aggression in Morocco. As a

¹⁵² Barraclough, 95.

¹⁵³ Barraclough, 102.

¹⁵⁴ Barraclough, 85.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Extract from speech of Mr. Lloyd George on July 21, 1911, *British Documents*, Vol VII, 391-392.

result of Lloyd George's speech, Kiderlen-Wächter forbade Paul Metternich, the German ambassador to Britain, from reassuring Grey that Germany had no intention of landing any troops in Morocco in order to deescalate the crisis.¹⁵⁷ Because of Lloyd George's fiery challenge to Germany's intentions, the German government refused to back down, and the fear that Germany might attack France grew. Lloyd George had previously been a part of the domestic affairs-minded wing of Asquith's Cabinet. Lloyd George's outspoken stance on the Second Moroccan Crisis revealed the extent to which Britain had become concerned with France's security.

Edward Grey ensured that Britain would take a leading role in the negotiations over the Second Morocco Crisis and that Britain would escalate the crisis to the brink of war. Francis Bertie, the British ambassador to France, cautioned Grey that any compromise with Germany could have disastrous effects on the balance-of-power in Europe since Germany could demand anything and expect the Entente to back down, and he advocated for a tough stance against Germany in order to prevent Germany from becoming too powerful.¹⁵⁸ Arthur Nicolson echoed that sentiment and added that if Britain backed down then it would face the prospect of a triumphant Germany and a resentful Franco-Russian Alliance, leaving Britain isolated.¹⁵⁹ Influenced by the advice of his subordinates in the Foreign Office, Grey became concerned that Germany was using the crisis to position itself to achieve Continental domination.

As the French and Germans entrenched themselves in negotiations so as to not lose face for any concession, Russia demanded concessions in Persia that would amount to total Russian

¹⁵⁷ Barraclough, 132-133.

¹⁵⁸ Francis Bertie to Edward Grey, 1 September 1911, *British Documents*, Vol. VII., 471-472.

¹⁵⁹ Arthur Nicolson to Edward Grey, 4 August 1911, *British Documents*, Vol. VII, 434.

domination of northern Persia and an effective elimination of the neutral zone.¹⁶⁰ Confronted with the threat of Russia abandoning Britain and France in the Moroccan negotiations, Grey acquiesced.¹⁶¹ Amidst heightened Franco-German tensions, Grey engineered the first war scare when in August 1911 he wrote to Reginald McKenna, the First Lord of the Admiralty, and advised him to prepare the fleet for the possibility of a surprise attack by Germany, even though the War Office did not anticipate any hostile actions by Germany whatsoever.¹⁶² Exasperated by German intransigence in the negotiations, Joseph Caillaux, the French prime minister, declared that if the negotiations were not concluded within a week, the French would send a warship to Agadir.¹⁶³ The Committee of Imperial Defense met on August 23 to decide what Britain would do if Germany and France went to war, and it decided that if Germany attacked France then Britain would send an expeditionary force to support the French, which Grey wholeheartedly supported.¹⁶⁴ The most serious war scare came in September 1911 when Kiderlen-Wächter chose to reopen the possibility of concessions in Morocco.¹⁶⁵ However, both Bethmann Hollweg's argument that neither Austria nor the German public would support a war over Morocco and France's threat of war if Germany did not drop the question of Morocco convinced him to withdraw the suggestion within a week.¹⁶⁶ The final settlement was signed on November 4, 1911. France maintained its protectorate over Morocco with promises from Germany not to object, and Germany received territory, almost entirely useless marshland, in the Congo.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁰ Barraclough, 117.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² Hinsley, 280-281.

¹⁶³ Barraclough, 136-137.

¹⁶⁴ Barraclough, 137.

¹⁶⁵ Hinsley, 282.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Herr von Kiderlen-Wächter to M. Jules Cambon, 4 November 1911, *British Documents*, Vol. VII, 613-619.

Once again, Germany's attempt to intimidate France into granting more concessions in Morocco failed, and it instead galvanized the Entente Cordiale against Germany and turned the Second Morocco Crisis into a test of strength between the two major power blocs. Any German hope of weakening the Entente Cordiale disappeared as Britain took the lead in the crisis in order to prove its loyalty, and it failed to secure a victory for the government in the 1912 Reichstag elections. The Second Morocco Crisis also revealed the fragility in both of the major European power blocs. Austria refused to support Germany's ambitions in North Africa while Russia declined to support France. The crisis also confirmed Russia's predatory nature when it used the tension of the crisis to extract more concessions from Britain in Persia. Most importantly, it marked the final transformation of the Entente Cordiale from an agreement over colonies into a primary consideration in British foreign policy. Britain, and Edward Grey in particular, became determined to uphold the Entente Cordiale throughout the Second Morocco Crisis, and Grey even prepared to send British troops to help France in case the negotiations failed.

The period in British foreign policy from 1905 to 1911 marked a transition for Britain's outlook on international relations. Abandoning the "free hand" ideology of the Conservatives, the Liberal government that took power in 1906 moved Britain decisively toward the Franco-Russian Alliance. The Anglo-French bond became strong through the First and Second Morocco Crisis, and France's security became a primary consideration in British foreign policy. Britain also moved closer to Russia through the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, but the relationship did not develop the same way that the Anglo-French relationship did. At the same time, the Foreign Office became decidedly anti-German in outlook, largely due to Sir Edward Grey and his allies. Germany continued to execute misguided attempts to destroy the Entente Cordiale and to curry favor with the German electorate in the Moroccan Crises, while it solidified its alliance

with Austria-Hungary in the Bosnian Crisis. From this perspective, Britain became more dependent on maintaining the friendships with France and Russia to ensure its own security against what Grey and the Foreign Office saw as the unchecked aggression of Germany. This perspective allowed the Russians, and to a lesser extent the French, to take advantage of Britain in order to gain concessions. Russia could offer the chance of friendship or threaten to take it away in order to get what it wanted, and this made Britain more eager to obtain and maintain that friendship. However, the Second Morocco Crisis revealed that the Triple Entente was not immune to petty squabbles and was far from a decisive alliance against Germany. As British foreign policy became more and more dependent on the goodwill of France and especially Russia, some British politicians sought a rapprochement with Germany.

Chapter 3: The Balkan Wars and the July Crisis

Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 as well as the conclusion of the Anglo-Russian Convention in 1907 diverted Russia's primary ambition toward the Balkans. Russia continued to encroach upon Japanese influence in northern Manchuria and the neutral zone in central Persia, but Russia's primary foreign policy considerations lay in the Balkans after 1907.¹ The question of the Straits, the right of Russian warships to freely navigate the Ottoman-held Dardanelles and Bosphorus from the Black Sea into the eastern Mediterranean, became a preoccupation within the Russian Foreign Ministry.² Though the Russians previously failed to manipulate the Bosnian Crisis into a revision of the Straits rule, they were able to secure a half-hearted guarantee from Edward Grey to "revisit" the question.³ The reorientation of Russian foreign policy to the Balkans and Near East brought it into conflict with Austria-Hungary, and by extension Germany, as well as the Ottoman Empire. Britain's traditional role as defender of the Ottomans as well as Edward Grey's desire for a *détente* with Germany after the tension of the Second Moroccan Crisis brought Britain into conflict with its erstwhile ally Russia as Grey inadvertently thwarted Russian ambitions in the Balkans. Despite this, the mindset within the Foreign Office that Russia was vital to Britain's security became more and more pronounced, and the fear of angering Russia decisively influenced Britain's decision to declare war on Germany in 1914.

Nikolai Charykov, the Russian ambassador in Istanbul, used this vague promise of a possible future review of the Straits rule to push the question in the aftermath of the Second

¹ Sean McMeekin, *The Russian Origins of the First World War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013), 12.

² McMeekin, 28.

³ Grey to Lowther, 12 December 1911, *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914*, 11 vols. (London: HMSO, 1926-1938) vol. IX, 350.

Moroccan Crisis.⁴ Charykov promised the Ottoman government a Russian guarantee of Ottoman control of Istanbul and a defensible Thracian hinterland in exchange for the right of Russian warships to pass freely through the Straits.⁵ Charykov also added the promise of a general *rapprochement* between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, and the Ottoman government under Said Pasha responded favorably.⁶ The push for a revision of the Straits rule also stemmed from the concerns of the Russian General Staff about the order of two dreadnoughts by the Ottoman Empire from Britain in early 1911 as well as the construction of railways in eastern Anatolia, which would allow the Ottomans to more easily reinforce the Caucasian theater in the event of a war with Russia.⁷ The General Staff feared that the combined might of the dreadnoughts and the formidable static defenses of the Straits would thwart any future Russian move on Istanbul.⁸ The General Staff even drew up plans for a surprise attack on the Bosphorus, and, though the Minister of War Vladimir Sukhomlinov dismissed the attack as impractical, the Russian plan for a sneak attack on Istanbul remained in the minds of Russia's General Staff.⁹ Charykov himself preferred to use the diplomatic opportunity afforded by the Second Moroccan Crisis and the Italo-Turkish War that broke out in September 1911 to pressure the Ottomans into negotiations over the opening of the Straits, and he convinced Assistant Foreign Minister Neratov, who was in charge of the Russian Foreign Ministry while Sergei Sazonov recovered from an illness, to authorize his proposal to the Ottomans.¹⁰ Charykov also believed that the approval of Italy and France was crucial to Russian success, and he convinced the French ambassador to Istanbul, Bompard, to

⁴ Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (New York: Harper, 2013) 259.

⁵ Clark, 259.

⁶ Edward C. Thaden, *Russia and the Balkan Alliance of 1912* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1965) 27.

⁷ Thaden, 40.

⁸ Thaden, 41.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Clark, 259-260.

approve the plan for negotiations while Neratov informed the Italian government that Russia would seek negotiations over the Straits.¹¹

At first, only Austria-Hungary openly opposed the negotiations while Germany endorsed the talks and Russia's Triple Entente partners responded with cautious support.¹² Edward Grey told Count Benckendorff, the Russian ambassador to Britain, in late October 1911 that Britain would consider the opening of the Straits "with sympathy."¹³ Though Grey gave a vague answer similar to the one he had given Isvolsky in 1908 and disturbed Benckendorff as to Grey's true feelings on the subject, the vague answer emboldened Charykov to continue with the negotiations. However, Said Pasha became less willing to entertain concessions to Russia as the Italian offensive in Libya came to a halt and a stalemate set in.¹⁴ The Ottoman Empire's sudden intransigence called into question Russia's support from other powers. France, still resentful over Russia's delay in support during the Second Moroccan Crisis, delayed its response to Russia's request for full support of the negotiations, and Edward Grey invoked the caveats he had given to Isvolsky in 1908.¹⁵ In December 1911, Grey sent a letter to Gerard Lowther, the British ambassador to Istanbul, in which he noted that he had promised Isvolsky in 1908 that Britain would not stand in the way of an opening of the Straits as long as the Turks also agreed to it.¹⁶

The conversations ceased once Sazonov returned from his vacation, and he informed the Ottoman government to disregard Charykov's overtures as unauthorized by the Russian government.¹⁷ In fact, the acting Foreign Minister, Neratov, had approved of Charykov's actions

¹¹ Thaden, 44-45.

¹² Thaden, 49-50.

¹³ Thaden, 50.

¹⁴ Thaden, 52-53.

¹⁵ Thaden, 52.

¹⁶ Grey to Lowther, 12 December 1911, *British Documents*, vol. IX, 350.

¹⁷ Clark, 260.

and had informed the Italian government of the impending conversations. However, Benckendorff's report to Sazonov which described Grey's reluctance to amend his previous position on the Straits as well as renewed conflict with Britain over the Persian border in the winter of 1911-1912 convinced Sazonov that the time was not right to push the questions of the Straits.¹⁸ Sazonov recalled Charykov back to St. Petersburg in March 1912, and he decided to support Nikolai Hartwig's alternative policy of supporting a Balkan League to block Austrian ambitions in the Balkans and apply indirect pressure on the Ottomans.¹⁹

The termination of Charykov's negotiations signaled an important shift in Russian policy toward the Balkans. Instead of trying to garner enough international support to impose a revision of the Straits rule, as Charykov had attempted to do, Sazonov decided to achieve Russian goals clandestinely by supporting the formation of the Balkan League. The formation of the Balkan League as well as Russia's subsequent strange relationship with it contributed significantly to the British Foreign Office's confusion over Russia's true goals in the Balkans. Also, Edward Grey's response to the negotiations initiated by Charykov indicated an important shift in British foreign policy in regard to the Ottoman Empire. In his December 1911 letter, he admitted that he had promised Isvolsky that Britain would not actively oppose negotiations regarding the Straits if Russia decided to seek a revision of the rule. Though the chance of the Turks agreeing to renegotiate the rule seemed almost impossible, the initial losses incurred in the Italo-Turkish War almost convinced the Ottoman government to seriously consider Charykov's proposal. Previously, any renegotiation of the Straits rule stood as a total non-starter for the British, but Grey's vague promise to Isvolsky in 1908 as well as his reiteration of the promise in December

¹⁸ Clark, 260-261.

¹⁹ Clark, 261-262.

1911 represented a shift in British policy. By removing the Straits rule from its position as a non-starter in British foreign policy, Edward Grey opened the door for Russia to campaign more openly for a revision of the Straits rule. The very fact that Russia was able to begin serious conversations, since they were sanctioned by the acting Foreign Minister, on the Straits rule indicated that Britain was becoming more willing to compromise in foreign policy considerations it previously considered vital to British security in exchange for Russian goodwill. Only the Ottoman Empire's improving fortunes in the Italo-Turkish War strengthened Said Pasha's government and their subsequent reluctance to move forward with the conversations convinced Sazonov to disavow Charykov.

The tensions caused by the Second Morocco Crisis broke quickly. Having nearly caused a general European war over Morocco, both Britain and Germany became eager for an improvement in relations.²⁰ The idea that a colonial agreement similar to that of the Entente Cordiale and the Anglo-Russian Convention could ease tensions between the two powers began to circulate within the German Foreign Office. Paul von Wolff-Metternich, the German ambassador to Britain, argued that only friendship with Britain could secure Germany's place as a world power.²¹ Additionally, the Anglo-German naval arms race, which Bethmann Hollweg identified as the primary obstacle to better Anglo-German relations, had been decided decisively in Britain's favor.²² German Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg agreed with Wolff-Metternich's assessment, and he decided to seek negotiations with the British to come to an agreement over imperial territories and the naval question.²³ Bethmann Hollweg first invited Winston Churchill,

²⁰ Zara Steiner, *Britain and the Origins of the First World War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977) 94.

²¹ James Joll, *The Origins of the First World War* (Harlow, England: Pearson Longman, 2007) 233-234.

²² Steiner, 98.

²³ Joll, 234.

the First Lord of the Admiralty, and then invited Edward Grey to visit Germany for negotiations after Churchill declined.²⁴ Grey also declined, but in his discussion with the Cabinet on the possibility of negotiations he nominated Richard Haldane, the Secretary of State for War and one of the most prominent pro-Germans in the Cabinet, to go in his stead in February 1912.²⁵

The primary British goal of the Haldane Mission was to end the naval arms race and secure Britain's naval superiority. However, the 1912 Naval Bill, which established the construction of three new battleships every two years and created a third squadron, was introduced in the Reichstag the day before Haldane arrived in Berlin and threw the entire purpose of the negotiations into doubt.²⁶ Though both the British Admiralty and the Foreign Office demanded the defeat of the new naval bill as a prerequisite for any agreement, Haldane proposed a "naval holiday" in which both sides would refrain from building any new dreadnoughts until 1913.²⁷ Both Tirpitz and Wilhelm rejected the idea, but Bethmann Hollweg's threat of resignation convinced them to try to compromise.²⁸ Kaiser Wilhelm, Tirpitz's principal ally on the naval program, became amenable to postponing new dreadnought construction as part of a larger deal with the British.²⁹ With a possible deal in sight, Bethmann Hollweg proposed that Germany would concede naval superiority to the British indefinitely in return for a guarantee of British neutrality in a future European war.³⁰ However, Bethmann Hollweg worded his proposal carefully so that it could be compatible with Britain's existing ententes with France and Russia. Haldane wrote that Bethmann Hollweg's proposal included, "They [Britain or Germany]

²⁴ Steiner, 95.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Volker R. Berghahn, *Germany and the Approach of War in 1914* (New York, N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1993) 134.

²⁷ Steiner, 98.

²⁸ Berghahn, 135.

²⁹ Steiner, 96.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

will not, either of them, make any unprovoked attack upon the other or join in any combination or design against the other for purposes of aggression,” as well as “If either of the high contracting parties becomes entangled in which it cannot be considered the aggressor, the other will at least observe a benevolent neutrality, and use its utmost endeavor for the localization of the conflict.”³¹ Additionally, “The duty of neutrality which arises from the preceding article has no application in so far as it may not be reconcilable with existing agreements which the high contracting parties have already made.”³² Lord Harcourt, the Colonial Secretary and another pro-German in the Cabinet, reported that Grey flatly refused the proposed arrangement since it was a danger to the entente with France.³³ Francis Bertie, the British ambassador to France, reported to Arthur Nicolson that Bethmann Hollweg’s proposal, “certainly creates suspicion here,” and threatened Britain’s relationship with France.³⁴ Similarly, Haldane’s Foreign Office advisor, and one of the most virulently anti-German officials in the Foreign Office, Arthur Nicolson excoriated the neutrality proposal.³⁵ Not only did Nicolson challenge the idea of benevolent neutrality, he called it a contradiction in terms, but he also challenged the idea of an aggressor.³⁶ Nicolson argued that threatening actions by Germany might convince France or Russia that Germany was preparing to initiate hostilities and therefore induce France or Russia to carry out a preemptive strike on Germany.³⁷ In this situation, Nicolson thought that Germany would be the true aggressor and therefore not subject to the neutrality pact with Britain since its threatening actions convinced Russia or France to attack.³⁸ However, provision four of Bethmann Hollweg’s

³¹ Lord Haldane’s diary, 10 February 1912, *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914*, 11 vols. (London: HMSO, 1926-1938) vol. VI, 682-683.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Steiner, 96.

³⁴ Bertie to Nicolson, 11 February, 1912, *British Documents*, vol. VI, 687-688.

³⁵ Notes by A. Nicolson to Lord Haldane’s Diary, 10 February 1912, *British Documents*, vol. VI, 686.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

proposal conceded that the neutrality agreement would have “no application insofar as it may not be reconcilable with existing agreements which the high contracting parties have already made.”³⁹ Grey only accepted point two of Bethmann Hollweg’s proposal and offered no more than to promise that Britain would not join in an unprovoked attack on Germany, which left the door open for Nicolson’s interpretation of Germany as an indirect aggressor, and the talks fell apart after the Germans rejected Grey’s offer.

The Haldane Mission was a last-ditch attempt to diplomatically resolve the Anglo-German naval arms race, and it failed in that endeavor. It failed because of Tirpitz’s political meddling before the talks began and because Germany wanted to trade something for nothing during the talks.⁴⁰ Bethmann Hollweg wanted a reasonable assurance of British neutrality in a future European war, but because of Tirpitz’s political victory in February with the introduction of the 1912 naval bill, even though the bill itself was a compromise bill that did not authorize Tirpitz’s desired expansion of six dreadnoughts every two years, he was unable to offer anything tangible to the British in return. The British were winning the naval race by a comfortable margin, so they had no reason to give a promise of neutrality to Germany in exchange for an admission of a fact that was already undeniable. Though Bethmann Hollweg believed that he was offering the British a good deal with a moratorium on dreadnought construction, the clear British advantage in the naval race made any exchange of a dreadnought moratorium for a neutrality pact undesirable. The Haldane Mission also underscored the near paranoia in the Foreign Office that any deal with Germany would break the fragile Triple Entente. Most officials in the Foreign Office, including Nicolson and Bertie, actively worked against the negotiations for

³⁹ Lord Haldane’s diary, 10 February 1912, *British Documents*, vol.VI, 683.

⁴⁰ Clark, 319.

fear of the possibility that an Anglo-German détente might disrupt the ententes that Grey and his Foreign Office had worked hard to cultivate.

Admiral Tirpitz emerged victorious from the Haldane Mission as well as the passage of the 1912 Naval Bill in May, but his victory was short-lived. Bethmann Hollweg allied himself with Helmuth von Moltke the Younger, Chief of the German General Staff and nephew of the hero of the Franco-Prussian War, to thwart Tirpitz's naval program by promoting an increase of the German Army.⁴¹ In May 1912, the Reichstag approved Tirpitz's naval bill, but it also adopted a program to revitalize the army, making a showdown over which branch would receive the greater share of funding inevitable.⁴² Tirpitz attempted to introduce a second navy bill in late 1912 that would increase the rate of dreadnought construction to meet the minimum ratio, 16:10, to compete with the British, but it was swiftly defeated by Bethmann Hollweg's coalition.⁴³ Soon, Moltke the Younger gained the ear of the Kaiser, and Tirpitz's ambition to challenge Britain's naval supremacy was replaced with Moltke's concern about Germany's strategic position on the Continent. The swift defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the First Balkan War and the resulting diplomatic crisis convinced the German General Staff that Germany needed to reorient toward the army and the Continent.⁴⁴ Moltke the Younger convinced the Kaiser and the Reichstag that a massive expansion in army funding was necessary to meet any threat on the Continent.⁴⁵ The June 1913 army bill eclipsed Tirpitz's naval bill, which Bethmann Hollweg dismissed as impossible due to the new commitments to the army and the political realities with

⁴¹ Steiner, 97.

⁴² Volker R. Berghahn, *Germany and the Approach of War in 1914* (New York, N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 135.

⁴³ Berghahn, 137-138.

⁴⁴ Berghahn, 141.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Britain.⁴⁶ The German Army won the funding war, and the Germany navy was forced to cut its expenditure drastically.⁴⁷ The effective end of the naval race removed the primary obstacle to better Anglo-German relations, and led directly to greater Anglo-German cooperation during the Balkan Wars as well as a greater feeling of détente between the two countries after the war scares during the Second Moroccan Crisis and the failure of the Haldane Mission. However, the defeat of Tirpitz removed the outlook that Britain was Germany's most important adversary on the world stage, and the refocus on the army increased the power and influence of the German General Staff, who were making plans for what they considered the inevitable showdown between Germany and Russia.

Despite his strong opposition to the Haldane Mission and his overall distrust of German policy, Edward Grey enthusiastically sought cooperation between Britain and Germany during the Balkan Wars in order to prevent Russia from escalating the crisis into a general European war. Russia's meddling in the Balkans, including the creation of the Balkan League, led directly to the First Balkan War in October 1912.⁴⁸ The officials in the Foreign Office first heard the rumors of a Russian-sponsored alliance between Bulgaria and Serbia during the early stages of the Italo-Turkish War in November 1911.⁴⁹ Serbia and Bulgaria concluded a defensive alliance in March 1912 and a general alliance aimed against the Ottomans in May 1912.⁵⁰ Sazonov and Nikolai Hartwig, the Russian ambassador to Serbia, supported the alliance and its aggressive policy toward the Ottoman Empire.⁵¹ However, the Russians quickly lost control of the Balkan League when Serbia and Bulgaria recruited Greece and Montenegro and began planning for war

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Berghahn 138-139.

⁴⁸ Steiner, 110-111.

⁴⁹ Steiner, 110.

⁵⁰ Clark, 252.

⁵¹ Clark 261-262.

against the Ottomans without consulting Russia.⁵² Grey knew that Russia had helped to create the Balkan League, and he dreaded the implications of the alliance's anti-Ottoman stance.⁵³ In April 1912, Hery Bax-Ironside, the British ambassador to Bulgaria, shared his view of the Balkan League with Arthur Nicolson.⁵⁴ He believed that the Balkan League was an instrument of revenge created by Russia to weaken the Ottoman Empire and above all thwart Austrian ambitions in the Balkans in retribution for the Bosnian Crisis.⁵⁵ Bax-Ironside also expressed his belief that the creation of the Balkan League under the auspices of Russia made a conflict between Austria and Russia highly likely.⁵⁶ On October 8, 1912, Montenegro declared war on the Ottoman Empire, and the three other members of the Balkan League joined the First Balkan War within a few days.⁵⁷ Grey and the Foreign Office were well aware of Russia's involvement in the creation of the Balkan League and the initiation of the First Balkan War, and Grey became concerned about Britain's obligations to support Russia in another crisis akin to the Bosnian Crisis.

Soon, the Russia-backed allies were at the gates of Istanbul, and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Sazonov worried that the League that he had helped to create might succeed too well and steal Russia's prize.⁵⁸ Sazonov had assured George Buchanan back in September 1912 that Russia had no desire for Istanbul, but "she would not allow any other power to take possession of it."⁵⁹ As Bulgarian troops neared the fortifications of Istanbul in late October 1912, Sazonov warned the Bulgarian ambassador to Russia that Russia would not allow Bulgarian

⁵² Clark, 263.

⁵³ Steiner, 110.

⁵⁴ Bax-Ironside to Nicolson, 8 April 1912, *British Documents*, vol. IX part I, 564-565.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Bax-Ironside to Nicolson, 8 April 1912, *British Documents*, vol. IX part I, 566.

⁵⁷ Steiner, 111.

⁵⁸ Clark, 264.

⁵⁹ Buchanan to Grey, 18 September 1912, *British Documents*, vol. IX part I, 694.

troops to enter Istanbul under any circumstances, but the Bulgarian troops were repulsed before Sazonov could fulfill his warning.⁶⁰ As the negotiations for a peace settlement between the Balkan League and the Ottoman Empire began, Sazonov supported Austria's demand that the territorial status quo be maintained in the Balkans, but he then informed the Italian government that Serbian access to the Adriatic was necessary for an acceptable peace.⁶¹ Sazonov changed his mind again and supported the creation of an independent Albania, but on November 17th Sazonov sent dispatches to London and Paris supporting a Serbian corridor to the coast and threatening that Russia would intervene militarily if Austria-Hungary attacked Serbia.⁶²

Austria-Hungary also wanted to profit from the conflict, and it wanted to prevent the spread of Russian influence in the Balkans, namely by preventing Serbia from acquiring a port on the Adriatic.⁶³ Both Britain and Germany cooperated to restrain their ally from escalating the situation, and Grey organized a conference in London to arbitrate the peace settlement.⁶⁴ Grey succeeded in his role as peace-maker alongside Germany, but initially he made sure to reaffirm Britain's loyalty to the Triple Entente. Grey sided with the Russians on the issue of the Montenegrin occupation of Scutari, a port that was vital to the viability of an independent Albania.⁶⁵ In a letter to Fairfax Cartwright, the British ambassador to Vienna, Grey admitted that he would side with the Russians despite the conference's decision that Scutari would be part of Albania because "we should not have to consider the merits of the question of Scutari, but what our interests required us to do in a European crisis."⁶⁶ This letter indicated that Grey was willing

⁶⁰ Clark, 264.

⁶¹ Clark, 265.

⁶² Clark, 265-266.

⁶³ Steiner, 112.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Steiner, 113.

⁶⁶ Grey to Cartwright, 1 May 1913, *British Documents*, vol. IX part II, 748.

to contravene the determination of the conference that he organized and championed as an alternative to an escalation of the crisis in order to appease the Russians. Only the timely withdrawal of the Montenegrins from Scutari prevented Austrian military intervention and a probable Russian counteroffensive to Austria's move.⁶⁷

During the conference in November 1912, in response to Austria's intransigence over the Albania issue, Russian Minister of War Sukhomlinov convinced the Tsar to begin the process of mobilization in the Kiev and Warsaw districts, which formed the border with Austria-Hungary.⁶⁸ Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Kokovstov, who was unaware of the mobilization until the day after it was ordered, quickly put a stop to the proceedings once he found out about the order, but the mobilization itself revealed the changing nature of Russian foreign policy. Since the economic recovery of the Russo-Japanese War, the Russian military had been greatly expanded, giving the Russian General Staff more power within the Russian government.⁶⁹ The generals in the Russian Army, and a growing number of government ministers after the assassination of the moderate Pyotr Stolypin in 1911, were rabid Slavophiles who believed in the same inevitable showdown between "Teuton and Slav" that the generals in the German General Staff believed in.⁷⁰ After the humiliation of the Bosnian Crisis, both the Russian Foreign Ministry and the Russian General Staff became determined not to let Austria call Russia's bluff again.⁷¹

The Treaty was signed in May 1913, and it represented a great victory for the Anglo-German partnership. When Russia attempted to cause an incident after the Ottoman recapture of Adrianople during the Second Balkan War in July 1913, Britain, France, and Germany quickly

⁶⁷ Steiner, 113.

⁶⁸ Clark, 267.

⁶⁹ D. C. B. Lieven, *Russia and the Origins of the First World War* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1983) 13.

⁷⁰ Lieven, 22.

⁷¹ Lieven, 36-37.

coalesced to veto any Russian action that threatened the stability of the Ottoman Empire, including intervention.⁷² The Anglo-German partnership during the Balkan Wars was one of convenience and was successful because of both powers' desire to prevent a general European war as well as the fact that neither power had significant interests in the Balkans beyond the survival of the Ottoman Empire. This allowed Britain and Germany to work together without the threat of a dispute. For the first time, Grey became cautiously optimistic about Britain's relationship with Germany writing, "Kiderlen worked for peace in the Balkans crisis and Jagow has done the same, and I shall do my part to keep our relations cordial as long as the German Government will do their part in good faith."⁷³ Despite Grey's initial appeasement of the Russians on the question of Scutari, the Anglo-Russian relationship was damaged. With the closer partnership between Britain and Germany and Grey's decision to oppose several Russian initiatives in the Balkans, the Russians began to consider the British unreliable allies within the Triple Entente.⁷⁴ Grey was not willing to risk the Balkan Wars escalating into a general European war, and he ultimately decided to cooperate with Germany to achieve de-escalation rather than continue to appease the Russians once the crisis began to escalate. The Balkan Wars not only showed that an Anglo-German partnership was possible but also that it could prevent an escalation of a crisis. It also showed the weakness of the Anglo-Russian Convention in that Grey was willing to go against Russia's wishes if vital British interests were not threatened.

The Liman von Sanders affair also revealed the cooperation Grey was willing to undertake with Germany as well as the fragility of the Anglo-Russian relationship. Desperate to reorganize their armed forces after the defeat in the First Balkan War, the Ottoman Empire

⁷²Steiner, 113.

⁷³ Steiner, 115.

⁷⁴ Steiner, 114.

invited the British to send a naval mission and the Germans to send an army mission to Istanbul. The dispatch of Admiral Limpus to reorganize the Ottoman navy as well as the order of two advanced dreadnoughts by the Ottomans in October 1913 caused an uproar in Russia.⁷⁵ In fact, the already risky Russian plan to seize Istanbul in a surprise attack would be utterly foiled by the addition of the two advanced dreadnoughts.⁷⁶ The arrival of Lieutenant General Liman von Sanders as the commander of the Ottoman 1st Army Corps, stationed in Istanbul, also angered and frightened the Russians, who became very concerned over German influence in the Ottoman Empire.⁷⁷ Sazonov attempted to rally Russia's allies to protest the appointment of von Sanders, but neither the French nor the British viewed Sanders' appointment as any great concern.⁷⁸ Grey wrote to Edward Goschen, the ambassador to Germany, explaining that "I do not believe the thing is worth all the fuss that Sazonov makes about it, but so long as he does make a fuss it will be important and very embarrassing for us: for we can't turn our back on Russia."⁷⁹ As a result, Britain applied pressure on the Germans, who quickly agreed to a compromise in which von Sanders remained Inspector General of the Ottoman Army, but he also gave up his position as commander of the 1st Army Corps.⁸⁰ Though the Russians were still unhappy about von Sanders' presence in Istanbul, Grey was content with the outcome. Grey did not realize the threat that von Sanders, and his reorganization of the Ottoman army, posed to Russia's designs on Istanbul, so he decided to broker what he believed to be a generous compromise. Since he believed that Russia's anger was unreasonable and overblown, Grey sided with Germany.

⁷⁵ Steiner, 119.

⁷⁶ McMeekin, 36.

⁷⁷ Clark, 339.

⁷⁸ Clark, 342.

⁷⁹ Edward Grey to Edward Goschen, 2 January 1914, *British Documents*, vol. X, part I, 407.

⁸⁰ Clark, 344.

The incident also revealed how radical the Russian government had become and how obsessed with the Straits it had become.⁸¹ The Russian General Staff briefly contemplated war with the Ottomans in January 1914, and they also took into account the possibility of a war with Germany as well as the prospective loyalty of Britain in such a conflict.⁸² Though they felt that Britain would eventually enter into the war on the side of the Franco-Russian Alliance if they began to lose the war, the Russian General Staff harbored doubts about Britain's ultimate loyalty.

Much like his puzzlement over why Germany would escalate the dispute between Germany and France in Morocco in 1905 into the First Moroccan Crisis, Grey could not guess why the Russians were so adamantly opposed to the presence of both Admiral Limpus and Liman von Sanders in Istanbul. He failed to truly discern Russian ambitions toward the Ottoman Empire, and Istanbul in particular, and his unintentional thwarting of Russia's secret plan to seize the Ottoman capital aided the further deterioration of the Anglo-Russian relationship. After the removal of Prime Minister Kokovtsov in January 1914, the Russian cabinet became more outwardly favorable to a direct move against the Straits.⁸³ Sazonov convened a special conference of Russian military leaders and ministers in February 1914 to affirm the necessity of Russia's direct control of the Straits.⁸⁴ Sazonov recognized that Russian control of the Straits would most likely come after a general European war, and, while Russia could not spare the troops to take Istanbul directly, Sazonov argued that the question of the Straits would inevitably be brought up in the peace negotiations.⁸⁵ Captain Nemitz, chief of operations in the Russian Admiralty, suggested that during a European war other powers, most likely a reference to

⁸¹ Clark, 346.

⁸² Steiner, 120.

⁸³ Clark, 346.

⁸⁴ Clark, 348.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

Britain, might occupy Istanbul while Russia battled Germany and Austria.⁸⁶ Aware that Britain might try to block a Russian seizure of the Straits even after a successful war, Sazonov set out to turn the Anglo-Russian Convention into an explicit alliance so that Russia could bargain with Britain after a war with Germany.⁸⁷ Like most powers in Europe, Grey and the Foreign Office desired the maintenance of the Ottoman Empire to stave off chaos in the Balkans and the Middle East, and he did not intend for his actions represent a direct challenge to Russian ambitions because Grey was unsure of Russia's true goals. Instead, Grey's policy of appeasing Russia, which he did in Central Asia and the Far East, and his policy of maintaining the integrity of the Ottoman state came into conflict. Grey attempted to strike a moderate stance, but he ultimately sided with the maintenance of the Ottoman Empire, the policy which he believed would maintain the general European peace.

Sazonov resolved to bring Britain back into the fold, and in April 1914 he requested naval talks between Britain and Russia.⁸⁸ Nicolson recounted in a minute on April 17, 1914 that Sazonov first proposed a defensive alliance in the same vein as the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, but Grey would not risk the improving relations with Germany.⁸⁹ However, Grey was willing to discuss a naval agreement similar to the naval agreement Britain had with France, which promoted Anglo-French cooperation but did not obligate either side to go to war on the side of the other, and the Cabinet approved naval talks with Russia as long as the talks excluded the Mediterranean and the Straits.⁹⁰ Not wanting to risk the détente with Germany, Grey kept the possibility of Anglo-Russian naval talks a secret, and he even lied to the House of Commons on

⁸⁶ Clark, 348-349.

⁸⁷ Clark, 349.

⁸⁸ Steiner, 121.

⁸⁹ Minute by Arthur Nicolson, 17 April 1914, *British Documents*, vol. X part II, 785.

⁹⁰ Hinsley, 345.

June 11, 1914 when he claimed that he knew nothing of any negotiations and declared that negotiations were unlikely.⁹¹ Grey also desperately wanted to keep the negotiations a secret from the Germans in order to preserve the partnership between the two powers in case a new crisis in the Balkans erupted.⁹² However, details of the talks were leaked to Berlin by a German agent in the Russian embassy in London, and the Germans once again became alarmed by the possibility of encirclement by the Triple Entente in addition to their fear of Russian power.⁹³ Edward Goschen relayed the growing fear in Berlin to Grey on May 23, 1914, and he argued that the naval talks were of no real use to Britain.⁹⁴ Goschen correctly guessed that the purpose of the talks was to bring Britain closer to Russia and anger Germany since the primary focus of the talks was the Baltic coast.⁹⁵ The naval talks themselves gained little ground before the July Crisis, but they served to further polarize Europe.

In addition to the distrust felt by Russia toward Britain as a loyal ally of the Entente, continued Russian territorial expansion in areas vital to British interests strained the relationship between the two powers. Every power in Europe, especially Britain and Germany, began to notice the rapidity of the Russian recovery from defeat in the Russo-Japanese War.⁹⁶ Despite their victory in the 1905, the Japanese were forced to accept Russian influence in northern Manchuria in 1912.⁹⁷ The Chinese granted the autonomy of Mongolia under heavy Russian influence in 1913, and Britain allowed the implementation of Russian administration in Harbin,

⁹¹ Steiner, 123.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Clark, 421.

⁹⁴ Goschen to Grey, 23 May 1914, *British Documents*, vol. X part II, 791-792.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ F. H. Hinsley, *British Foreign Policy under Sir Edward Grey* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1977), 342.

⁹⁷ McMeekin, 12.

the largest city in northern Manchuria, in early 1914.⁹⁸ In the Near East, Persian Azerbaijan was essentially a Russian colony, Russian settlers owned over three-quarters of the land, the neutral zone in central Persia had ceased to exist except on paper, and the Russians even claimed a small pocket of influence over northern Afghanistan.⁹⁹ Russian encroachment into Persia and Afghanistan was so egregious that French diplomats were worried that it could cause a permanent rift within the Triple Entente and tried to convince Russia to limit its advances in the Middle East.¹⁰⁰ Sazonov met with George Buchanan, the British ambassador to Russia and proposed a partition of the neutral zone in Persia. Despite the fact that the Russians had repeatedly violated the neutral zone from the inception of the Convention and that the neutral zone had been an integral part of guaranteeing the security of British India, Buchanan argued in favor of partition to Grey.¹⁰¹ Buchanan reasoned that the existence of the neutral zone engendered conflict between the two powers and that if it were partitioned the disputes in Persia would cease.¹⁰² Despite Buchanan's urgings to give up the neutral zone, Grey and the Foreign Office did offer mild complaints over Russia's blatant violations of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907.

In fact, several officials in the Foreign Office expressed the necessity of further appeasing Russia as vital to British security in early 1914. Indeed, even in 1912 after the failure of the Haldane Mission Arthur Nicolson expressed his view that it was better to have a displeased Germany than a displeased Russia.¹⁰³ Without the support of Russia, Britain's colonial frontier in India and Central Asia would be in jeopardy, and Britain would be forced to reconfigure its

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ McMeekin, 12-13.

¹⁰⁰ McMeekin, 13.

¹⁰¹ Buchanan to Grey, 25 June 1914, *British Documents*, vol. X, part II, 805-808.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Nicolson to Goschen, 15 April 1912, *British Documents*, vol. VI, 747.

navy in the Far East and the eastern Mediterranean.¹⁰⁴ With the concentration of the Royal Navy in the North Sea, a German conquest of the Low Countries or even northern France would not pose a great threat to the British Isles, but if Russia became hostile it could threaten Britain's imperial possessions and force Britain to redeploy its fleet away from the Home Islands. An angry Germany could only threaten the heavily defended Home Islands, but an angry Russia could threaten Britain's lightly defended interests in India and the Far East. Similarly, George Buchanan stressed Russia's importance to Britain as a guardian of British security and advocated the conclusion of an alliance with Russia similar to that with Japan.¹⁰⁵ Buchanan warned that Britain risked its colonial security if it did not openly declare its solidarity with the Triple Entente.¹⁰⁶ He wrote, "Russia is rapidly becoming so powerful that we must retain her friendship at almost any cost."¹⁰⁷ Finally, Buchanan argued that if Britain did not prove itself as a reliable ally, then Russia would turn to Germany and threaten British interests in India and Persia.¹⁰⁸ Both of these documents indicated that the Foreign Office regarded the goodwill and friendship of Russia as vital to British interests. However, Buchanan's letter to Nicolson pointed to the future power of Russia as a British security concern and advocated for preemptive appeasement to ensure that Britain stayed in Russia's good graces.

Both of these documents showcased the mindset of the Foreign Office on the eve of the July Crisis. Despite Grey's successful cooperation with Germany in 1912 and 1913, many in the Foreign Office remained hostile to Germany's ambitions, especially if they thought that those ambitions included detaching Russia from the Triple Entente. The thought of an unfriendly

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Buchanan to Nicolson, 16 April 1914, *British Documents*, vol. X part II, 784.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

Russia or worse, a Russo-German agreement, terrified the Foreign Office, and that inspired many of them to advocate for closer ties with Russia, including a formal alliance.¹⁰⁹ The documents also cemented Russia's position as a guarantor of British security, requiring Britain to make concessions to ensure Russia's loyalty.

The July Crisis marked the climax of both Anglo-German and Anglo-Russian relations prior to World War I. The Russian strategy during the July Crisis revolved around preventing the destruction of Serbia, which also meant the destruction of Russian ambitions in the Balkans, and convincing Britain to stand firmly with the other members of the Entente. Sazonov and the other ministers of the Russian government resolved that Russia would take a firm stand against Austria-Hungary so as to not repeat the humiliation of the Bosnian Crisis.¹¹⁰ After the resignation of Prime Minister Vladimir Kokovstov in January 1914, there was no major voice for peace within the Russian government.¹¹¹

However, during the first few weeks of the July Crisis, both the British public and government supported Austria-Hungary. Almost every major newspaper displayed headlines decrying the events in Sarajevo and blaming the Serbians for instigating the assassination.¹¹² Even Edward Grey expressed his disgust with Serbian behavior and the prospect of a conflict because of Serbia.¹¹³ Moreover, most of the Cabinet was preoccupied with domestic issues. Trouble in Ulster and the Home Rule Bill for Ireland preoccupied everyone in the Cabinet except

¹⁰⁹ Clark, 546.

¹¹⁰ Thomas G. Otte, *July Crisis: The World's Descent into War, Summer 1914* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2014) 244.

¹¹¹ Clark, 481.

¹¹² Steiner, 220.

¹¹³ Clark, 495.

for Edward Grey, and as a result the Cabinet barely considered foreign affairs for the first half of July 1914.¹¹⁴

French President Raymond Poincaré gave his full support to the Russians during his visit to St. Petersburg from July 20 to the 23rd.¹¹⁵ George Buchanan sent a detailed report to Edward Grey on July 24th, the day after Austria issued its ultimatum to Serbia, detailing his conversation with Sazonov about Sazonov's meeting with Poincaré. Buchanan reported that France and Russia had agreed to fully support each other and stand by Serbia.¹¹⁶ Sazonov told Buchanan that he hoped that Britain would make a declaration of solidarity with France and Russia, and he said that Austria's demands were immoral.¹¹⁷ Sazonov also expressed his view that Austria would never make such demands without a guarantee of support by Germany.¹¹⁸ Maurice Paléologue, the French ambassador to Russia, told Buchanan that France was prepared to fulfill all obligations in accordance with its alliance with Russia, implying that France would join Russia if war broke out.¹¹⁹ Buchanan asked if Russia would go to war with Austria if the Austrians invaded Serbia, and Sazonov responded that the Council of Ministers would discuss that possibility.¹²⁰ However, Sazonov told Buchanan that he thought that Russian mobilization was inevitable.¹²¹ When Buchanan expressed his view that the British people would never stomach Britain going to war for Serbia, Sazonov declared that the question of Serbia was just one part of the wider European question of which alliance bloc would hold sway in Europe.¹²² Buchanan

¹¹⁴ Steiner, 215-216.

¹¹⁵ McMeekin, 45.

¹¹⁶ Buchanan to Grey, 24 July 1914, *British Documents*, vol. XI, 80-81.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

suggested a compromise settlement between Serbia and Austria in which Serbia would acquiesce to some of Austria's demands while opening the possibility of arbitration on the others, but Sazonov said that several of the demands were so offensive to Serbia that the Serbians would never accept them.¹²³ Sazonov then said, "If war did break out, we [Britain] would sooner or later be dragged into it, but if we cannot make common cause with France and Russia at the outset we should have rendered war more likely, and should not have played a 'beau role.'"¹²⁴

Sir Eyre Crowe immediately seized upon Sazonov's implication in his minute to Buchanan's dispatch on July 25th. Crowe declared "The moment has passed when it might have been possible to enlist French support in an effort to hold back Russia," and "Whatever we may think of the merits of the Austrian charges against Serbia, France and Russia consider that these are pretexts, and that the bigger cause of the Triple Alliance versus the Triple Entente is definitely engaged."¹²⁵ He agreed with Sazonov's appraisal that Britain could not stay neutral in a European war, and he saw only two options if Britain decided to remain neutral.¹²⁶ First, if Germany and Austria won then Germany would dominate the French coast and threaten the Home Islands.¹²⁷ With no friends on the Continent, Britain would be isolated and at Germany's mercy.¹²⁸ On the other hand, if France and Russia won without Britain's aid then they would be resentful and threaten British security in the Middle East and India.¹²⁹ Therefore, Crowe argued, British interests were bound together with those of France and Russia, and Britain should do everything within its power to show that German aggression would not be tolerated.¹³⁰ Crowe

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Eyre Crowe's minute to Buchanan's dispatch, 25 July 1914, *British Documents*, vol. XI, 82-83.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

argued that an immediate mobilization of the British fleet once either Russia or Austria began to mobilize could deter the Germans from escalating the conflict.¹³¹ In response to Crowe's minute, Arthur Nicolson concurred and added, "Our attitude during this crisis will be regarded by Russia as a test and we must be most careful not to alienate her."¹³² Grey responded that Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, said that the fleet could be mobilized within twenty-four hours, but Grey did not think that it was the opportune moment to make a statement guaranteeing the mobilization of the fleet to France and Russia.¹³³ Grey held onto the prospect of a mediated settlement by a conference of powers that had been successful during the Balkan Wars.

On the same day as Crowe's minute, July 25th, Buchanan reported the news that Russia was initiating its early mobilization process.¹³⁴ Buchanan told Grey that he warned Sazonov that if Russia mobilized then Germany would very likely declare war rather than allow Russia to complete its mobilization process.¹³⁵ Sazonov assured Buchanan that Russia did not want to initiate a conflict, but if Austria did not back down Russia would risk war with the complete support of France.¹³⁶ Buchanan presented Grey with a stark choice, "we shall have to choose between giving Russia our active support or renouncing her friendship."¹³⁷ Buchanan also stressed the importance of Russian goodwill toward Britain in regard to the status quo in Central Asia, adding, "If we fail her now we cannot hope to maintain that friendly cooperation in Asia that is of vital importance to us."¹³⁸ The documents from July 24th and July 25th highlight the pressure exerted by Russia, and to a lesser extent France, on Britain to try to obtain a guarantee

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ Buchanan to Grey, 25 July 1914, British Documents, vol. XI, 93-94.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

of British support against Germany. It also seemed to reaffirm the Foreign Office's belief that Russia was crucial to the territorial integrity of the British Empire since Crowe immediately connected trouble with Russia in India and the Middle East with Sazonov's veiled threat of future hostility toward Britain, and Nicolson noted that the crisis would be a test of Britain's loyalty to Russia.

According to Zara Steiner, once the Crisis began to move toward a conflict Edward Grey resorted to the partnership with Germany to resolve tensions.¹³⁹ Grey also pressured the French and the Russians to defuse the conflict before it began, but he was reluctant to issue a statement of solidarity with France and Russia against Germany as suggested by Poincaré.¹⁴⁰ He also refused to tell Prince Lichnowsky, the German ambassador to Britain, that Britain would not stand aside if war broke out when he proposed the idea of a conference to Lichnowsky.¹⁴¹ Instead, Grey endeavored to recreate his diplomatic success during the Balkan Wars by organizing an international conference to arbitrate the dispute between Austria-Hungary and the Russo-Serbian Alliance.¹⁴² Grey proposed to the Cabinet a four-power conference made up of the powers not directly involved in the dispute, Britain, France, Germany, and Italy.¹⁴³ The cabinet approved Grey's proposal for a conference on July 24th, the same day that Sazonov threatened that Britain would find itself without friends in Europe if it did not declare for the Triple Entente as soon as war broke out. Though the French were willing to hold a conference, the Russians vacillated. In the same dispatch from July 25th in which George Buchanan reported that Sazonov had initiated early mobilization, Sazonov voiced his approval of such a mediation

¹³⁹ Steiner, 220-221.

¹⁴⁰ Steiner, 221.

¹⁴¹ Grey to Buchanan, 25 July 1914, *British Documents*, vol. XI, 97-98.

¹⁴² Clark, 493.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

as long as the Serbians appealed to the conference for a settlement.¹⁴⁴ However, two days later Sazonov changed his mind and declared that Russia would only accept direct talks between Russia and Austria-Hungary to resolve the crisis.¹⁴⁵ The Austrian declaration of war on Serbia on July 28th and the subsequent order for general mobilization of the Russian Army on the 29th thwarted the possibility of any direct talks.¹⁴⁶

Grey's attempt to organize a conference akin to the one he successfully forged during the Balkan Wars was doomed to failure. Bethmann Hollweg lost faith in Britain's ability to act as an objective arbiter. In a telegram to Count Lichnowsky on July 27th, Bethmann Hollweg stated that Germany could not acquiesce to a conference because Britain, and Bethmann Hollweg singled out Edward Grey in particular, was more concerned with the Austro-Russian conflict than the Austro-Serbian conflict, implying that Grey was concerned about Britain's partnership with Russia.¹⁴⁷ He said that the conference would not be impartial since Austria would not be able to present its case to the Powers.¹⁴⁸ Germany was also the only power in the proposed four-power conference that would definitely support Austro-Hungarian claims, the Germans had recognized Italy's unreliability almost a decade prior, so the efficacy of the conference's decision could easily be disputed if France, Britain, and Italy chose to side with Russia.¹⁴⁹ Additionally, since Russia was not included in the conference proposal, it would not be bound by any resolution passed by the conference.¹⁵⁰ Grey made sure to include every major power in the conference of 1912-1913, and that granted far more legitimacy to the conference's decisions. In July 1914, he

¹⁴⁴ Buchanan to Grey, 25 July 1914, British Documents, vol. XI, 94.

¹⁴⁵ Otte, 334.

¹⁴⁶ Otter, 359-360.

¹⁴⁷ Immanuel Geiss, July 1914: The Outbreak of the First World War: Selected Documents (New York: Scribner, 1968) 237.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Clark, 519.

¹⁵⁰ Clark, 495.

stacked the deck against Austria from the beginning by making sure that three out of the four powers invited to the conference would side against Austria.¹⁵¹

Ultimately, Grey was more concerned with the integrity of the Triple Entente than the facts of the Austro-Serbian dispute, and as a result he decided early on to side with Russia and pursued the conference half-heartedly.¹⁵² Grey also showed almost no interest in Russia's mobilization while he was trying to organize the conference, even after George Buchanan warned him that Russia was definitely headed toward full mobilization.¹⁵³ If Grey had truly been determined to offer a peaceful solution through a conference of power, then he would have been more emphatic toward Russia's mobilization and he would have held a conference that included all of the Great Powers, especially the aggrieved party.

Whether Grey's attempts at creating a conference to arbitrate a settlement and prevent the escalation of the July Crisis were half-hearted or were completely sincere is difficult to determine. Zara Steiner argued that Grey attempted to salvage peace for as long as possible until he realized that war was inevitable, at which point he endeavored to make sure that Britain entered the war on the side of the Entente.¹⁵⁴ Steiner pointed to Germany's initial rejection of the four-power conference on July 27th, even though they still agreed with mediation in principle, as a pivotal moment in Grey's attempts to preserve peace.¹⁵⁵ Steiner concluded that Grey's proposed conference did not succeed like the one in 1912 because the Central Powers had shifted their aims.¹⁵⁶ Austria-Hungary was determined to defeat Serbia and weaken Russian influence in

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Clark, 495-496.

¹⁵⁴ Steiner, 220.

¹⁵⁵ Steiner, 224.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

the Balkans while Germany was determined to support its only reliable ally, and any diplomatic compromise would have been seen as a defeat for the Central Powers.¹⁵⁷ While Grey did endeavor to call an international conference several times until his idea was ultimately ruined by Austria-Hungary declaration of war on Serbia on July 28th, his omission of Russia and Austria-Hungary from the conference guaranteed that the two parties closest to war had no say in the conference and had no incentive to ultimately obey the conference's decision.

However, Grey tried to salvage the negotiations when he offered a "Stop at Belgrade" plan that would allow the Austrians to occupy Belgrade until an agreement could be reached.¹⁵⁸ Grey also told Lichnowsky on July 29th that Britain could remain neutral in an Austro-Russian conflict, but if France and Germany went to war Britain could not stand aside.¹⁵⁹ Edward Goschen, the British ambassador to Germany, informed Edward Grey on July 29th that the Austrian government believed it was too late to act upon Grey's proposal for a conference since events, meaning Austrian and Russian mobilization, had advanced too rapidly.¹⁶⁰ Though Grey's "Stop at Belgrade" plan showed his willingness to compromise, the delicate timetable of Austrian, Russian, and German war plans would not allow such a delay once the war began.¹⁶¹ It also revealed Grey's fundamental misunderstanding of the mobilizations processes of Austria, Russia, and Germany. The Russian mobilization plan in the event of an Austrian attack on Serbia required it to mobilize against both Austria and Germany, and Germany's mobilization plan required it to mobilize against both France and Russia, making a conflict with France certain.¹⁶² According to Grey's warning, Britain would inevitably have to intervene on the side of France in

¹⁵⁷ Steiner, 224-225.

¹⁵⁸ Geiss, 288-289.

¹⁵⁹ Geiss, 289.

¹⁶⁰ Goschen to Grey, 29 July 1914, *British Documents*, vol. XI, 171.

¹⁶¹ Otte, 393.

¹⁶² Clark, 496-497.

this scenario. So, Grey's "Stop at Belgrade" offer was also a non-starter since the momentum of mobilization could not be stopped at that point. Lichnowsky noted that Grey was aware of British public opinion in this matter, implying that the British public was far more willing to accept a war in defense of France than a war over Serbia.¹⁶³ Either Grey was totally ignorant of the domino effect that would take place after Austria invaded Serbia or he knew what would happen and maneuvered Germany so that the onus for Britain's entry into the war would fall on Germany. Though he attempted to maintain a neutral stance for most of the July Crisis, Grey had already ceded his diplomatic flexibility, and that ultimately caused him to side with the Entente.¹⁶⁴ The Foreign Office's fears of renewed difficulties with Russia starting in 1912 caused Grey to move away from being a neutral arbiter in European affairs toward appeasing the Russians.¹⁶⁵ As a result, Grey, whether he was sincere about a conference or not, had already determined to support Russian policy.¹⁶⁶ At best, Grey failed to realize the fundamentally different circumstances surrounding the July Crisis that differentiated it from the Balkan Wars or the Bosnian Crisis. At worst, he intentionally excluded Austria-Hungary, the aggrieved party, and stacked the conference with Entente-friendly powers to ensure a resolution favorable to the Triple Entente.

Grey also failed to adequately warn the Germans that Britain would side with France if war broke out. On July 24th in the same conversation with Lichnowsky in which Grey stressed the need for a four-power conference, Grey warned Lichnowsky of the possibility of a four-power war on the Continent.¹⁶⁷ Lichnowsky noted that Grey emphasized the four powers that

¹⁶³ Geiss, 289.

¹⁶⁴ Herbert Butterfield, "Sir Edward Grey in July 1914," *Historical Studies*, v, (1965): 1-25. Pg. 20.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Geiss, 183-184.

would be embroiled in the conflict, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia, and France.¹⁶⁸ This gave both Lichnowsky and Bethmann Hollweg hope that Britain intended to stay neutral if war broke out. The next day, Lichnowsky reported another conversation he had with Grey in which Grey said that Britain would not remain indifferent to a European struggle.¹⁶⁹ However, Grey also remarked that Britain was “in no way committed by any sort of binding agreements.”¹⁷⁰ The Germans held onto Grey’s vague suggestions as a good sign of British neutrality if a war broke out, but Grey definitively declared on July 29th that Britain would not stand aside if France became involved. Once Bethmann Hollweg learned of Grey’s declaration at 2:00 A.M. on July 30th, he immediately attempted to persuade the Austrians to cancel its invasion of Serbia and submit to international arbitration.¹⁷¹ Austria ignored Bethmann Hollweg’s pleas and rejected the idea of a four-power conference in which it could not participate.¹⁷² Bethmann Hollweg urged Austria to accept Grey’s terms for a conference throughout the day on July 30th, and he realized that if Austria refused and continued with its plan to invade Serbia then the blame for starting the war would fall on the Central Powers instead of on Russia.¹⁷³ Bethmann Hollweg explicitly guessed that Grey intended for Austria to reject his conference proposal so that the responsibility of the war would shift from Russia to the Austro-German Alliance.¹⁷⁴

Bethmann Hollweg and Lichnowsky made a mistake in hoping for British neutrality based on Grey’s vague declarations. Britain had loyally supported France in the First Morocco Crisis, and even the pacifist David Lloyd George had threatened war with Germany if Germany

¹⁶⁸ Geiss, 183.

¹⁶⁹ Geiss, 205.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ Geiss, 291-292.

¹⁷² Geiss, 292-293.

¹⁷³ Geiss, 305.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

attacked France during the Second Morocco Crisis. Despite the *détente* between Germany and Britain during the Balkan Wars, Bethmann Hollweg could not have reasonably believed that Britain's loyalty to France was waning to the point that Britain would stand aside in a European war. On the other hand, Grey committed a disastrous sin of omission by not clearly declaring his support for France when he spoke to Lichnowsky on the 24th. If he had been clear about Britain's likely support for France, then Bethmann Hollweg almost certainly would have tried to rein in Austria sooner. Grey did not have the support of the Cabinet on July 24th to make a statement in support of France, but he did not have the Cabinet's support on the 29th or the 30th either. Grey's unwillingness to fully declare that Britain would support the Entente gave the Germans the false impression that Britain might remain neutral and made war more likely.

Grey used underhanded tactics to convince the staunchly isolationist Cabinet to go to war. Along with the British public, the British Cabinet on July 24th was vehemently anti-intervention even as Grey attempted to once again become a peacemaker and began to consider the terms of intervention.¹⁷⁵ The issue of Belgian neutrality would not even sway the Cabinet to support intervention, and several Cabinet members remarked that they would be content to stay out of the conflict as long as Germany only invaded through the Ardennes.¹⁷⁶ Winston Churchill, one of the most prominent anti-Germans in the Cabinet, remarked, "I don't see why we should come in if they go only a little way into Belgium."¹⁷⁷ Grey was the only significant voice for intervention, and the other Cabinet members sensed how radical his intervention scheme was. Lord Harcourt, the Colonial Secretary, passed a note to David Lloyd George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, during a Cabinet meeting that said, "You must now speak for us. Grey wishes to

¹⁷⁵ Wilson, 176.

¹⁷⁶ Clark, 494.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

go to war without any violation of Belgium.”¹⁷⁸ However, as the crisis deepened Churchill and several other Cabinet ministers joined the interventionist camp, and they tried very hard to convert Lloyd George, who was seen as the bellwether of the Cabinet.¹⁷⁹ Lloyd George had been a vocal critic of German policy during the Second Moroccan Crisis when he delivered the famous Mansion House Speech, but he joined the peace movement after several leading Liberal newspapers began to push for better relations with Germany after the successful Anglo-German cooperation during the Balkan Wars.¹⁸⁰

Despite the growth of the pro-interventionist faction within the Cabinet, all of them except for Grey would not acquiesce to intervention unless vital British interests were directly threatened, and the Cabinet of July 29th was just as opposed to intervention as it had been four days earlier, despite the declaration of war by Austria-Hungary on Serbia.¹⁸¹ The Cabinet once again questioned the legal efficacy of the 1839 neutrality pact with Belgium, and Edward Grey unleashed every argument he could conceive of to convince the Cabinet to intervene.¹⁸² Grey was so vehement in his argumentation that several Cabinet members questioned whether Grey had been planning on intervention for some time and actually desired a war against Germany.¹⁸³ Grey found nothing but opposition within the Cabinet during their next meeting on July 31st, but Grey was secretly working to manipulate several key Cabinet members.¹⁸⁴ On August 1st, Grey telephoned Karl Lichnowsky, the German ambassador to Britain, and he asked Lichnowsky to give him his assurance that if France remained neutral in a Russo-German war then Germany

¹⁷⁸ Keith M. Wilson, *Decisions for War, 1914* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1995) 176-177.

¹⁷⁹ Wilson, 177-178.

¹⁸⁰ Wilson, 180.

¹⁸¹ Wilson, 188.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ Wilson, 191.

would not attack France.¹⁸⁵ Lichnowsky gave Grey his assurance, but Grey's request was a ruse to win over Richard Haldane, who refused to alter his non-interventionist position until every alternative option had been tried.¹⁸⁶

With the defection of Haldane, one of the oldest pro-Germans in the Cabinet, the non-interventionist faction began to crumble. Lloyd George became aware on the night of August 2nd of a list drawn up by Conservatives naming who would replace those Liberal ministers who had sworn to resign if Prime Minister Asquith decided to intervene, Lloyd George was one of the names on the list.¹⁸⁷ On August 3rd, Lloyd George gave a speech to the non-interventionists and implored them not to resign and to support Asquith.¹⁸⁸ Grey announced his intention to resign if any other policy other than intervention was adopted, and he convinced Asquith to pledge the same, guaranteeing the fall of the Liberal government if the Cabinet decided on non-intervention.¹⁸⁹ Convinced by Lloyd George and unwilling to resign their posts to pro-intervention Conservatives, all but two non-interventionists supported Asquith and Grey.¹⁹⁰ On August 4th, Britain declared war on Germany for violating Belgian neutrality.

Lloyd George switched from the leading voice in the non-interventionist camp to the deciding factor in sending Britain into World War I for the same reason that he had switched from one of Germany's most ardent critics to one of the leaders of the non-interventionist faction: the maintenance of his own political power.¹⁹¹ After realizing that his promise to resign meant nothing since he would be replaced with a pro-intervention Conservative, Lloyd George

¹⁸⁵ Wilson, 194.

¹⁸⁶ Wilson, 195.

¹⁸⁷ Wilson, 178.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ Wilson, 199.

¹⁹⁰ Wilson, 200.

¹⁹¹ Wilson, 181-182.

decided to support Grey and retain his position. Grey's tenacity in convincing the Cabinet to intervene in the July Crisis stemmed both from his conviction that his policy was the correct one and the threat of Sazonov that non-intervention would result in serious consequences for British foreign policy.

Despite the promising cooperation and successful *détente* between Britain and Germany during the Balkan Wars, the autonomy of British foreign policy was increasingly subordinated to its fear of Russia from 1911 to 1914. Grey proved that Britain and Germany could enter into a successful partnership if neither power had significant interests at stake in 1912 and 1913. After the Balkan Wars, almost every major official in the Foreign Office began to stress the importance of appeasing Russia and maintaining in its friendship "at almost any cost." The ultimate cost of Russian friendship was war with Germany, but Grey was willing to sacrifice relations with Germany because Russia posed the larger threat to vital British interests. Germany was seen as a threat to the general European peace, but Russia was seen as a direct threat to British interests, namely in Central Asia and India. When Grey did oppose Russia, such as during the Liman von Sanders affair, he did so more out of ignorance of larger Russian goals than out of calculated defiance. In fact, Grey remained silent in areas, namely Persia, where Russian transgressions were the most blatant. Though Grey did work against Russian ambition during the Balkan Wars, he made sure not to offend his ally too much and offer a compromise where possible. The sheer number of documents that concerned Russia's growing power and how Britain needed to stay on Russia's side showed that the Foreign Office was preoccupied with concerns about Russia and the ever-delicate state of Anglo-Russian relations. The fear of Russia's wrath even affected the British Cabinet. Grey argued so vehemently for intervention and manipulated fellow Cabinet members during the July Crisis because of Sazonov's warnings

about British neutrality. Grey feared that Britain would be left isolated and surrounded by hostile powers if they did not declare for the Triple Entente. Grey wasn't blinded by his commitment to the Entente as suggested by Christopher Clark, and he wasn't determined to stand for the Entente and thwart German aggression as argued by Zara Steiner. Instead, his real motivations were closer to the argument of Herbert Butterfield. Grey, along with almost everyone else in the Foreign Office, feared the growing power of Russia, and his fear caused him to come to conclusions in the period from 1912 to August 1914 that impeded his flexibility and set him on an inevitable course. The specter of Russia's future strength as well as Sazonov's threats held both Grey and British foreign policy hostage during the July Crisis, and the complex nature of Anglo-Russian relations certainly affected Britain's decision to declare war on Germany on August 4, 1914.

Conclusion

By the July Crisis, Britain had solidly moved into the Russian sphere of influence. Misunderstandings and clumsy German foreign policy diminished the goodwill gained by the Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty and paved the way for a British rapprochement with France. The Anglo-German cooperation during the Balkan Wars granted a limited détente between Britain and Germany, but even by 1912 the British had moved irrevocably into the Franco-Russian camp. While active British intervention in a general European war on the side of the Franco-Russian Alliance was doubtful even into the final week before Britain declared war on Germany, the question of whether Britain would support Russian policy in the Balkans and diplomatically support the Franco-Russian Alliance in a dispute with the Triple Alliance was never in doubt. Grey tied Britain's security to the appeasement of Russia long before the assassination of Franz Ferdinand.

The sheer number of documents by officials within the Foreign Office focused on the threat posed by Russia and the necessity of Britain's friendship with Russia from 1912 to the July Crisis indicate that the Foreign Office was acutely aware of Britain's dependence on Russia for its own security. That dependence had evolved from both the Entente Cordiale, which first brought Britain closer to the Franco-Russian Alliance and paved the way for an agreement with Russia, and the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. Instead of securing British interests in Central Asia and the Far East, the Anglo-Russian Convention made the Foreign Office even more concerned about Russia's role in protecting Britain's empire. As a result, Grey decided to support Russia in Balkan disputes in which he had very little interest. Britain's support for Russia during the Bosnian Crisis and its mediation during the Balkan Wars and the Liman von Sanders Affair, even though Grey privately admitted that Russia was in the wrong during all

three incidents, were based on the desire to maintain Russian friendship in order to maintain the integrity of Britain's empire.

It is unquestionable that the officials within the Foreign Office became decidedly anti-German during Edward Grey's tenure. Several, including Nicolson, Crowe, and Hardinge, explicitly stated their anti-German position and advocated for better relations with Russia in order to secure British interests and deter German aggression. However, the current debate lies in whether the officials within the Foreign Office were justified in their anti-German rhetoric or whether they exaggerated the German threat. The officials operating in the Foreign Office during Grey's tenure may have expressed sound judgement in regard to Germany's aggressive policies and diplomatic blunders, but they did not apply the same standard of scrutiny that they used for German policies on Russian policies. Though Eyre Crowe easily discerned German motivations during the First Moroccan Crisis and in the naval arms race, no one at the Foreign Office was able to accurately define Russia's foreign policy goals, and as a result Grey inadvertently angered the Russians when he foiled their ambitions in the Balkans by working with Germany.

The thesis that Sir Edward Grey was irrational in his foreign policy decisions or that he was governed by his own anti-German biases and that these things led Britain into war in 1914 does not carry much weight. Few scholars challenge that Grey and the Foreign Office were anti-German, but few argue that Germanophobia was a direct driving force behind Grey's decisions. Grey remained willing to work with Germany in certain circumstances, especially when he believed that Russia was going too far in the Balkans, and most historians agree that the Entente Cordiale and the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 were not explicitly anti-German. His biases certainly shaped how German actions were interpreted, but Germany's aggressive and diplomatically clumsy actions did not need Grey to exaggerate them to engender a fear of

German expansionism. Likewise, though Grey and his subordinates tried to downplay aggressive actions by Russia, Grey himself was deeply troubled by Russian aggression. Even Herbert Butterfield argues that Grey was not blinded by his dislike of Germany in the July Crisis. Ultimately, Grey's foreign policy in regard to Russia and Germany was rational. Grey recognized that a good relationship with Germany meant a worse relationship with Russia, and vice versa. So, Grey chose Russia was the bigger threat to British imperial interests, so Grey gravitated toward a friendly relationship toward the power that could cause the most problems for British interests.

Grey's performance during the July Crisis, especially his call for a four-power conference, has proved to be one of the most contentious debates among modern historians surrounding Britain's actions during the July Crisis. Zara Steiner, perhaps the staunchest defender of Grey's integrity, argued that Grey endeavored for peace through an arbitration by Britain, France, Italy, and Germany up until Austria's refusal to accept the mediation on July 30th. However, as Christopher Clark pointed out, Grey's decision to leave out the two principal actors in the July Crisis doomed the conference to failure. Grey should have known that Austria would never have submitted to arbitration from a conference made up of three hostile powers. With Germany as the only member of the conference favorable to the Dual Monarchy, the Austrians knew that the conference would not side with Austria. Also, Russia would not have been bound by the pronouncements of the conference and could already count on full French support, from Poincaré's visit with Sazonov on July 23rd, as well as reasonably expect at least tacit British support. Grey had successfully mediated the Balkan Wars after he invited all of the powers to a conference in London, so it did not make sense to convene a conference of only four powers if he wanted to replicate his previous success.

One of the most enduring mysteries of the July Crisis remains Grey's vague suggestions to Lichnowsky on July 24th that Britain might remain neutral. Grey had already made up his mind that Britain would support Russian policy in the Balkans, but he refused to declare whether Britain would become involved in a general European war. As a result of Grey's sin of omission, Germany encouraged Austria to continue its aggressive actions toward Serbia until it was too late to stop the outbreak of war on the Continent. Based on Bethmann Hollweg's immediate reaction to Grey's announcement that Britain would not stay neutral in a European war, if Grey had clearly declared Britain's inability to remain neutral on the 24th, the war could have been avoided. Lichnowsky's accusation that Grey's strategy from July 24th to the 29th was to make the blame for the war fall on Austria and Germany instead of on Russia remains an intriguing theory and a possible explanation for Grey's sudden reluctance to stand firmly beside the entente that he had campaigned so vehemently to create.

Butterfield's criticisms of Grey, as well as criticisms from other scholars, deserve to be reevaluated. By extension, Grey's isolation from the effects of public opinion and the conviction of his personal beliefs did not leave him particularly susceptible to the forces of interest groups and newspapers. However, these factors may have influenced the actions of Grey's allies who were more ambitious and thus more susceptible to public opinion, such as Lloyd George. Butterfield's central criticism that Grey pursued better relations with Russia at the expense of better relations with Germany out of fear of Russian aggression and future power remains his most controversial and potentially consequential argument. His theory has certainly found new life in the works of Christopher Clark and Sean McMeekin, and they have both offered up well-researched and well-developed arguments in support of Butterfield. The evidence provided by Butterfield as well as his supporters guarantees that Butterfield's criticism has enough ground to

stand on. Therefore, Butterfield's criticism of Grey as an appeaser of Russia remains a relevant and intriguing part of the debate on Anglo-German relations before the First World War.

The relationship between Russia and Britain in Persia from 1907 to 1914 deserves further research. Disputes between the two signatories of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 over Persia broke out almost immediately after the signing of the convention that was designed to resolve such disputes. Conflicts between Britain and Russia in Persia remained in the background of several crises, including the Bosnian Crisis, and the effect these background disputes had on the European crises that eclipsed them. Additionally, Russia's true aims in regard to the decaying Ottoman Empire and the ever-important Straits question require more research. Sean McMeekin provided a fascinating study on Russia's goals for Istanbul and the Ottoman Empire from 1913 to the Russian Revolution in *The Russian Origins of the First World War*, and a work on the evolution of Russia's policy toward Istanbul from the late nineteenth century to the July Crisis would be extremely valuable. Of course, Edward Grey's thinking during the July Crisis, which has already undergone an immense amount of scrutiny, must be further researched. However, it is doubtful whether we will ever get a full satisfactory answer to Grey's exact motivations between July 24th and 29th. The available evidence within the documents only reveal so much of Grey's mind during that pivotal time. We may never know exactly Grey's motivations because we can't get inside Grey's head, but evidence for a lively debate on Grey's true intentions still abound.

In the years leading up to July 1914, Edward Grey maneuvered himself into a corner from which he could not escape. His decisions to support France and to appease Russia pushed him closer to the Franco-Russian Alliance and diminished his credibility with the German government. Even when Grey believed Russia to be clearly in the wrong, he still made an effort

to show support for Russia. Grey readily agreed with Berlin during the Bosnian Crisis that Serbia had no legitimate territorial claims, but he vehemently supported Russia in the subsequent Austro-Russian dispute over Serbia's claim. Similarly, Grey declared that he had no interest in an Austro-Serbian dispute, even though an Austrian victory would expand the Triple Alliance's power in the Balkans, but he knew that he would have to become involved in an Austro-Russian quarrel. Ultimately, Grey was willing to guarantee Russia's future friendship at any cost, even at the cost of a European war.

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