The Foreign Relations of England, March 3, 1894-June 22, 1895

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Preface

This paper is not intended to be a comprehensive survey of English foreign policy during the years 1894-1895. It coincides, rather, with the dates of the Rosebery Administration which was in office from March 5, 1894 until June 22, 1895. The purpose of the study is to examine the main points of British foreign policy in that period of time and to determine how and why Lord Rosebery acted as he did in the situations he faced.

Much effort towards the completion of this paper has been expended by others than myself. I wish to especially express my appreciation to my advisor, Dr. Leonard C. Wood, who several years ago aroused my interest in the study of history and who is really responsible for this paper. A special debt of thanks is owed too to Dr. Frank Miller, Department of History, Eastern Illinois University, for the many hours of his time he so graciously spent in offering me indispensable criticism and advice toward the writing of this paper. Many thanks go also to Miss Sharon Jenkins who typed the manuscript.

Whatever errors are in this paper are mine alone, made despite the efforts of my advisor and others.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On March 3, 1894, William Ewart Gladstone, leader of the Liberal party for twenty years and the possessor of a political life that stretched back to 1832, resigned the office of Prime Minister because of his opposition to an expanded naval program. With this resignation, an era ended in English politics.

Into Gladstone's place as First Minister of Her Majesty's Government and effective leader of the crumbling Liberal party, stepped Archibald Phillip Primrose, the 5th Earl of Rosebery. Lord Rosebery had been Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in Mr. Gladstone's last Government. He was a wealthy young aristocrat whose Liberal Imperialistic views on foreign policy were more similar to those of the Tory leader, Lord Salisbury, than those of Mr. Gladstone.

When Lord Rosebery became Prime Minister of Great Britain changes of great importance were occurring in European political circles. These changes had started before Lord Rosebery became Premier, and they continued during and after his term of office.

On the European continent itself, the Emperor William II of Germany had dismissed, in March of 1890, the famous Chancellor, Prince Otto Von Bismarck. Into his place were put a group of minor diplomats who had neither the knowledge nor the ability to replace the older statesman. The Reinsurance Treaty, signed by Germany and Russia in June of 1887, and which had pledged Russian neutrality in the event of a Franco-German war, no
longer existed. Gone too were the Mediterranean Agreements between Austria, England, and Italy, which had arranged for the maintenance of the status quo in the Near East. These were serious events for Germany, for she had now lost the contact she had formerly had with England and Russia.¹

The other Great Power on the continent, France, was by the nature of her expanding program of imperialism, coming to be at variance with England. Not only were relations becoming more and more strained, but war itself had nearly ensued between the two Powers in the summer of 1893. The story of this crisis illustrates just one of the many instances when French and British interests were at odds.

This crisis arose over Siam, an area long of interest to the British because it lay between the British possession of Burma and the Indo-Chinese possessions of France. When France declared war on Siam in 1893 over a border dispute, the British at once sent war ships to Bangkok. The French had declared an extremely stiff ultimatum to the Siamese government and blocked the coast. The British ships, along with other neutral vessels, were asked to leave the area. Lord Rosebery, then Secretary for Foreign Affairs, telegraphed the ships not to leave, and then notified the French of his action. At the same time, Lord Rosebery convinced the Siamese government to accept the French ultimatum if it were given in a modified form. Because of the strength of this move, the French modified their demands, Siam then accepted them, and the British ships were recalled.² This crisis, however, gave rise to other territorial


questions between France and Great Britain which were not settled for three years.

To make the European situation even more complex, the Franco-Russian entente developed between 1891 and 1893 and was to culminate in 1894 into a definite military alliance. By the terms of this highly secret agreement, Russia was to aid France if France was attacked by Germany or Germany and Italy. The French for their part were to aid Russia if she was attacked by Germany or Germany and Austria. This alliance, even though its precise terms were unknown to the other Powers, had the effect of putting Germany even further adrift in her international relations since she now faced the possibility of a two front war.³

England, for her part in the international relations of the 1890's, was remaining aloof, choosing to ally with no one Power while playing for assistance from nearly all of them. Germany, because of this attitude, and because of English opposition to German colonialism in Africa and other places, such as Samoa, adopted a brusque attitude toward England. This semi-hostile attitude is amply displayed in the following excerpt from a popular German newspaper:

Too long (has) Germany tolerated this opposition (to German colonialism). Today our patience is exhausted. England went too far. The English government can no longer doubt that Germany has the strength and the will to prevent further obstruction of her colonial development. There is no question here of enmity, or of hatred towards England. It is a question only of protecting German interests. The rulers of England should recognize clearly that they can accomplish more by altering their colonial policy than by trying to frighten us by the supposed isolation of Germany.⁴


When Lord Rosebery complained of this attitude to Count Hatzfeldt, the German ambassador at London, Hatzfeldt reminded him that for years Germany had sought an Anglo-German alliance. Lord Rosebery then professed the standard reply that the British public would never permit any more than an informal understanding with any foreign power. 5

This incident enunciated the whole attitude of England in the years of 1890-1896. She was not prepared to bind herself to a permanent alliance when British interests were not directly concerned and to cooperate only temporarily and informally where British interests were directly concerned relying on her large navy to offset the lack of any permanent alliance.

The Germans, however, were not unduly worried by the lack of British cooperation. They knew that although they could make no alliance with England, there was even less chance that an alliance would be made between the English and the French or the English and the Russians. Germany well realized that the tremendous Empire of England kept her from aligning with any country where a conflict of colonial interest was liable to occur.

In England itself, important social changes were occurring. The English population, as it had for the previous fifty years, was becoming more and more urban. The workingmen of England were turning more and more to organizations other than the State for their betterment. Trades and labor unions were becoming increasingly popular. The "bloom on the grapes of Liberalism was fading" before it could fully mature. 6


The Liberal party had appealed to the country as the party concerned with the masses. Now, the masses were turning elsewhere.

In England too there was an increasing feeling of patriotism that emerged in an ambitious colonial policy. This intense spirit, the flames of which were fanned by writers such as Rudyard Kipling and papers such as the *Evening News*, was supported throughout the whole of the English social strata. Perhaps this feeling was generated because, as one authority has written, the new, lower middleclass city-dwellers, bored by their hum-drum, everyday existence in the workaday world, wanted to hear of exciting events, performed by their countrymen in far off, exotic places for the benefit of the British Empire.⁷

Political leaders, mostly of the Conservative party, as well as the man in the street, supported the expansionist ideas of imperialists. Even some Liberals, who had the courage to oppose the ideas of Mr. Gladstone, supported a far reaching colonial policy. Lord Rosebery, the leading Liberal Imperialist, stated his feelings expressively.

The Empire that is sacred to me is sacred for this reason, that I believe it to be the noblest example yet known to mankind of free, adaptable just government... When a community is in distress or under oppression, it always looks first to Great Britain; while in cases which are quite unsuspected, I think, by Great Britain at large, and which... are only known to Ministers, they constantly wish in some form or other to be united to our country and to enjoy our government.⁸

In domestic politics in England then, the Conservatives stood firm while the Liberal party was divided. The Liberals were divided not only on imperialism (opposed by Gladstone, W. V. Harcourt, John Morley and others), but were also divided on the issue of Irish Home Rule, which had


been defeated in Mr. Gladstone's last Ministry. The Liberals had only a precarious majority of forty in the commons, while only about five per cent of the Lords was composed of Liberals.

From this brief sketch of English political and social life during the 1890's we can see that this England was not the sturdy, united England of thirty or forty years before. Her political leaders in a major party were divided, her social composition rapidly changing, her press jingoistic, her population ambitious for excitement but afraid of danger. It was in the midst of this uncertainty and because of it as well, that Lord Rosebery became Premier of England on the 3rd of March, 1895.

Lord Rosebery became Premier, it is generally conceded, because of the preference of Queen Victoria, and because the leading Liberal statesmen did not wish to see the disagreeable W. V. Harcourt, Liberal majority leader in the House of Commons, become Prime Minister. 9

The reaction to the new Premier was mixed. In commenting on Lord Rosebery's abilities, the Spectator gave the following not very reassuring views:

He is as full of indecisions as Mr. Gladstone was full of decisions, and is always trying to throw up straws to show him which way the wind blows. Naturally enough in a democracy so little educated, the wind blows in all sorts of little eddies, and poor Lord Rosebery, like a child's windmill, turns now to one point of the compass, now to another. Whoever may be fit to guide our raw democracy, Lord Rosebery is at least not the man. 10

To Edward Dicey, however, writing in the Fortnightly Review, Lord Rosebery "both as Foreign Secretary and as Chairman of the London


County Council ... displayed many qualities which commanded the confidence of the British public."¹¹

The view of at least one Frenchman was expressed in the same magazine. He said:

He possesses some of our favorite characteristics without any of the faults with which we reproach the English when we are out of temper with them. He doesn't preach, he never talks through his nose, he exhibits neither Puritan cant nor academic pendency nor aristocratic haughtiness.¹²

The German view given in the same publication envisioned Rosebery as a nonentity, known only to the German people "to have married a daughter of the house of Rothschild, to be a friend of Herbert Bismarck's, and to own a horse which has won a famous race."¹³ The author, a German historian, felt that Lord Rosebery's combination of "Radicalism and imperialism" would result in failure if the Radicals remained in power in England and had a chance to carry their program to its logical end.

The Times gave this opinion of Lord Rosebery and his prospective Premiership:

Disregarding the example and influence of some of his political teachers and masters (e.g. Mr. Gladstone), he has taken from the beginning of his political life a keen interest in all that appertains to the expansion and consolidation of the Empire. He is accordingly disliked by all the "Little England" faction; but the English people are believers in the great England bequested them by their ancestors and built up by the strenuous effort of generations.

Lord Rosebery has reverted to the faith of Pitt and Palmerston. That he has done so is to our own belief


one of the principle factors in the popular confidence he
enjoys to a far greater extent than any other member of
the party except Mr. Gladstone.\textsuperscript{14}

The two following quotations can be taken as good examples of the
reaction toward Rosebery's ascendancy by members of the two parties.
Joseph Chamberlain, a leader of Conservative party, felt that "Mr.
Gladstone was one of those of whom it was sometimes said that his
earnestness ran away with his judgement, but Lord Rosebery allows his
judgement to be run away with by the earnestness of other people."\textsuperscript{15}

L. Atherly-Jones, however, a Liberal member of parliament, expressed
the view in a letter to the London \textit{Times} that Lord Rosebery would be a
strong leader, and that "in respect of our international relations
Lord Rosebery enjoys in a single degree the confidence of his fellow
citizens and the respect of foreign statesmen" alike.\textsuperscript{16} These of
course were strictly party views and must be accepted as such, but they
probably mirrored the feelings of the majority of people aligned behind
their respective parties.

Lord Rosebery himself was somewhat reluctant to accept the leadership
of the nation. Realizing full well that leading a divided party with a
small majority would be a difficult task, he appreciated what lay ahead
of him as Prime Minister. Some of his own party's leaders, particularly
W. V. Harcourt, who felt that as leader of the majority in the House of
Commons he should have rightfully been Premier, tried to interfere with
his perogatives as First Minister. Rosebery enunciated his apprehensions
in a letter to Sir Henry Ponsonby, secretary to Queen Victoria:

\textsuperscript{14}\textit{The Times} (London), March 5, 1894, p. 9.

\textsuperscript{15}E. T. Raymond, \textit{The Life of Lord Rosebery} (New York: George N. Doran

\textsuperscript{16}\textit{The Times} (London), March 6, 1894, p. 7.
My Dear Ponsonby,

Things are not going very well. One or two of my colleagues in the Commons are endeavoring to impose conditions--upon me--one of which is that the new Foreign Minister shall be in the Commons.

I have refused to submit to any conditions not ordinarily imposed on a Prime Minister. I don't want to be Prime Minister at all, but if I am to be, I must be a real one. I have told them that if this condition is pressed I will throw up my commission at once. That is how matters stand. Of course, all this is for the Queen, but I prefer to tell her informally through you.17

I am respectfully yours,
Rosebery

and again in a letter to the Queen herself, Rosebery repeated his reluctance to assume office.

... he felt it his duty to inform Your Majesty ... of at least some of the objections he sees to the task of reconstituting the Government. Nothing can diminish his sense of these objections but he cannot resist Your Majesty's appeal, and will endeavour to carry out Your Majesty's wishes.18

With these uncertain words Lord Rosebery became Prime Minister of Great Britain, an office which he held for the ensuing fifteen months.

This paper will examine the conduct of foreign affairs during those fifteen months. It is hoped that along with an examination of the events that transpired under Rosebery's leadership, an evaluation can be made of his conduct of foreign affairs.


CHAPTER II

LORD ROSEBERY

Archibald Philip Primrose, the fifth Earl of Rosebery and First Minister of Great Britain from March 3, 1894, until June 24, 1895, was born in London on May 7, 1848. He was the son of Archibald, Lord Dalmeny and of Catherine, the daughter of the fourth Earl of Stanhope.

Lord Rosebery received his early education at Brighton and then at Eton, where he formed a fondness for the school that stayed with him for the remainder of his life. Shortly before his death in 1929, Rosebery instructed a servant to purchase a gramaphone and to play on it, as Rosebery lay dying, the Eton boating song.

While at Eton, Rosebery became a favorite pupil of William Johnson, a teacher who lived in the same house as Rosebery. Although an exceptionally intelligent student the young aristocrat was not an exceedingly industrious one, and Johnson was to write another teacher that he would give him a "piece of plate" if he could get some work out of him. Rosebery, Johnson wrote, "is one of those who like the palm without the dust."\(^{19}\) Although later in his political career Lord Rosebery showed that he was capable of working hard and long, this phrase was often used as a weapon against him by his political opponents. Johnson also commented during Rosebery's last year at Eton that Rosebery "will be an orator, and if not a poet, such a man as poets delight in."\(^{20}\)


\(^{20}\) Ibid., p. 15.
After graduation from Eton in 1865, Rosebery spent the next few months at the home of his stepfather (his own father had died and his mother had remarried during his early childhood). It was here that he met Benjamin Disraeli, with whom he had several long talks. Although within three years of this meeting Lord Rosebery was to declare his stand with the Liberal party, it is more likely than not that the young man’s ideas concerning foreign policy were in some manner colored by the influence of the great Conservative. Apparently he impressed Disraeli too, for Mrs. Disraeli told young Rosebery that her husband had mentioned that he wished Rosebery could take a seat in the Commons for the Conservative party.

In 1865 Rosebery entered Oxford, and it was while he was a university student that a friend of his mother’s asked if he would be interested in running for Parliament. Because he felt he would have a chance to sit in the Commons for only a short time before he inherited his title, he declined. Indeed little interest in politics was shown during this period of Rosebery’s life, for when he became a peer in 1868 he declined the request of Lord Granville, Liberal leader in the Lords, that he make a seconding speech for Mr. Gladstone. However, in his letter declining the invitation, he stated that his “private sympathy and . . . reason have been wholly enlisted in the Liberal cause for some years.”

It is clear then that at this early date in his life Lord Rosebery had assumed the ideas and political philosophies that were to determine his political life until early in the twentieth century.

Because of this early devotion to Liberalism, Lord Rosebery was soon attracted to Mr. Gladstone and his followers. Lord Rosebery had taken his seat in the House of Lords in 1868, and by 1871 he was a follower of Lord Granville. Mr. Gladstone had by this time already become a personal friend of Lord Rosebery. The letters Rosebery received from him "were marked by ancient courtesy and paternal kindness, as they were throughout the remainder of Mr. Gladstone's life." 22

In February of 1872 Lord Rosebery was asked by Mr. Gladstone to represent in the House of Lords the Board of Rating for the Liberal Government. Rosebery accepted and started on the long road of service to Mr. Gladstone and the Liberal party that reached through the years to 1900. Lord Rosebery had made a distinct impression on the old leader who once remarked "He is very decidedly a remarkable man, not a mere clever man: ... From the first time I ever saw him I liked him and thought highly of him." 23

In the late 1870's when Mr. Gladstone ended his self imposed retirement and spoke out against the Disraeli Government's action during the Bulgarian atrocities and the Congress of Berlin, Lord Rosebery was in full agreement. In 1878 and early 1879 he played a prominent part in convincing Mr. Gladstone to stand as the Liberal candidate for Midlothian County. 24 After the campaign which drew thousands upon thousands to hear Mr. Gladstone, and which gave him a victory, Lord Rosebery was offered no Cabinet post. He then chose to take no post at all, a decision which has been attributed to anger at his exclusion from the Cabinet as well as to the circulation of rumors that his part in the campaign was motivated

23 Ibid., p. 107.
24 Ibid., p. 92.
primarily by a desire for public office. This somewhat contradictory reaction reveals, perhaps, an element of aristocratic pride in his character. In any case he was at the time recovering from an attack of scarlet fever, and felt that he could not hold an office had it been given him.25

By 1881, he had recovered from his illness and was given a position in the Government as Under Secretary for the Home Office. Evidently bored with his somewhat trivial duties, Rosebery resigned after two years service; he apparently was more interested in policy than routine. He returned to office, however, in a more congenial position as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the Gladstone Government of 1885—despite his difference of opinion with the old leader on how foreign affairs were to be conducted. This ministry fell in the same year, but when Gladstone returned to power in 1892, Rosebery was once again in the Foreign Office. There he "displayed a prickly independence from his Prime Minister which pained the latter, but Rosebery's spirit was serviceable to England in the only foreign crisis of importance, a dispute with France (previously described) in 1893 about the frontiers of Siam ... ."26 It was when this ministry fell that Rosebery became Premier.

In order to understand why Rosebery acted as he did when he became Prime Minister, it is necessary to examine his attitudes concerning imperialism and the maintenance of foreign affairs when he assumed a position of leadership.


Throughout his life, first as a private citizen, then as a member of the House of Lords, and finally as a member of the Cabinet and Prime Minister, Lord Rosebery was an avowed imperialist. As early as 1874, for example, he has spoken of the glories of colonization in an address to the Social Science Congress in Glasgow:

Our race has colonised and colonises, has influenced and influences, and in future ages seems likely to further colonise and influence, a great part of the globe. So great has been our field of influence, that we can only view it with awe. It has been, and is, a great destiny for this country to sway so mightily the destinies of the universe ... We have no right, perhaps, to hope that we may be an exception to the rule by which nations have their period of growth, and of grandeur, and of decay. It may be that all we most esteem may fade away like the glories of Babylon. But if we have done our duty we ... even though our history should pass away, and our country become

'an island salt and bare
the haunt of seals and arcs and seamews clang,'
she may be remembered, not ungratefully, as the mother of great commonwealths and peaceful empires that shall perpetuate the best qualities of the race.27

In 1885, before he became Minister for Foreign Affairs in Mr. Gladstone’s third Government, Lord Rosebery again voiced his imperial views:

The other day I was described, and I think truly described, as a Liberal Imperialist. So far as I understand these two words, that is a perfectly accurate description. If a Liberal Imperialist means that I am a Liberal passionately attached to the Empire and interested intensely in the best means of sustaining and promoting the interests of the Empire; if it means ... that I am a Liberal who believes that the external policy of Great Britain is one that should be founded not on independent attitudes of our own ... if these be accurate descriptions of what a Liberal Imperialist is, then I am a Liberal Imperialist.28

These comments with reference to Liberal Imperialism should concern us here, because Rosebery’s concepts of the Empire and of the foreign

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28Ibid., p. 75.
policy it forced upon late nineteenth century England were unusual for a Liberal Minister. From 1865 until 1894, the Liberal party was so dominated by Gladstone that his ideas became the accepted program of the Liberal party as a whole.

Gladstone's views concerning foreign policy were best summed up by Gladstone himself. In 1869, in a letter to the Queen's secretary, Gladstone, who was then Prime Minister, stated his outlook. He wrote that he felt it was a situation fraught with extreme danger for England to assume alone an advanced, and therefore isolated, position in regard to European controversies; that come what may it is better for her to promise too little than too much; that she should not encourage the weak by giving expectations of aid, to resist the strong, but should rather seek to deter the strong by firm but moderate language, from aggression on the weak; that she should seek to develop and mature the action of a common or public or European opinion as the best standing bulwark against wrong . . . 29

Gladstone again stated his views, even more explicitly, on November 27, 1879, at West Calder, during his campaign for a seat in Parliament for Midlothian:

Here is my first principle of foreign policy: good government at home.

My second principle of foreign policy is this: that it ought to be to preserve to the nations of the world the blessings of peace . . .

My third principle is this: to strive to cultivate and maintain, aye, to the very uttermost, what is called the concert of Europe; to keep the Powers of Europe in union together.

My fourth principle is: that you avoid needless and entangling engagements. You may boast about them, you may brag about them, you may say you are procuring consideration for the country. You may say that an Englishman can now hold his head up among nations. You may say that he is now not in the hands of a Liberal ministry, who thought of

nothing but pounds, shillings, and pence. But what does all this come to gentlemen? It comes to this, that you are increasing your engagements without increasing your strength, you really reduce the Empire and do not increase it. You render it an inheritance less precious to hand on to future generations.

By fifth principle is this: to acknowledge the equal rights of all nations.

Let me give you a sixth and I have done.

And that sixth is ... foreign policy should always be inspired with the love of freedom.30

These, then, were the ideas that made up the bulk of the political thought of the Liberal party concerning foreign affairs.

With the first, second, third, fifth and sixth principles expounded by Mr. Gladstone, Lord Rosebery was in total agreement. With the fourth principle he could not and would not agree. Lord Rosebery remained a true disciple of imperialism and of the strong hand throughout his public career. In his heart and mind, Lord Rosebery always felt that the Empire and its protection was a cause "for which anyone might be content to live; ... a cause for which, if needs be, anyone might be content to die."31 It was this attitude, this strongly rooted and deep seated feeling and belief, that guided his conduct of foreign affairs from March 3, 1894, until June 24, 1895.

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CHAPTER III

AFRICA I

Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century the European Powers were engaged in an almost frantic "race for empire." Despite the efforts of anti-imperialists within the governments of the Powers, colonialists kept the upper hand and imperialism continued almost unabated. Africa was a prime target for colonization and every major Power had at least a foothold there. In this situation conflict was bound to occur, and as we shall see later in this chapter, did. European diplomatists found themselves facing questions in Europe that were caused by colonial possessions thousands of miles away while foreign ministers were forced to spend a great deal of time and energy trying to unravel tangled problems caused by colonization. England, France, Germany, Italy and others were all involved to one extent or another in the whole colonial adventure.

It was in this context that Lord Rosebery faced the first issue in foreign affairs to come before his Government.

In June of 1892 the British East Africa Company which, since 1890 had been in control of the vast territory of Uganda, had reviewed its interests there and determined that it could no longer bear the expense of administering that territory. Lord Rosebery, at that time foreign secretary to Mr. Gladstone, was determined not to let Uganda slip from
British control, for his imperialist orientation was strengthened by the likelihood that massacre and anarchy would follow. The foreign office was also reluctant to release an area that would give free access to other European Powers to the valley of the Nile, considered by England to be her sphere of influence. In order to prevent these contingencies the British government, at the insistence of Rosebery, persuaded the Company to postpone its withdrawal for a period of several months. In the meantime the explorer, Sir Gerald Portal, was sent to examine the situation and to make recommendations for the future of Uganda.

The reports sent back by Portal indicated that Lord Rosebery was not alone in his belief that adverse consequences would follow a British withdrawal from Uganda. In a message to Rosebery that was received on December 6, 1893, Sir Gerald wrote:

I fear that withdrawal of the present control, and the consequent loss of prestige might have consequences ... which would shake the positions of Europeans throughout East and Central Africa and would result seriously in the neighboring colonies of Germany, Italy and the Congo State.\(^{32}\)

Bishop Alfred Tucker, residing in Mombasa, had already expressed similar views in a letter to Portal, dated March 30, 1893:

Should her majesty's Government decline to undertake the expense and responsibility involved in the administration of this country, it is my firm conviction that the consequences that must inevitably ensue would be most disastrous.\(^{33}\)

The problem of Uganda arose and developed while Rosebery was foreign secretary. It was, however, due to his action as Prime Minister that the problem was finally solved. Events were developing slowly, due to the


\(^{33}\)Ibid., p. 39.
lack of communication and the tremendous distances involved, and as the
London Times pointed out on January 8, 1894:

   The final consideration of the East African question, which had been postponed until his (Portal's) return, has only now entered upon the stage from which some decision can be expected.34

   It was not until three months past this date, on April 12, 1894, that the Government, now under Rosebery's direction, took any action. On that date the British East Africa Company was bought out and its administration was taken over by the British Government. On June 18, 1894, the British formally established a protectorate over Uganda and the situation was then resolved. The conditions in Uganda remained stable and a year later it was announced that "a railway from the coast was to be begun as soon as possible and that the territory between Uganda and the sea was to be placed under a British protectorate."35 The Uganda question is an interesting study for it was not purely a colonial question, although it was indeed concerned with African colonial policy, but was also a question of foreign policy in that its settlement was motivated, in part at least, by a desire to block foreign aspirations in what had been traditionally considered a British sphere of influence.

   It was this same desire that involved Lord Rosebery in two more African problems, first with the French in Harrar and then with the French and Germans in Central Africa.

   In 1888 the British government had signed with France an agreement which dealt in part with the province of Harrar in Abyssinia. In Article IV of that agreement, the two governments pledged not to annex

34The Times (London), January 8, 1894, p. 8.

Harrar, a caravan route terminal, nor to make it a protectorate. At the same time, however, the governments did not renounce the right to oppose attempts of a third power to bring the province under its control. This agreement had been signed to lessen Franco-British tensions along the Red Sea. The next year, however, the Italians had signed a treaty with the ruler of Abyssinia in which he recognized Italian control over all of Abyssinia, including Harrar.36

Although at the time the treaty was concluded the British complained, the Rosebery Government took advantage of the situation by reaching an agreement contrary to the spirit if not the letter of England's agreement with France. William Longer has described the circumstances concisely:

On May 5, 1894, a new treaty was signed. It was concerned chiefly with the delimitation of the frontier between British Somaliland and the areas claimed by the Italians. But there was a "Note Officiouse annexée au Protocol" which, despite the Anglo-French Treaty of 1888 relating to Harrar, abandoned this province to Italy, while at the same time a "Declaration Secrète" allowed England to act there and regard it as part of her sphere until Italy was prepared to take over. Harrar formed the chief approach to Abyssinia. The new arrangement . . . would . . . block any attempt by France to establish control over this strategic point.37

Although the British government's actions concerning Uganda and Harrar partly blocked French designs in Africa, there was still one more avenue through which Britain's interests in the "dark continent" could be menaced. This avenue was the Congo Free State. Controlled by Leopold II of Belgium, this neutral State had been founded by him in 1878. It began its existence as the International Association of the Congo when a number of committees were established to undertake the job of setting up the


37Ibid., pp. 130, 131.
new country. Leopold had commissioned the famed explorer H. M. Stanley to establish a series of stations along the Congo River. He was to also make treaties with the native chiefs and to construct a road between the upper Nile and the Congo estuary near the sea. The International Association was recognized in 1884 and 1885 by the Powers of Europe as the Congo Free State and Leopold was acknowledged as sovereign of the newly created State by the Belgian Chamber in 1885. This State, then, bordering on France's sphere in Africa, was another area through which England felt France could threaten her interests in the Sudan.

The problem England faced in the spring of 1894 had arisen from her relatively recent involvement in Egyptian and Sudanese affairs. In the late 1860's when the Suez Canal had been constructed in Egypt, part of the funds had come from the Egyptian government and part from European investors. Because of the expense of the Canal and of certain other internal improvements undertaken by the Egyptian government the Egyptian national debt had come to something near ninety million pounds and this crushing burden had finally forced the Egyptian Khedive to sell his 177,000 shares of stock in the Canal in 1875. Disraeli, then Prime Minister, saw a golden opportunity, and borrowing three million pounds from Rothschilds, he purchased the stocks for England.38

The seeds of Britain's future interest in Egypt and consequently the Sudan were now sown. Because of the immense amounts of money owed by Egypt to English investors, and because of Britain's part ownership of the Canal, England had a double interest if anything went amiss there. Her concern was soon aroused by the actions of Ismail Pasha, the Khedive of Egypt. In an effort to economize on the expenses of his government,
he had reduced the pay of officers of the army by half. This shortage of pay, along with growing flames of nationalism fanned by Arabi, an army officer, led to a revolt of the army in 1881 and 1882. Anti-foreign demonstrations occurred and the British felt intervention to be necessary. The French were asked by Gladstone to join but, to their everlasting regret, did not. The British then decided to bombard the fortresses at Alexandria and considered following through with a landing force. This action was against the principles that had guided liberal foreign policy under Gladstone's control, but the foreign secretary, Lord Granville, who opposed Gladstone's idea of joint action, justified the bombardment as follows:

A bombardment is a horrible thing, but it will clear the air and accelerate a solution of some sort or other.

It is well for a country whose strength is maritime that naval demonstrations should not be thought to be absolutely without a sting.

I am as decided as ever against a dual political intervention of the English and French.39

On July 11, 1882, the bombardment was executed and the fortresses reduced. Desert tribes then began to threaten the Canal and the previously projected landing force became necessary. Gladstone, in the dilatory manner so characteristic of his attitude toward foreign policy delayed until September before taking action.40 Fortunately the French government had in the meantime fallen, leaving England with an almost complete freedom of action in Egypt. Gladstone was finally forced to take advantage of the situation and on September 13 the battle of


Tel el Kebir was fought. The British were victorious and on September 15 they entered Cairo. They were now in control of Egypt, but as one authority has commented "they could hardly have said themselves how they managed to get there." And because they controlled Egypt, they also had claims to the Sudan—"that unknown, undefined, largely wasteland" into which Egyptian conquest had penetrated since the 1820's. Under the next Conservative administration (that of Lord Salisbury) this area was claimed by England as a sphere of influence, and the transition of Uganda from private administration to that of the British government suggested penetration of British influence northwards into the Sudan to meet their penetration southwards from Egypt. Lord Rosebery, as the Liberal foreign Minister in 1892 and as Premier in 1894, maintained British claims and the stage was thus set for a series of diplomatic conflicts between England and France that were not ended until 1899. The problems arose because though the Germans recognized the Sudan as a British sphere, the French did not, and thus had no qualms about intrusion into the area.

It seemed apparent that the French desired to penetrate the Sudan in order to build a land bridge from their West African possessions to the Red Sea, possibly through Abyssinia to French Somaliland.* The British were stirred by the resulting threat to their north-south communications connecting Egypt and Uganda, essential to the development of British trade.

*Ibid., p. 276

*France had taken possession of this small area at the southern end of the Red Sea, and bordering also on the Gulf of Aden, in 1892, but the name French Somaliland was not adopted until 1896.
One author, however, had drawn a plausible case for a fear by the British that if the French gained control of the lower Sudan they would in some manner be able to regulate the water supply of Egypt. The French would then be able to bring flood or drought at will, and in reality would control the entire country.\textsuperscript{42} It was British insecurity over her tenuous control of the Sudan, then, which led her in 1894 to sign the Anglo-Congo Treaty of that year. Lord Kimberly, the foreign secretary, and Lord Rosebery hoped that by this agreement not only would French designs on the Sudan be blocked, but that the Congo Free State would recognize the Sudan as a British sphere of influence.

The Treaty itself consisted of three main articles. Article I, which provided for a rectification of the Congo State's northeastern and southeastern frontiers, caused no problems. Articles II and III, however, raised an European reaction. Article II leased to King Leopold for the remainder of his life a large area along the west bank of the Nile, a region that extended from the "northern point of Lake Albert Edward to Fashoda and westward as far as the thirteenth meridian east of Greenwich." This would provide an area for Belgian penetration which would forestall French penetration to the Sudan. Article III provided that the Congo State "grants under lease to Great Britain to be administered when occupied, a strip of territory 25 kilometers in breadth, extending from the most northerly point on L. Tanganyika to the most southerly point of Lake Albert Edward."\textsuperscript{43} This third article, as indicated in a letter by Lord Kimberly, was designed to connect

\textsuperscript{42}For an explanation of this idea, see Wm. Langer's \textit{Diplomacy of Imperialism}, pp. 103-108, 135.

\textsuperscript{43}Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. LVII, cmd. 7307, session 1894, "Papers Relating to the Agreement between Great Britain and Leopold, King of the Belgians", p. 34.
"Lake Albert Edward, the Eastern shore of which is in the British sphere (in Central Africa) with the leased part. This secures to British trade uninterrupted communication ... (between the two spheres)."14 The British in short were attempting to build their own bridge of communications from Uganda (just south of the Sudan), southward between German East Africa and the Congo and by way of Lake Tanganyika, to Rhodesia.*

As soon as the treaty was made public, immediate protests were made by both the French and German governments. The Germans felt, and quite rightly, that their protectorate of German East Africa was being encircled and that their trade interests would thus suffer. Baron Von Marschall, the German foreign secretary, expressed these fears in a letter to Count Hatzfeldt, who was the German ambassador in London:

We see injury to our interests especially in Article III of the Treaty which contemplates handing over a strip of country between Lake Tanganyika and Albert Edward. This would mean the risk of our protectorate being hemmed in on all sides by British territory. We must conclude from this unfriendly attitude adopted by the British that the neighborhood of the British on our borders would tend to draw trade away from our possessions in that zone.45

Germany did not want a complete split with England on this issue, but was willing to, and to a certain extent did, cooperate with France. A further understanding of the German attitude toward the whole matter and toward cooperation with France can be gleaned from the following memorandum by Baron Von Marschall:

44Ibid.


*Cecil Rhodes British South Africa Company had been chartered in 1889 for development of this area, and the capital, Salisbury, had been established in 1890; the name Rhodesia would not be adopted until 1895.
The agreement of May 12 was a matter of principle and impinged on the basic underlying International Law in Central Africa. Thus far the interests of Germany, France and even of other European States coincided. (This) . . . made it necessary to consider whether or not it would be advisable for France and Germany to take as their basis for negotiation with England the maintenance of the status quo . . . if only France and Germany definitely agreed in the direction mentioned above and acted accordingly, their influence would not go for nothing in London. 46

In order to avoid an open breach with London, the Germans put most of the pressure on King Leopold of Belgium and pressed for an immediate withdrawal of the Treaty. Germany's attitude toward Belgium is displayed in the following telegram from the German foreign office to the German ambassador in London:

Withdrawal of the Treaty of May 12, and that without delay, is the only way to avoid complicating the European situation. England will learn she cannot treat us as she chooses and it will give her reason to prefer our friendship to our ill will. We continue to press King Leopold to withdraw from the Treaty. If this fails because he is hoping England will support him, we must refuse to be responsible if the Egyptian Question (between England and France) is raised and if a conference includes it in its program. 47

Notable, too, in this communication is the mention of the Egyptian question. This was in reference to Britain's contention (recognized by Germany but not by France) that the Sudan, as Egyptian territory, was an English sphere of influence. Now Germany was threatening to withdraw her support of English influence in the Nile Valley. If this were done, it would bring matters to a crisis. The question of England's rights in the Sudan, in short, could be approached by an European challenge to her status in Egypt proper. This was a consideration that

46 Ibid., Memorandum by Baron Von Marschall, June 13, 1894, p. 316.
47 Ibid., Baron Von Marschall to Count Hatzfeldt, June 15, 1894, p. 316.
weighed heavily upon the British, but not as quickly as the Germans had hoped. That the British had long been aware that just such a development might arise is indicated in the following minute by Lord Kimberly, the English foreign minister, written two months before the Anglo-Congo question:

... This whole proceeding (a Franco-German agreement of March, 1894, concerning Cameroons) shows how little reliance can be placed in the assurance of the German Government that they desire to cooperate with us in Africa. It will be necessary for us now to be strictly on the guard against this possible combination with our rivals in Africa.  

48

The first indication that the threat was not immediately having its desired effect was Rosebery's warning that England could return to the policy of the "free land." This message was passed to Germany through a dispatch from the Austrian ambassador in England to the Austrian foreign office. In the message Rosebery mentioned that he was "very uneasy about the political situation in Europe" and that the "attitude of Germany causes him to ask himself whether England would not do better to alter her policy (in Africa) and to recover complete freedom of action." Rosebery then enunciated the thought that possibly is the first indication of England's drift from friendship with the Triple Alliance which was to culminate in the Anglo-French entente of 1904. 

In a hey sentence he remarked that "Germany is a party to the Triple alliance and if she follows in Africa a policy hostile to England and


*England, although not willing to bind herself to any permanent alliance, had for years cooperated in a friendly manner with the Triple Alliance. Her part in the Mediterranean Agreements of 1887 and in general diplomatic conduct toward the Central Powers had drawn her close to Germany. Most of this cooperation was initiated by the Conservatives but was carried on to a degree under Liberal Ministries. This cooperation finally ceased in the summer of 1894.
makes common cause with France, it will become impossible for the Cabinet of St. James to maintain her entente with the Triple alliance in European questions.\textsuperscript{49}

In the meantime King Leopold, the object of most of the German protest, was ready to give in when the Germans pointed out that Article III of the Anglo-Congo agreement was inconsistent with the Congo-German treaty of November 8, 1884.\textsuperscript{50} By this time Lord Rosebery was beginning to change his mind. The Cabinet had not been informed of the treaty during its negotiation, and when they learned it had been signed, some members protested strongly. When Leopold asked permission to withdraw from Article III, the pressure of the Cabinet, and especially W. V. Harcourt, helped lead to Rosebery's consent. The Cabinet alone, however, did not cause Rosebery's reconsideration. There is some indication that he began to fear the wrath of Germany. On the 16th of June he told Deyrn, the Austrian ambassador, that after reconsideration he "had come to the conclusion that ... a strip of territory 25 kilometers in extent, in Africa, part of it in desert was not important enough to England to warrant a complete change in her foreign policy ..."\textsuperscript{51} What prompted this complete change in attitude on Rosebery's part in the span of two days will probably never be known. It is probable, however, that on having second thoughts he realized how heavily things weighed against him--the fear of German cooperation with France in relation to Egypt, the

\textsuperscript{49}Ibid., Count Deyrn to Count Kalnoky, June 13 and 14, 1894.

\textsuperscript{50}The Foreign Policy of Lord Rosebery (London: A. L. Humphries, 1901), p. 35.

\textsuperscript{51}Harold Temperley and Lillian Penson, Foundations of British Foreign Policy 1792-1902 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), Introductory note, p. 490.
opposition of W. V. Harcourt and other Cabinet members, a healthy respect for the magnificent German army—all these must have centered in Rosebery's mind and forced upon him the realization that to remain immoveable would be madness. On June 22 the objectionable Article III was bilaterally abrogated by England and Belgium, and thus Rosebery's scheme to unite England's two spheres of influence in Africa was spoiled.

The protests of the French were paid little heed; and although the Cabinet criticized the foreign office for the problems it caused with France as well as with Germany, Rosebery shrugged off the protests with the remark that "the Anglo-Congo agreement is causing disproportionate excitement in France because France had endeavoured to do the same thing and failed ..." 52 Since their protests were ignored by the British government it was once again King Leopold who was forced to yield. On August 14 he signed an agreement with the French by which in return for a rectification of the border between the Congo and French territory, King Leopold agreed to:

renounce all occupation and to exercise in the future no political influence west or north of a line thus determined: longitude 30° east of Greenwich starting with its intersection of the watershed of the Congo and Nile basins, up to a point where it meets the parallel 5°30' and then along that parallel to the Nile. 53

Rosebery did not oppose this action because he felt that Britain could not compel Leopold to occupy the areas leased to him. He realized full well too that there was enough truth in the French accusation that whoever the lands of the Sudan belonged to, they did not belong to the British, that this could result in an embarrassing international situation.

52 Lord Rosebery to Queen Victoria, June 14, 1894. Letters of Queen Victoria, third series, II. p. 404.

if he pressed Leopold too hard. The British government then apparently felt that one of the main objectives of the negotiations--to obtain the recognition of the British sphere of influence by the Free State--was in no way, shape, nor form altered by the action of France. However, in another very important objective Lord Rosebery had miserably failed--the French still had open access to the Sudan, a problem which was to lead to the Fashoda incident in 1898. After this "wildest piece of diplomatic jugglery on record," the situation in Africa in 1894 remained at the status quo. According to one scholar, however, the British still:

entertained hopes that the comprehensive negotiations on all African matters, begun in the summer of 1894, might yet issue in a French renunciation of any designs on the Upper Nile or even a French reconciliation to the British occupation of Egypt itself. 54

These negotiations, as we shall see in a later chapter, bore no fruit and within a year Britain was to be deep in diplomatic conflict with France. The "Africa Question" between France and Britain was finally settled only by a show of force in 1898 during the great crisis at Fashoda. The next year an agreement was signed recognizing this fact, but intermittent trouble between Britain and Germany continued for another fifteen years.

CHAPTER IV

ASIAN AFFAIRS

In another quarter of the world the political situation was rapidly changing. The area was the Far East and the cause of the change was Japan.

In the short space of some thirty years Japan had risen from a fifteenth century feudal monarchy to a modern industrialized state. With the arrival of Japan as a great power new problems came into focus for the powers of Europe. Formerly the greatest concern Europe had shown in the Far East was in how best to carve the decaying Chinese Empire into more effective spheres of influence. Now Japan threatened the interests of the European powers by her aspiration to acquire a sphere of her own. This desire, coupled with the fact that Japan's geographical proximity to China gave this rapidly rising power a decided advantage over other European powers, awoke European diplomatists to an altering balance of power in the East. The British government became cognizant of this change as early as July, 1894. It has been pointed out that:

Lord Rosebery was among the earliest of European ministers to become alive to the situation in the Far East. . . It was Lord Rosebery who led the way for the other powers . . . by the treaty of July 16, 1894.55

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By the terms of this treaty the extraterritorial jurisdiction of British Consular Courts in Japan was to be abolished within a year, and Japan was allowed to have customs tariffs, as she formerly could not. In return restrictions were removed from British trade conducted in the Japanese Empire.\footnote{Ibid., p. 53.} As Sir Edward Grey later remarked in his autobiography:

> We had made up our minds that the time had come when dealings with Japan must be put on the same equal terms as exist between nations of European; only so would cordial political and successful commercial relations be preserved.\footnote{Sir Edward Grey, Twenty-Five Years (New York: Frederick A. Stocker Co., 1925), p. 22.}

Japan however was not content with mere equality in these areas. She was not diverted from emulating her European models in employing her industrial and military resources to exert influence over China in the Sino-Japanese War.

Early in 1894 the Korean government, threatened by rebellion, had asked the Chinese government for help. China sent troops and Japan followed suit as both nations were allowed to do under the terms of the Tientsian Convention signed in 1885. However, when the Chinese government was ready to move its forces, the Japanese came forward with a plan to arrange reforms in Korea. The Chinese government refused to participate and the Japanese took over the Korean administration on August 1. They declared war on China the same day.

The British watched these events with interest and not without some concern, as is indicated in the correspondence between the Prime Minister and Queen Victoria just prior to Japan's declaration of war. In a telegram to the Prime Minister on July 30, 1894, the Queen expressed her...
concern at the way events were moving when she asked "would not a joint demonstration by ourselves and Russia be the best thing? Something must be done speedily to stop what will be a very disastrous war."\(^{58}\)

Lord Rosebery, however, was reluctant to cooperate with Russia in an intervention. In his reply to Victoria he indicated his fear of working only with Russia and mentioned other complications in the affair:

> I am rather afraid of joint action in this affair, and no other power seems inclined to join. Moreover in any case we should be too late. Japan is determined to force on a war and has done so.\(^{59}\)

This opinion was shared by others in the Cabinet and although the policy received some criticism, it was generally supported throughout England. An author friendly to the government commented in the *Westminster Gazette* more than a year later on Rosebery's decision. In that writer's eyes:

> ... nothing short of going to war with Japan ourselves could have prevented her going to war with China, and it would have been a strange policy indeed ... to divert those evils (of war) from Japan to ourselves with the certain prospect of dragging in other European powers who from jealousy could not have held aloof.\(^{60}\)

The war duly occurred; but after the first Japanese victories in the early part of the war, China informed the British government that she was seeking an "honorable peace." The British, therefore, sounded the other powers on an international intervention between the warring nations. As Lord Rosebery later said:

> The British government did not found any great hopes upon that, but we did think it our duty to sound the other courts of Europe and the United States (to see) if ... 


\(^{59}\)Ibid., Lord Rosebery to Queen Victoria, p. 418.

there was any possibility of Japan and China coming to
terms upon any such conditions. \textsuperscript{61}

This offer was spurned by enough of the powers to prevent its
implementation. Rosebery later described the rejection of the offer as
follows:

\begin{quote}
\textit{In the judgement of one or two of them, only one I}
\textit{think but we will say one or two of them to be within}
\textit{the confines of truth, it did not appear that the time had}
\textit{yet arrived when conditions could be put forward with any}
\textit{advantage to the consideration of the combatants.}\textsuperscript{62}
\end{quote}

There was some question raised in England as to why the English
government did not take it upon itself to intervene between the two
nations, and take China's considerations to Japan alone. Lord Rosebery,
who was always an advocate of the concert system, felt that "the more
great powers you have engaged in peace making, the better the peace."
He believed it was his duty to try and "secure a concert of powers in
all great international concerns."\textsuperscript{63} Beyond these reasons lay one
more, perhaps more important than the rest. Lord Rosebery was, in his
own mind, certain that:

\begin{quote}
in the jealous condition of things produced by the way in
China and Japan, it would have been madness for this country
to have gone alone and attempted to act as bottle holder
between China and Japan without incurring the suspicion of
every power interested--and all powers are interested--in
the East.\textsuperscript{64}
\end{quote}

According to The Times version of the intervention episode, two
powers had declined, two gave no reply, and only one accepted the British
suggestion.\textsuperscript{65} The war, therefore, continued until April 15, 1895, when
China surrendered and the Treaty of Shimonoseki was signed. By the terms
of this arrangement China was, among other things, to cede to Japan:

\textsuperscript{61}\textit{The Times} (London), October 26, 1894, p. 10. (From a speech made by
Lord Rosebery on October 24, at Sheffield).

\textsuperscript{62}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 9.

\textsuperscript{63}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 10.

\textsuperscript{64}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{65}\textit{The Times} (London), October 25, 1894, p. 9.
Port Arthur and the peninsula of Listung, Formosa and the Decodores Islands, to pay a large indemnity, to grant Japan the most-favored-nation clause in a new commercial treaty, and to open additional ports to the commerce of the world.\textsuperscript{66}

It was when these terms were announced to the world that Russia, France, and Germany decided to intervene and force Japan to retract some of her conditions. At this point then, say some authorities, England did an about face and withdrew her friendship for China and replaced it with that of Japan.\textsuperscript{67} In England it seemed as though public opinion had switched in favor of Japan. It became evident that England wanted no part in the repudiation of the Treaty of Shemonoseki. Lord Kimberly expressed the government's view in a letter to Queen Victoria when he wrote it would "be contrary to sound policy" if England interfered, and the "wisest policy will be to watch events, and it will be time enough to consider whether we should interfere, when we are convinced British interests are really in danger."\textsuperscript{68} Sir Edward Grey, then Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs, commented on this attitude some thirty years later:

I do not believe that Lord Kimberly had any ulterior motive in the decision he took not to interfere. We did not consider that British interests required us to join in this interference with Japan's claims; the threat to her by European powers appeared harsh and uncalled for, and it was repugnant to join in it.\textsuperscript{69}

England was then apparently ready to accept Japan as the victor, and if necessary to play her off against Russia in the Far East.


\textsuperscript{67}See William Langer, \textit{The Diplomacy of Imperialism} and E. Malcolm Carrol, \textit{Germany and the Great Powers 1866-1914}.

\textsuperscript{68}Earl of Kimberly to Queen Victoria, April 23, 1895. \textit{Letters of Queen Victoria}, third series, II (Longmans, Green and Co., 1931), p. 496.

St. James Gazette expressed this view in its March 18, 1895, issue. The magazine stated that if Japan menaced Russia in the East "it is no affair of ours. For ourselves, if Japan acts as a counterpoise to the formidable Empire which is stretching one of its long arms around northern Asia, we are no losers . . ."70

This attitude was to play an important role later in the cordial relations between England and Japan that culminated in the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1902. Whether this policy was formulated by accident or design is not and cannot be known. It, at any rate, proved to be one of good fortune for the future foreign relations of England.

Japan, however, was not the only Eastern problem to face Rosebery. He was confronted with the problem of playing Russia off against Japan and yet remaining friendly enough toward her that some sort of entente would perhaps become possible. In order to partially accomplish this Rosebery reached an agreement with Russia concerning British and Russian spheres of influence in the Pamirs mountain area of Afghanistan. These conflicting spheres of influence had long been a bone of contention between the two nations but an agreement signed in 1887 had given a temporary respite to affairs leading to a dangerous situation. For more than half a century the British had advanced on the northwestern frontier of India toward Afghanistan. The Russians were pushing toward the same area, moving southeast from the Caspian Sea. Since Afghanistan was the immediate buffer to India, the British had a vested interest in its well being, considered it their sphere of influence, and were opposed to any efforts of the Russians to exert their influence over it.

The crisis of 1885 had arisen when Russia claimed, as part of their Empire, Pendjeh, in the northwestern corner of Afghanistan. War was averted by careful diplomacy and in 1887 a definite frontier was established by treaty for that particular area of contention. This agreement was now refined and extended by the Rosebery government in the fall of 1894. As part of a general diplomatic move toward closer relations with Russia, the Pamirs Agreement was negotiated in order to define the northeastern border of Afghanistan. The agreement, in general terms, provided for a line to be drawn running from Lake Victoria eastward to the Chinese frontier.* The border was to be marked out by a joint technical commission composed of British, Russian and Afghan members. The commission was also instructed to report on the situation at the Chinese frontier in order to help the British and Russian governments agree with China on the juncture of the Afghan-Chinese border. Britain and Russia also pledged in the agreement to "abstain from exercising any political influence or control, the former (England) to the north, the latter (Russia) to the south, of the above line of demarcation ..." The British also agreed that the area of Afghanistan which lay in the British sphere of influence between Nindu Kush and Lake Victoria would not be annexed by Great Britain nor would it be fortified. The whole agreement was contingent upon the agreement of the Ameers of Afghanistan and Bakhara. Their agreement was obtained and the treaty was completed. The line drawn in 1895 still marks the present border of Afghanistan.

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*Lake Victoria is in the extreme northeastern corner of Afghanistan, just west of the point where the borders of Kashmir, Afghanistan, and China meet. It is the source of the AB-I-Panja River, at an altitude of 17,753 feet.
In commenting on this agreement after Rosebery's fall, the Review of Reviews noted that:

No prime minister, not even Mr. Gladstone, came so near establishing that hearty good understanding with Russia which is the fundamental basis of any sound foreign policy for England. To replace suspicion by trust and to substitute friendly confidence for distrust was a great thing to have done even if it lasted only some few months.72

Perhaps it is true that no other Prime Minister had come so close to Russia. The Pamirs agreement had been designed as a stepping stone toward a rapprochement with Russia, and this larger goal was not achieved. England was to wait twelve years more before such an entente, under another Liberal ministry, became a reality.

CHAPTER V.

THE BEGINNING OF ISOLATION

It is difficult to say whether the desire for rapprochement with Russia was a product of the new isolation in which England found herself by midsummer of 1894 or whether it was pursued independently of that development. Rosebery had turned away from a pro-German attitude in connection with his South African policy, and had refused to cooperate with the other European powers in the Far Eastern situation. The attempts to reach an accommodation with Russia came in the fall.

One authority attributes English isolation to the clumsiness of the Rosebery administration concerning the Anglo-Congo agreement. This same author implies that Anglo-German cooperation ceased after 1894 because of Germany's desire to end the established entente. This is an inaccurate conclusion. Although Article III of the Anglo-Congo treaty had aroused German resentment and had caused Germany briefly to unite with France on the Egyptian question, Germany did not desire a lasting break with England. This attitude is exhibited in a letter from the German foreign office to Baron Von Heyking, the German Consul-General in Cairo. Written more than a month after the Anglo-Congo fiasco, the letter stated that by agreeing with the Khedive's anti-English attitude Von Heyking:

... might incur the danger of joining the French representative in permanent opposition to the British one, and this would not suit our general policy ... 74

In another letter between the two diplomats Von Heyking was informed that for Germany to set herself in "open and permanent" antagonism toward England would be neither in consonance with the traditional close relationship between the two nations, nor with the feelings of our associates in the Triple Alliance. 75

These references (and many more could be cited) to Anglo-German cooperation indicate that it was not Germany's wish for the Anglo-German entente to cease. Another author has written that England's isolation was a planned situation, and goes on to say that July 9, 1894, was an "historic date" in British history. This conclusion is drawn because on that day Lord Rosebery spurned a German apology for past events, offered by Count Deym, the Austrian ambassador. By doing so Rosebery marked the end of a more or less consistent Anglo-Austro-German cooperation begun in 1792. It is concluded by the same author, then, that upon this date, July 9, 1894, England became intentionally isolated. 76

There had been, in late nineteenth century England, a good many influences pulling England and Germany apart. The German desire for colonies had for years rankled Englishmen, Liberal and Conservative alike. Even though the Liberal party under Rosebery's guidance in 1894 had many inner differences, it was solid on one point—opposition to a


75 Ibid., July 5, 1894, pp. 300-301.

strong German friendship. The older Cobden-oriented Gladstonian Liberals were opposed to entangling alliances, ententes or agreements of any nature. The Liberal-Imperialists, of whom Lord Rosebery was the acknowledged leader, were opposed to an alliance or an understanding with Germany because the colonial interests of the two nations were too often at odds. It becomes evident, then, why there was no great effort on the part of England in 1894-95 to continue her previous policy of diplomatic cooperation with Germany.

Toward France the English were ambivalent. After the Anglo-Congo episode England showed a lukewarm desire to acquire an entente with France. In the summer and fall of 1894 attempts were made to reach an understanding concerning the Nile valley, but failed when Lord Rosebery turned down an agreement concerning the problem. The French, failing here, then launched expeditions toward the Sudan, according to one scholar, in order to force England to declare a de facto recognition of French rights in the valley of the Nile. This action, however, as we shall later see, had the exact opposite of its desired effect and precipitated a serious diplomatic crisis with England.

England then pursued her attempt at rapprochement with Russia. The British negotiated the Ramirs Agreement with Russia which eased tensions in Afghanistan, and when the Armenian massacres broke out, attempted to work with both France and Russia to right the situation although efforts came to naught. Lord Rosebery's desire for Russian friendship was illustrated in a speech he gave at the Guildhall on November 11, 1894. Referring to the Sino-Japanese war he said:

77 Ibid., pp. 353, 354.
In this delicate and difficult business we have acted hand in hand with Russia... In itself that cordial action with Russia is a fact of which we may rejoice. Ever since this Government has been in power our relations with Russia have been more cordial than I ever remember them to have been. We have, as nearly as possible, I hope and believe, terminated the long standing difficulty with regard to the limitations of our spheres of influence in Central Asia (a reference to the Ramirs agreement). I agree that if Russia and England can march with cordiality and without suspicion in Asiatic affairs, one great step toward the peace of the world will have been taken.78

These attempts at friendship with Russia brightened a few times then lapsed into nothingness because of Russia's disinterest. This is attributable to the fact that the developing Franco-Russian entente of the last four years had culminated in 1894 in a formal alliance, although this fact remained for sometime a secret.* The British then remained aloof, going their way without alliance or entente until after the turn of the century. Planned disconnection from Germany and a lukewarm attitude toward France and Russia ended in unexpected and complete isolation. The responsibility for this state of affairs must lie with Lord Rosebery but it is doubtful that things would have been much different in another Minister's hands--events were moving too quickly.

78The Times (London), November 11, 1894, p. 6.

*As late as 1898 the German ambassador to Vienna, for example, "felt sure there was no formal alliance." Rumloed to Salisbury, December 5, 1898; British Documents on the Origin of the War as cited in Sidney Foy, The Origins of the World War (New York: Macmillan Co., 1948), p. 121, note 33.
Although Britain would later emerge from her isolation with the development of the Triple Entente, this was still a decade in the future. During Rosebery's administration unresolved colonial conflicts between the English and French made a real understanding impossible. Thus in the fall of 1894 Lord Rosebery faced the very problem which he had earlier tried to prevent by signing the Anglo-Congo Treaty--French intrusion into the Sudan.

France, refusing to recognize the Sudan as a British sphere of influence, held that if the Sudan belonged to anyone, it belonged to Turkey (because of her theoretical suzerainty over Egypt), and the British had no more right to be there than the French. Since the British were there, however, the French felt that they must be there too. If the Sudan was, in fact, ownerless, the French reasoned, then it was anyone's game and the British ought not to complain. With this reasoning, then, the French launched an expedition of exploration toward the disputed area. This was done, according to one author, in order to force the British into recognition of French claims in the Sudan and, by so doing, to bring the British occupation of Egypt (which the French had always resented) before an European conference. 79

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It is hard to believe that the French government would engage in an undertaking as dangerous as this with such a tenuous and hypothetical policy. Lord Rosebery had warned of the danger involved in this policy as early as November of 1894, when he said in a speech at the Guildhall:

The last difficulty to which I will refer is this. It is the danger of armed explorers. At this moment in the continent of Africa, we are all liable to a real danger from the aberrations of armed exploration... I am not charging any nation particularly... but what I would say is this—that this exploration... constitutes a real danger to European peace... 80

France was engaging upon further exploration of the very kind Rosebery had warned against. He then felt he must impress upon the French government the fact that Britain would not yield and it was for this reason that Sir Edward Grey delivered his famous Declaration in the House of Commons on the evening of March 28, 1895. In that Declaration Grey stated that "the British and Egyptian spheres of influence cover the whole of the Nile waterway" and that the "advance of a French expedition... into an area over which our claims have been known for so long (5 years) would be not merely an inconsistent and unexpected act but it must be perfectly well known to the French government that it would be an unfriendly act*... and would be so viewed by England. 81

These were exceedingly strong words for the language of diplomacy among friendly nations. The significance which they carried, and were meant to carry when they were spoken, was gauged by Lord Rosebery in a speech at Epsom three years later when he said "the word 'unfriendly'

80 The Times (London), November 10, 1894, p. 6.
81 Great Britain, 4 Parliamentary Debates XXXII, 1895, pp. 405-406.

*This language was so strong that it was called by the Radical M. P. Henry Lalouchere a "quasi declaration of war" against France.
which socially has, perhaps, no particular meaning, or perhaps too common a meaning, is among diplomatists a word of exceptional weight and gravity.\footnote{\textit{The Times} (London), October 13, 1898, p. 10.} Grey's use of this strong language has been questioned by many writers. Grey's own explanation, years later, was that the language I had thought of using about west Africa (with reference to French activities there) was not suitable to the question of the Nile valley. I there transferred to the subject of the Nile the firmness I had been authorized to show about competing claims in West Africa . . . \footnote{Sir Edward Grey, \textit{Twenty-Five Years} (Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1925), p. 19.} Lord Rosebery stated, however, in 1898, that he was "personally and ministerially responsible" for the Declaration.\footnote{\textit{The Times} (London), October 13, 1898, p. 10.} The purpose then was to inform France, and to inform her in no uncertain terms, that the British considered all the Nile valley as a British sphere of influence that was not open to the intrusion of any foreign power.

Queen Victoria, visiting in France at the time, telegraphed Lord Rosebery that:

\begin{quote}
Your telegram is rather disquieting. While trusting that the government will preserve a strong attitude against French encroachments, I hope crisis may be averted . . . It would be very awkward if complications arose with a country in which I am now residing and receiving marked courtesy and attention.\footnote{Queen Victoria to Lord Rosebery, March 29, 1895. \textit{Letters of Queen Victoria}, third series, II (Longmans, Green and Company, 1931), p. 493.}
\end{quote}

The French received the Grey Declaration with some surprise. Following the dispute over the Anglo-Congo Treaty in the spring of 1894, negotiations with France over African affairs had been carried on through the summer and into the following winter. According to one authority the British had delimited an Egyptian sphere of influence extending as far south as
Khartoum and a separate British sphere farther upriver extending northward from Uganda to Fashoda. Thus a large area along the Nile River would be open between these two points. The earlier dispute had actually involved the portion of the Sudan upriver from Fashoda lying between Abyssinia and the Congo and just north of British Uganda. The delimitation of the two spheres just indicated would seem to show that British negotiators were assuming that the specifically British (i.e. non-Egyptian) sphere had derived from an extension of their claims northward from British Uganda. The significance lies in the gap between Fashoda and Khartoum. Rosebery, however, was not thinking in the same terms as his negotiators. Already in June he had declared "that the Nile is Egypt and Egypt is the Nile."86 His previous initiative in the Congo dispute clearly reveals an intention to build a north-south bridge connecting British claimed areas. Thus his response to the delimitation of spheres embodied in the unsigned draft agreement arranged by his negotiators was to repudiate terms which recognized that fatal gap along the upper Nile—hence Grey's Declaration. The unsolved mystery lies in why he had permitted to proceed so far in recognizing a position with which he was not in agreement.

At this moment in history England had deliberately put herself adrift from her entente with Germany and was looking toward France and Russia for a diplomatic understanding. Yet in this very situation Lord Rosebery adopted an attitude just short of warlike in order to protect British colonial interests from France. This illustrates that in foreign policy under Rosebery's leadership there could be no diplomatic cooperation or

alliance with any power if, in the last analysis, British colonial interests would have to be sacrificed. This was true earlier (in 1894) with Germany, and it proved to be true again in 1895 with France. Therein lies the cause for no entente or alliance being effected while Rosebery was in office. France and Russia were aware of Rosebery’s attitude and thus their attempts toward friendship were no warmer than Britain’s were.

The French ambassador stated that "he could not but regard the declaration made in the House of Commons as a 'prise en possession' on the part of the British government. To this Lord Kimberly replied that he "could not see that the reiteration of a claim already made known to the French government could be regarded as a 'prise en possession.'" Fortunately the French government did not make an issue of the affair and it momentarily passed over. The British, under the succeeding government of Lord Salisbury remained firm in their determination to hold the entire burden and the question was not resolved until the Fashoda crisis in 1898.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION

The administration of the Earl of Rosebery fell on June 22, 1895. "Sick of his colleagues' dissention (particularly W. V. Harcourt), he took advantage of an unimportant defeat in the Commons to resign." 87 The "unimportant defeat" was over the question of the censure of the war minister, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, for incompetency in his department. In 1891 the British army had switched from rifles using black powder to those using cordite. The contention of the Conservatives in 1894 was that the Liberal government, first under Gladstone and then Rosebery, had kept in supply only enough cordite cartridges for 110,000 men, instead of enough for the 390,000 men actually in the British army. 88 For this failure the opposition moved, on June 21, to reduce Campbell-Bannerman's salary by £100. The vote in the Commons was as follows:

For the reduction - 132
against the reduction - 125
The majority for - 789

Not an important defeat by normal standards, this seemingly minor question signaled the exclusion of the Liberal party from politics for a decade. The London Times described the situation:

88 The Times (London), June 22, 1895, p. 11.
89 Ibid., p. 11.
The government at first intended to carry on but her unanimous consent changed its mind and decided to resign when it was decided the war minister had been insulted and if this could not be wiped out, he must resign, and the government resign as well.90

On the 22nd of June Rosebery submitted his resignation to the Queen, where it was accepted immediately.

In the comments following Rosebery's fall from power the reaction was mixed, as it had been at his accension. Some felt Rosebery had muddled his way through his tenure of office. An article in the Fortnightly Review criticized Rosebery by commenting that "the shortcomings which have shown themselves in his short record as premier are due to a lack of experience and self-assertiveness."91 The Nation felt that Lord Rosebery had been "the Melbourne or Palmerston type of minister who did not think anything mattered very much and was not very sure of his conviction."92 A different opinion, however, was expressed by the Review of Reviews:

In view of Lord Rosebery's effort in 1894 to open an All British Route from the Cape to Cairo, it would be difficult to conceive a bolder model of foreign policy. The new epoch in foreign policy is his work and in that decisive idea he rendered a service to his country with which few achievements in office will compare.93 Whatever the opinion of the journalists, Lord Rosebery had managed to lead the nation for a period of fifteen months, and in those fifteen months he held firm control of foreign affairs. Lord Kimberly was the foreign minister, but as one author has written, he was:

90The Times (London) June 24, 1895, p. 6.
competent but of no great force of character (and) was bound to be little more than an instrument in his (Rosebery's) hands. In fact the control of foreign affairs remained in the Prime Minister's hands. 94

Rosebery controlled foreign affairs indeed, often times without the consent of the Cabinet. For this he received much criticism, from both his contemporaries and future historians alike.

To evaluate this control of foreign affairs is not an easy task. Rosebery faced no crisis of great import such as Fashoda, but during his tenure of office England did face serious questions. Probably the most serious crisis of that period was when Sir Edward Grey, under Rosebery's instructions, issued his famous Declaration to France that penetration of the Nile valley would constitute an "unfriendly act" toward Britain. Here it is quite possible that war could have ensued, as it nearly did for the same reason at Fashoda three years later. This only crisis of any importance under Rosebery was due of course to his firm conviction that the Sudan was a British sphere of influence. He was not the first or last minister, however, to hold such a conviction.

In other affairs Rosebery's decision not to intervene at the signing of the Treaty of Shimenonseki turned out to be a wise one, for by that intervention every European power except England incurred the enmity of Japan.

Concerning other questions, Lord Rosebery did what he must have felt in his own mind to have been best. He was responsible to a large degree for England's isolation of 1894-1904. He broke the entente with Germany and failed, because of his only lukewarm attempts, to attain one with France and Russia. He acted as he did in these cases because he felt he

was protecting the life-blood of his country--British Imperialism. His blundering in the Anglo-Congo Treaty is almost inexcusable, but there probably was no permanent or important, at the time, damage done. However, one authority has pointed out that after "the collapse of the Anglo-Congolese Treaty a hopeless muddle seemed to overtake the foreign office." 95

Perhaps Lord Rosebery was an opportunist, taking action to meet only a present situation, with little regard to future consequences. With his vision somewhat blurred by his burning imperialism this seems more likely than not, to have been the case. Perhaps too things would have been different had he possessed a larger majority (the most he ever had was forty) and a united Cabinet. With those assets in his favor, he might have been able to have wielded a more stable and lasting policy.

The Review of Reviews summed up Rosebery's situation:

He was not the head of his government. He was the figure head of their government. He was not a minister who had established an ascendency in politics before rising to the highest office, who had chosen his colleagues and given the organic impress to his own Cabinet in its formation. He was less a Premier supported by a Cabinet than a Premier in the custody of a Cabinet. There was open and arrogant sedition; there was desertion, opposition, lack of sympathy, hopeless incompatibility of temper. 96

Lord Rosebery's Premiership has been accused of being sterile of accomplishment. Whether one accepts this view depends on how much importance is attached to the events that arose under his leadership. Had he been Prime Minister at a different time, in a different day, he might have had the fame of Palmerston or Disraeli. But that is in the realm of speculation and we will never know, for history is as it is, and we must judge those who contribute to its never ending stream accordingly.


Lord Rosebery himself was not sorry to leave the seat of power. As he wrote some years later:

There are two supreme pleasures in life. One is ideal, the other is real. The ideal is when a man receives the seals of office from his Sovereign. The real is when he hands them back. 97

And this, perhaps, is the best commentary of all on the Premiership of the Earl of Rosebery.

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The Anglo - Congo Treaty

May 12, 1894
Agreement signed at Brussels, May 12, 1894.

The Undersigned, the Honourable Sir Francis Richard Plunkett, a Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George, Her Britannic Majesty's Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the King of the Belgians, on behalf of the British Government, and M. van Eervelde, Officer of the Order of Leopold, Grand Cross of the Orders of St. Gregory the Great, of Christ of Portugal, and of the African Redemption, &c., Secretary of State of the Interior of the Independent State of the Congo, on behalf of the Government of the Independent State of the Congo, duly authorized by their respective Governments, have agreed as follows:

His Majesty the King of the Belgians, Sovereign of the Independent State of the Congo, having recognized the British sphere of influence, as laid down in the Anglo-German Agreement of the 1st July, 1890, Great Britain undertakes to give to His Majesty a lease of territories in the western basin of the Nile, under the conditions specified in the following Articles:

ARTICLE I.

(a.) It is agreed that the sphere of influence of the Independent Congo State shall be limited to the north of the German sphere in East Africa by a frontier following the 30th
meridian east of Greenwich up to its intersection by the
watershed between the Nile and the Congo, and thence fol-
lowing this watershed in a northerly and north-westerly
direction.

(b.) The frontier between the Independent Congo State
and the British sphere to the north of the Zambesi shall
follow a line running direct from the extremity of Cape
Akalunga on Lake Tanganiika, situated at the northernmost
point of Cameron Bay at about 8° 15' south latitude, to
the right bank of the River Luapula, where this river issues
from Lake Moero. The line shall then be drawn directly to
the entrance of the river into the lake, being, however, de-
flected towards the south of the lake so as to give the Island
of Kilwa to Great Britain. It shall then follow the "thalweg"
of the Luapula up to its issue from Lake Bangweolo. Thence it
shall run southwards along the meridian of longitude of the
point where the river leaves the lake to the watershed between
the Congo and Zambesi, which shall follow until it reaches the
Portuguese frontier.

ARTICLE II.

Great Britain grants a lease to His Majesty King Leopold
II, Sovereign of the Independent Congo State, of the territories
hereinafter defined, to be by him occupied and administered on
the conditions and for the period of time hereafter laid down.

The territories shall be bound by a line starting from a
point situated on the west shore of Lake Albert, immediately
to the south of Mahagi, to the nearest point of the frontier
defined in paragraph (a) of the preceding Article. Thence it shall follow the watershed between the Congo and the Nile up to the 25th meridian east of Greenwich, and that meridian up to its intersection by the 10th parallel north, whence it shall run along that parallel directly to a point to be determined to the north of Kanchoda. Thence it shall follow the "thalweg" of the Nile southward to Lake Albert, and the western shore of Lake Albert to the point above indicated south of Mahagi.

This lease shall remain in force during the reign of His Majesty Leopold II, Sovereign of the Independent Congo State.

Nevertheless, at the expiration of His Majesty's reign, it shall remain fully in force as far as concerns all the portion of the territories above mentioned situated to the west of the 30th meridian east of Greenwich, as well as a strip of 25 kilometers in breadth, to be delimited by common consent, stretching from the watershed between the Nile and the Congo up to the western shore of Lake Albert, and including the port of Mahagi.

This extended lease shall be continued so long as the Congo territories as an Independent State or as a Belgian Colony remain under the sovereignty of His Majesty's successors.

Throughout the continuance of a lease there shall be a special flag in the leased territories.

ARTICLE III.

The Independent Congo State grants under lease to Great Britain, to be administered when occupied, under the conditions
and for the period hereafter determined, a strip of territory 25 kilom. in breadth, extending from the most northerly port on Lake Tanganyika, which is included in it, to the most southerly point of Lake Albert Edward.

This lease will have similar duration to that which applies to the territories to the west of the 30th meridian east of Greenwich.

ARTICLE IV.

His Majesty King Leopold II, Sovereign of the Independent Congo State recognizes that He neither has nor seeks to acquire any political rights in the territories ceded to him under lease in the Nile Basin other than those which are in conformity with the present Agreement.

Similarly, Great Britain recognizes that she neither has, nor seeks to acquire, any political rights in the strip of territory granted to her on lease between Lake Tanganyika and Lake Albert Edward other than those which are in conformity with the present Agreement.

ARTICLE V.

The Independent Congo State authorizes the construction through its territories by Great Britain, or by any Company duly authorized by the British Government, of a line of telegraph connecting the British territories in South Africa with the British sphere of influence on the Nile. The Government of the Congo State shall have facilities for connecting this line with its own telegraphic system.
The authorization shall not confer on Great Britain or any Company, person or persons, delegated to construct the telegraph line any rights of police or administration within the territory of the Congo State.

ARTICLE VI.

In the territories under lease in this Agreement the subjects of each of the Contracting Parties shall reciprocally enjoy equal rights and immunities, and shall not be subjected to any differential treatment of any kind.

In witness whereof the Undersigned have signed the present Agreement and have affixed thereto the seal of their arms.

Done in duplicate at Brussels, this 12th day of May, 1894.

(L.S.) FRANCIS RICHARD PLUNKETT.

(L.S.) EDM. van EETVELDE.
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