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**THE MANICHAEAN TRAP**  
**American Perceptions**  
**of the German Empire,**  
**1871–1945**

*Detlef Junker*

with an Introduction by  
*Klaus Hildebrand*

and a Comment by  
*Paul W. Schroeder*



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**Introduction**

*Klaus Hildebrand*

**The Manichaeian Trap:  
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German Empire, 1871–1945**

*Detlef Junker*

**The Missing Dimension  
in the Manichaeian Outlook:  
A Comment**

*Paul W. Schroeder*



## Preface

THE GERMAN HISTORICAL INSTITUTE is pleased to present as the latest in its series of *Occasional Papers* the inaugural address of its new Director, Professor Detlef Junker of the University of Heidelberg. A professor of modern history specializing in twentieth-century German and American history and international relations, Professor Junker assumed his position in Washington on October 1, 1994. On the occasion of his formal inauguration on November 22, in addition to Professor Junker's lecture, remarks and greetings were delivered by Volker Knoerich of the Federal Ministry for Research and Technology, the chairman of the Foundation German Historical Institutes Abroad; Thomas Matussek, Minister, German Embassy in the United States; Professor Vernon Lidtke of the Johns Hopkins University, Chairman of the Friends of the German Historical Institute; Professor Hartmut Keil of the University of Leipzig, former Acting Director of the Institute; and Professor Klaus Hildebrand of the University of Bonn, Chairman of the Institute's Academic Advisory Council.

We are grateful to Professor Paul W. Schroeder of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, a member of our Academic Advisory Council, for agreeing to comment on Professor Junker's address for this publication; and to Professor Hildebrand for providing a brief introduction to both essays.





## Introduction

IN THEIR THOUGHTFUL OBSERVATIONS on the relationship between Germany and the United States in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Detlef Junker and Paul W. Schroeder find much to agree upon as they describe and analyze the path of German-American relations from the period of Reconstruction and the unification of the German Empire to the rise of the imperial republic as the leading world power and the decline of the German Empire. There are, however, two differences that may be considered noteworthy:

To begin with, Detlef Junker, with a certain logical consistency, concentrates in his essay on America's perception of what was essentially the Bismarckian Germany in the decades between 1871 and 1945. Thus, he bases his discussion on the *kleindeutsch* solution of the "German question," a solution that excluded Austria from any designs for a united Germany and that became a historical reality with the founding of the Empire on January 18, 1871. By contrast, it is this very framework that Paul W. Schroeder suggests to transcend, and his arguments are well worth considering. By referring to the "fraternal war" between Prussia and Austria in 1866 as an example, he points out that, in its relations to Germany, the United States was often inclined to disregard, or even ignore entirely, the fact that, beyond the *kleindeutsch* Bismarckian state, it was necessary to pay attention to the existence of the "German question" in various other manifestations, not the least of which was the Central and East Central European context. Anybody who deals closely with the history of the international order will not fail to notice immediately that, in certain ways, the same disregard for conditions in Central and East Central Europe was also characteristic of the policy of Great Britain, the dominant sea power and guardian of the European balance of power. As the arbiter and hegemon of global politics, Britain seems to have been the predecessor of the United States in many, if by no means in all, respects.

Secondly, in putting forth his thesis of the Manichaean trap, Detlef Junker has made the thought-provoking attempt to portray American politics and history as something specific, something extraordinary, something unique in the history of the world. By compari-

son, Paul W. Schroeder argues in his reply that a blending of elements of power politics with moral aspects is not exactly unknown in history. Indeed, reading Detlef Junker's article serves as a reminder of the history of the British Empire: Britain regularly resorted to a "black legend" in morally ostracizing those peoples—whether the Spanish, the French, or the Germans—who set about to strive for hegemony on the continent.

However, it is indicative of the reflective method of both historians that they do not view the moralization of the political sphere primarily as the result of purposeful, deliberate, even diabolically designed plans of individuals with Machiavellian inclinations. Rather, they regard this phenomenon as something evolving, a given condition, an almost natural state of affairs. One of them sees it as specific to American history, the other perceives it as part of the political sphere in general. In this way, both historians call attention, although from different points of view, to a seemingly timeless problem of the international system that is as crucial for the past as it is for the present and the future: the enigmatic relationship between power and morality. Both of these historical forces contradict each other—a fact that is often painfully evident; yet, they undoubtedly depend on each other just as much. For, it is well known that power without morality cannot endure, while morality without power cannot be effective. And, finally, the contributions of Detlef Junker and Paul W. Schroeder are apt to show the importance for all historical developments of a phenomenon which the great French scholar Raymond Aron has characterized—without diminishing the effective influence of other factors on the history of states and peoples, of societies and individuals—as the significance, even the "primacy of the international system."<sup>1</sup>

*March 1995*  
*Bonn*

*Klaus Hildebrand*

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<sup>1</sup> Raymond Aron, *Die Letzten Jahre des Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart, 1986), 29.

**The Manichaeian Trap:  
American Perceptions of the German Empire,  
1871–1945**

Detlef Junker

When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, several momentous things happened simultaneously. The Soviet tanks remained in their depots, the famous American strategy of containing both the Soviet Union and Germany—a policy of double containment most succinctly expressed as keeping the Soviets out, the Americans in, the Germans down, and the Europeans happy—began to crumble, and the question of German unity once again topped the agenda of world history. At that juncture, the government of the United States reacted precisely as one might have expected given the path of German-American relations during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The American reaction is a striking example of historical continuity—it could have been virtually predicted.

Americans welcomed the prospect of German unity, liberty, and self-determination in 1989, just as they had welcomed it in 1848 and 1871. America's joy about the fall of the Wall was genuine and spontaneous. The United States supported a possible German reunification sooner and more decisively than any of the other victorious powers of the Second World War. The documents published so far, as well as the diaries of Chancellor Kohl's advisor Horst Teltschik, show clearly and emphatically the decisive role played by the United States from December 1989 onward, at a time when President François Mitterand and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher tried to derail the train and President Mikhail Gorbachev was still unwilling to accept NATO membership for a united Germany.

Chancellor Kohl traveled to the United States during February, May, and June of 1990. When he received an honorary Ph.D. degree at Harvard University, people called out to him: "Mr. Chancellor, we are all Germans!"<sup>1</sup>—meaning: we are all delighted that

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<sup>1</sup> Horst Teltschik, *329 Tage. Innenansichten der Einigung* (n.p. 1991), 264. For the perspective of the Foreign Ministry, see Richard Kiessler and Frank

freedom has proved victorious. In the beginning of February 1990, close German-American consultations between Secretary of State James Baker and Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher and their advisors led to the idea of a "Two-plus-Four Conference," after Kohl had categorically rejected the Soviet suggestion in January that the victorious powers of World War II convene a four-power conference on Germany. "We do not need four midwives,"<sup>2</sup> Kohl had insisted. The United States actively supported the process of unification at every one of the many international meetings that year, be it at Ottawa, Malta, Houston, Dublin, Paris, or London. Secretary of State Baker was therefore quite accurate when he stated at a press conference in Paris on July 17, 1990, one day after the famous meeting between Gorbachev and Kohl: "The terms of the agreement that were reached between Chancellor Kohl and President Gorbachev are terms that the United States has supported since at least as early as last December, when we called for a unified Germany as a member of the NATO alliance."<sup>3</sup>

The other complementary aspect of U.S. policy toward Germany that could be expected as a result of the history of German-American

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Elbe, *Ein runder Tisch mit scharfen Ecken. Der diplomatische Weg zur deutschen Einheit*, with a preface by Hans-Dietrich Genscher (Baden-Baden, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>3</sup> Adam Daniel Rotfeld and Walter Stützel, eds., *Germany and Europe in Transition* (Oxford, 1991), 179. For the early support by the United States, see Teltschik, *Innenansichten*, 48, 77, 123, 129, 137. This fact is unanimously agreed upon by the growing number of monographs dealing with the international dimension of German unification: Elizabeth Pond, *After the Wall: American Policy toward Germany* (New York, 1990); *id.*, *Beyond the Wall: Germany's Road to Unification* (Washington, D.C., 1993); Stephen F. Szabo, *The Diplomacy of German Unification* (New York, 1992); Konrad H. Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity* (New York and Oxford, 1994), 157–76; Michael Beschloss and Strobe Talbott, *At the Highest Levels: The Inside Story of the End of the Cold War* (Boston, 1992); Renate Fritsch-Bournazel, *Europe and German Unification* (Providence, R.I., and Oxford, 1992); A. James McAdams, *Germany Divided: From the Wall to Reunification* (Princeton, N.J., 1993); Frank A. Ninkovich, *Germany and the United States: The Transformation of the German Question since 1945*, updated ed. (New York, 1994), 153–79; Philip Zelikow and Condolezza Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft* (Cambridge, Mass., forthcoming).

relations was a continuation of the policy of containment under different conditions. Unified Germany was to remain a part of NATO and of a general European and Atlantic design; its neutralization or isolation was to be avoided at all costs. The rest of Europe had to be reassured in the face of newly rekindled fears about Germany, and America's influence in Europe had to be confirmed.

In the end, the Americans were satisfied. The Two-plus-Four Treaty resulted in the kind of Germany that the United States had, in a way, desired ever since 1848: it had found its political borders within its geographic limits. For the first time in their history, the Germans were enjoying (in the words of their national anthem) "unity and justice and liberty"; prosperity in the East, Americans and many others hoped in 1990, would follow in due course. The unified Germany, as it turned out, does not pose a military threat to its neighbors: Within the terms of the Treaty, it is incapable, on its own, of either attacking others or defending itself. The world was confident in 1990 that it would remain an integral part of the West through its ties with NATO, the European Union, and numerous other organizations, and that Germany's industries would continue to depend on an open world market. The United States would remain Germany's most important ally, despite the permanent German diplomatic balancing act between France and the U.S. As a country dedicated to the rule of law, Germany guarantees democratic basic rights, maintains a federalist structure, and is devoted to the principles of a social market economy.

These expectations of 1990—of a reunited Germany as a Western-style democracy, of a small European replica of the United States—are reminiscent of the hopes raised in 1871 and the initial American reactions to the newly founded German national state. Only three weeks after the proclamation of the second German Empire at Versailles, President Ulysses S. Grant stated in an address to Congress on February 7, 1871, that the unification of Germany under a form of government that, in many respects, mirrored the American system was received with great sympathy by the American people. "The adoption in Europe," he declared, "of the American system of union under the control and the direction of a free people,

educated to self-restraint, can not fail to extend popular institutions and to enlarge the peaceful influence of American ideas.<sup>4</sup>

This and other statements by the president of the United States, which were probably representative of the opinion of a majority of the American people,<sup>5</sup> reflected America's hopes for the best of all possible Germanies—a far-away Old World country, freedom-loving, peaceful, Protestant, and with a federal structure; a country of considerable size and weight, but one without territorial ambitions in Europe, let alone any other part of the world; a country whose internal structures were shaped primarily by its sages and artists, its musicians and poets, by farmers, tradespeople, technicians, engineers, merchants, and entrepreneurs and not by its soldiers, priests, or landed aristocrats; a country without any serious conflict of interests with the United States, called upon, as a freedom-loving European state, to emulate the historical mission of the United States by promoting the progress of liberty throughout history. The United States chose to interpret German unity from this providential perspective, as it had done with other national and democratic movements in Europe during the nineteenth century, be it in Greece, Hungary, Italy, or a republican France.

This observation leads directly to my first thesis: From 1871 to 1945, the United States judged the German Empire by the extent to which Germany did or did not approximate this hopeful ideal. The varying images that the Americans formed of Germany—their opinions, their prejudices, their clichés and stereotypes, the images

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<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Manfred Jonas, *The United States and Germany: A Diplomatic History* (Ithaca, N.Y., and London, 1984), 15. The American minister and historian, George Bancroft, had recommended that the president make the statement; see Peter Krüger, "Die Beurteilung der Reichsgründung und Reichsverfassung von 1871 in den USA," in Norbert Finzsch et al., eds., *Liberalitas: Festschrift für Erich Angermann zum 65. Geburtstag* (Stuttgart, 1992), 263–83.

<sup>5</sup> For the American reaction to the founding of the Empire, see, in addition to Krüger, Jonas, *United States and Germany*, 15–34; Otto Graf zu Stolberg-Wernigerode, *Deutschland und die Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika im Zeitalter Bismarcks* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1933), 98–146; John Gerow Gazley, *American Opinion of German Unification* (New York, 1926); Christine Totten, *Deutschland—Soll und Haben. Amerikas Deutschlandbild* (Munich, 1964), 76–82; Hans L. Trefousse, "Die deutschamerikanischen Einwanderer und das neugegründete Reich," in Frank Trommler, ed., *Amerika und die Deutschen. Bestandsaufnahme einer 300jährigen Geschichte* (Opladen, 1986), 177–91.

expressing enmity or hate—generally followed the overall political developments, i.e. the changing political fortunes and America's political judgments concerning the German Empire.

Depending on the political situation, Americans would pick certain stereotypes out of a set of typical images of Prussia or Germany that they had developed early on. These images would then dominate the public debate, while others would remain in the background. Thus, there existed, and still does exist, (1) a Germany that is romantic and "gemütlich," characterized by enchanted landscapes, castles, and palaces (coming from Heidelberg, I am only too familiar with this view, of course); (2) a Germany that is the home of philosophers, poets, and artists, one that is industrious, efficient, reliable, productive, and technologically first-rate; and (3) a Germany that is arrogant, cynical, presumptuous, subservient, unable to handle freedom; it is aggressive, militaristic, notoriously war-mongering, anti-Semitic, and racist, striving for world power, indeed world domination. In the second thesis of my address, I argue that, at the end of both world wars, the opinion of Germany was so negative that there was no alternative to dissolving the Empire in 1918 and the Third Reich in 1945.

The third observation is based on the recognition that even the most negative American judgment during those two wars never resulted in any serious doubts on the part of either the American government or the American public about the legitimate existence of a united Germany, based on the principle of self-determination, in the center of Europe—if we leave aside, that is, the brief and inconsequential interlude of the plans concerning the division of Germany or the Morgenthau Plan during the Second World War. In order to question Germany's existence and right to self-determination, Americans would have had to renounce their own best traditions.

My fourth thesis maintains that any judgment concerning the present and future status of the German Empire also involved, at the same time, a decision about the present and future status of Europe, since American policies toward Germany always remained a crucial part of its policies toward Europe as a whole. Any judgment concerning Germany was the result of relating it to judgments about other European powers, especially England, France, and Russia or the Soviet Union. Indeed, one might be tempted to ask whether a

purely bilateral relationship, a distinct German policy, ever really existed in the United States.

In any event, during the first decade after the establishment of the German Empire in 1871, the political relationship between Bismarck's *Reich* and the United States remained excellent, if only of secondary importance to both. This remained true even though, of course, the newly founded German Empire, in its actual existence, differed considerably from the American image of the best of all possible Germanies; even though the young French Republic elicited a lot of sympathy after the fall of Napoleon III and the loss of Alsace-Lorraine and the massive French reparations led to harsh criticism among some segments of the American public. North America remained the center of interest for the United States, while the German Reich focused on Europe. Hence, there were no significant areas of conflict.

Almost all of America's energies were absorbed by the reconstruction of the South, by industrialization and the settlement of the continent. Whatever foreign policy there was, it was essentially concerned with the Western hemisphere: with Canada, the acquisition of Alaska, and the attempt to expand the U.S. position in the Caribbean. The initial stirrings of an East Asia policy were as yet quite confused and without any clearly defined goals. As far as Europe was concerned, George Washington's advice not to get entangled in the quarrels and alliances of the Old World remained unchallenged.

As is well known, Bismarck's policies after 1870/71, on the other hand, remained focused on Europe; the United States remained a *cura posterior*, of secondary concern. Still, for Bismarck it was in Germany's self-interest, as he understood it, to retain America's good will, and he continued to treat the United States with remarkable acuity and circumspection. In particular, he was careful to respect the Monroe Doctrine and U.S. sensibilities in the Western hemisphere, whenever he was called upon to protect the interests of German citizens in such places as Venezuela, Peru, Brazil, Nicaragua, or Hawaii. On December 18, 1871, he instructed the German ambassador, von Schlözer, to inform the American Secretary of State as follows: "We have no interest whatsoever in gaining a foothold anywhere in the Americas, and we acknowledge unequivocally that, with regard to the entire continent, the predominant influence of the United States is founded in the nature of things and corresponds



most closely with our own interests."<sup>6</sup> Such an acknowledgment could not be obtained at the time from any of the old European colonial powers, which the United States proceeded to displace in the Western hemisphere one by one: neither Great Britain nor France nor Spain would have granted as much. It was thus no accident that the United States turned to Emperor William I for the settlement of a border dispute between British Columbia and the Washington territory on the northwestern coast of the United States. William complied by declaring the American claims legitimate. Obviously, the Americans had no reason to complain about the German Empire.

In addition, I would like to at least mention some domestic factors that helped create a generally benign image of a German Empire that was respected, indeed even admired, in the United States, even though critical voices in some parts of American society were not absent during those first decades. Among those reasons, one can name the German immigrants, whose sense of their own significance had been measurably increased by the German victory during the Franco-Prussian War, or the German university system, re-organized by Wilhelm von Humboldt, which served as a model for the reform of American higher education during those first decades after the founding of the Empire. Neither the *Kulturkampf* nor the anti-Socialist laws tarnished the high estimation enjoyed by Bismarck and the German Reich in the eyes of most Americans. During the celebrations of the first centennial of the Declaration of Independence in 1876, Bismarck and Emperor William I exchanged friendly messages with President Grant, in which Bismarck, with some justification, could allude to the one hundred years of friendship that had existed between the two countries, going back to the days of Frederick the Great.<sup>7</sup>

This kind of continuity, however, began to dissolve in a long and gradual process. Beginning with the early 1880s, and increasingly after Bismarck's fall, a profound change, the so-called "great transformation," took place in German-American relations. By 1914, it had led to such a transformation of America's image of Germany

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<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Stolberg-Wernigerode, *Deutschland und die Vereinigten Staaten*, 321.

<sup>7</sup> Jonas, *United States and Germany*, 33.

that, in marked contrast to 1870, the majority of the anglo- and francophile elites in the United States sympathized with the Western Allies at the outbreak of the Great European War. This change in the image of Germany was in part responsible for the policy of *partial* neutrality pursued by the United States between 1914 and 1916 and for justifying its entry into the war against Germany in April 1917.<sup>8</sup> The Wilhelminian Empire had become an integral part of America's image of the enemy—although, until 1916, all conflicts between the two countries had been settled peacefully, be it in Europe, East Asia, or Latin America, in the Atlantic or the Pacific Ocean, and the diplomatic relationship could best be characterized as a combination of limited conflict and cooperation. Now the German Empire occupied the position previously held by the Indians, by France, England, Mexico, and Spain.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> For the change of the image, see Clara Eve Schieber, *The Transformation of American Sentiment toward Germany, 1870–1914* (New York and Boston, 1923); Melvin Small, *The American Image of Germany, 1906–1914* (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Michigan, 1965); Jörg Nagler, "From Culture to *Kultur*: Changing American Perceptions of Imperial Germany, 1870–1914," in David Barclay and Elizabeth Glaser-Schmidt, eds., *Mutual Images and Multiple Implications: American Views of Germany and German Views of America from the 18th to the 20th Centuries* (New York, forthcoming). For the American perception of Germany, see Konrad H. Jarausch, "Das amerikanische Deutschlandbild in drei Jahrhunderten," in Klaus Weigert, ed., *Das Deutschland- und Amerikabild. Beiträge zum gegenseitigen Verständnis beider Völker* (St. Augustin, 1986), 10–20; id., "Huns, Krauts or Good Germans? The German Image in America, 1800–1980," in James F. Harris, ed., *German-American Interrelations: Heritage and Challenge* (Tübingen, 1983), 145–159.

<sup>9</sup> For German-American relations to 1917, see esp. Jonas, *United States and Germany*, 35–124; Hans W. Gatzke, *Germany and the United States: A Special Relationship?* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980), 27–51; Alfred Vagts, *Deutschland und die Vereinigten Staaten in der Weltpolitik* (New York, 1935); Reiner Pommerin, *Der Kaiser und Amerika* (Cologne and Vienna, 1986); Ragnhild Fiebig-von Hase, *Lateinamerika als Konfliktherd der deutsch-amerikanischen Beziehungen, 1890–1903* (Göttingen, 1986); id., "The United States and Germany in the World Arena, 1900–1917," in Hans-Jürgen Schröder, ed., *Confrontation and Cooperation: Germany and the United States in the Era of World War I, 1900–1924* (Oxford, 1993), 33–68; Raimund Lammersdorf, *Anfänge einer Weltmacht. Theodore Roosevelt und die transatlantischen Beziehungen der USA 1901–1909* (Berlin, 1994); Reinhard R. Doerries, *Imperial Challenge: Ambassador Count Bernstorff and German-American Relations* (Chapel Hill, N.C., and

This qualitative change had to do with the changing position of both states in relation to each other and within the economic and political framework in the age of imperialism. Both states moved beyond the confines of regional interests, became, or at least sought to become, world powers that participated in the contest of all major powers for what they perceived as the final division of the globe and thus found themselves confronting each other as rivals in the Pacific, in East Asia, and in Latin America. They also became enmeshed in trade controversies, such as the pork war of the mid-1880s. This development has been exhaustively researched on both sides of the Atlantic and need not detain us here. Let us just hypothesize then that the changing image of the German Empire was not merely grounded in the real conflicts of the two states, but that it also derived from the fact that these two *nouveaux riches*, these upstarts of world politics, showed a lot of similarities and parallels in the substantive aspects of their foreign policies.

The tremendous economic growth of both states had increasingly turned Germany and the United States into both partners and competitors in trade. In both countries, political parties and powerful interest groups exerted successful pressure upon their own governments to adopt protectionist measures. While the United States continued to soak up an unlimited supply of people and capital from Europe, the development of its economy since 1861 took place behind a growing wall of protectionist tariffs, which impaired above all the importation of industrial products. The protectionist tariff policy pursued by the German Empire, on the other hand, was primarily intended to protect its agrarian interests. Thus, the basic pattern was set for the mutual accusations exchanged during the protracted conflicts over tariffs: the United States kept complaining that the Germans protected their agrarian markets, while the German Empire was unhappy that the Americans kept shielding their industrial markets.

Both states, as has been noted, became imperialist states. By 1914, the United States had created its own informal and formal

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London, 1989); id., "Kaiserreich und Republik. Deutsch-Amerikanische Beziehungen vor 1917," in Trommler, *Amerika und die Deutschen*, 353–66; Holger H. Herwig, *The United States and German Naval Planning 1889–1941* (Boston and Toronto, 1976).

empire in the Pacific and the Caribbean. It had also strengthened its position in East Asia where, in spite of its own protectionism, it attempted to enforce the open-door policy, sometimes with the support of the German Empire.

Both states also fairly burst with a sense of self-importance. In both countries, aggressive nationalism linked up with ideologies specific to the times, such as navalism, racism, and theories of world power. Thus, all the expansionists and naval strategists in the United States would have essentially agreed with Emperor William's grandiloquent statement that posited "world policy as the task, world power as the goal, and a great navy as the instrument" of all policies. It is no accident that Alfred Thayer Mahan's bestseller of 1890, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*, became required reading in all the navies of the world.

In both countries, the navy existed also as a pressure group, supported by vociferous naval lobbies. In specific German-American confrontations, such as over Samoa, the Philippines, or Venezuela, the American "yellow press" was easily up to the level (or is it *down* to?) of its English or German counterparts. Published opinion in both countries nursed a special kind of self-righteous nationalism and intensified images of the enemy. Thus, the stereotype of the German peril developed in the United States, while the stereotype of the American peril gained prominence in Germany.

Both countries also had a problem in common, one that they shared as world powers on the rise: the old, long-established world power, Great Britain. It became a crucial aspect of America's changing image of Germany that England won out in the race for America's favor, because England's dowry turned out to be considerably more opulent than that of the stingy German suitor. The most valuable part of Britain's wedding present turned out to be her strategic withdrawal from the Caribbean and her express acceptance of the Monroe Doctrine, while the German Empire of William II chose to abandon the conciliatory approach of Bismarck on this as on many other issues.

This great transformation during the age of imperialism meant that, by 1914, the German Empire had lost its position as "Little America" in Europe. Simultaneously, American admiration for German culture had subsided substantially, while the cultural influences of France and England had grown in the United States during the 1890's. Clumsy attempts on the part of William II and the German

Empire to counter this worrisome trend by increased cultural exchanges and inappropriate gifts did not materially alter the situation. After all, a statue of Frederick the Great could hardly compete with that brilliant French gift, the Statue of Liberty.<sup>10</sup>

The criticism of an autocratic, militaristic, rude, presumptuous Germany, a Germany that may turn out a menace to civilization, had become more pronounced in the United States, since "Kaiser Bill" represented Wilhelmine Germany in the eyes of many Americans. His obsession with uniforms, his predilection for anything military, and his war-like speeches reinforced the impression that Germany was a militaristic state. His infamous speech about the "Huns," in particular, delivered while sending off German troops to help put down the Boxer Rebellion in China, left a disastrous impression in America. During the First World War, this speech was endlessly exploited by British and American war propaganda to influence the world by equating Germans and "Huns."

This transformation is crucial for the explanation of the most important aspect affecting the development of America's image of Germany in the course of World War I—that is, how the German Empire came to be caught in the Manichaeian trap, as I would like to call it, of America's historic mission. Let me develop this term and this assertion a little more fully.

Individuals or nations in the process of defining their own identities seem to have a hard time tolerating the idea of being merely the equals of others. They attempt to arrogate to themselves some special significance that is supposed to render them different from and superior to other individuals or nations, indeed make them unique. In the process, they frequently invoke notions of exalted generality, such as God, History, Providence, Progress, or the Salvation of Mankind—all with capital letters, of course). Like so many other nations before them or since, Americans, too, have claimed to be a chosen people. The idea of America's special mission has been a part of American political culture that has gone without saying since the founding of the nation. The founding fathers of the union were deeply shaped by the spirit of the Enlightenment. They integrated Christian and Puritanical missionary ideas of New England's

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<sup>10</sup> Nagler, "From Culture to *Kultur*," 15; Garzke, *Germany and the United States*, 45.

settlers such as "the chosen people," "the Covenant people," "God's new Israel," and "God's last American Israel" into the idea of a secular mission for America. It was this fusion of Christianity and Enlightenment that brought forth the civil religion so specific to America, that unmistakable admixture of Christian Republicanism and Democratic faith that created a nation with the soul of a church. The American nation does not have any ideologies, she *herself* is one.

The goals of America's mission have, of course, oscillated over time; they have combined with the dominant aspects of the *Zeitgeist* of different ages—such as, for example, racism in the age of imperialism—only to uncouple themselves again from such tendencies. They have transformed themselves, moving from the Puritanical mission of completing the work of the Reformation to the political mission of bringing freedom and democracy to the world—or, in the words used by President Woodrow Wilson in his declaration of war against Germany in 1917: "to make the world safe for democracy." Thus, the missionary goals of the United States have changed from the *passive* notion of turning America into a new Jerusalem whose example would be a beacon for the world to the *active* missionary duty to elevate backward, less civilized nations to the American level, to create a new world order, save the world, and bring about the millennium.

Every sense of mission grounded in a teleological view of history requires for its realization some concrete negation, its counter-principle, an evil empire that has to be overcome in war in order to enable progress and fulfill the mission. This missionary zeal tends to cultivate a radical dualism, it has to divide the world and its governing principles into good and evil. This dualistic system of beliefs is known as Manichaeism, named after Mani, the Persian philosopher of late antiquity. A nation with the soul of a church can thus justify entering an actual war only on ideological grounds. It cannot fall back on material interests, reasons of state, or—*horribile dictu*—a violation of the balance of power. By the way, it took Henry Kissinger almost a lifetime to come to terms with this problem. At best, it can refer to a violation of rights, because in this kind of reasoning, legality and morality are interchangeable. Thus, whoever gets involved in any conflict or war with the United States automatically finds himself caught in the Manichaean trap of America's sense of a special mission.

The first enemy caught in this trap were the Indians. It was with them that the battle for territory and for room to live was waged most ferociously, particularly after the greatest catastrophe of New England in 1675/76. Under the leadership of chief Metacon, the Indians managed to almost destroy the New England settlers in a war that, in relation to the total number of inhabitants, was the bloodiest conflict in American history. Since those days, the Indians were perceived as savages who could not be civilized, indeed as devils; the wilderness was equated with hell. The Indians had lost any right to stand in the way of the conquest of the West—a conquest that was pushed ahead during the nineteenth century by the massive employment of troops and capital. The Manichaeian pattern of the ideology and mythology of the Indian Wars has determined the foreign policy behavior of the United States throughout its history, up to and including the administration of President Ronald Reagan.<sup>11</sup> Even after the secularization of America's sense of mission, this dualistic interpretation of the world played a key role in U.S. foreign policy. All the enemies of the United States were caught in the Manichaeian trap: following the Indians were the French and the British—in America's first political best seller, Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, and in Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence, it was King George III who embodied the principle; later it was the Spaniards and the Mexicans, and, in the twentieth century, mainly the Germans, the Japanese, the Russians, the Chinese, the North Koreans, and the Iraqis.

I would argue that it was this transformation of the German Empire into the evil empire that enabled the American people in general and President Wilson in particular to put an end to the deeply ambivalent U.S. policy toward Europe of the years 1914–1916, a policy that could not be maintained indefinitely. Wilson had, after all, won the election of 1916 because he had kept America out of the war. So the battle for the American soul, which was anything but ready for war, had to be won by revolutionizing the "threat perception" of the American people in order to be able to cross the Rubicon—that is, the Atlantic—and declare war on Germany. And, finally, after the entry into the war, the propaganda

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<sup>11</sup> Dieter Schulz, "Rothäute und Soldaten Gottes. Amerikanische Ideologie und Mythologie von der Kolonialzeit bis Ronald Reagan," in Jan Assmann and Dietrich Harth, eds., *Kultur und Konflikt* (Frankfurt/M., 1990), 287–303.

machinery had to be set in motion, producing grotesque scenarios about the threat posed by German machinations in the Western hemisphere to the domestic and external security of the United States. The same pattern was repeated, more or less, between 1939 and 1941, with the exception of the witch hunts against German-Americans, whose ethnic identity had already been destroyed during World War I.<sup>12</sup> Moreover—if I am here permitted to make a value judgment—the situation in the Second World War was, of course, different, in that Germany actually was an evil empire; prior to 1914, on the other hand, a comparison of social and legal aspects, as well as of democratic theory, between Imperial Germany and the United States (*including* the South) would result in a highly complex and differentiated picture.

Wilson's deep ambivalence was based on the fact that he neither liked Europe, nor could he leave the continent alone; that he wanted to isolate the morally superior New World from the rotten Old World while also saving mankind and the international system from the ancient evils.

Thus, he appealed to his fellow Americans on August 19, 1914, to remain neutral not only in deed but also in their thoughts and asserted that the effects of the European war on the United States depended entirely upon how Americans themselves thought and acted, an assertion he repeated as late as December 7, 1915.<sup>13</sup> The deeply partial and anglophile U.S. ambassador in London, Walter Hines Page, had insisted to Wilson as early as August 1914 that the system of Prussian militarism had to be excised like a tumor, while

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<sup>12</sup> See Frederick L. Luebke, *German-Americans and World War I: Bonds of Loyalty* (De Kalb, Ill., 1974).

<sup>13</sup> Declaration of Neutrality, in Henry Steele Commager, *Documents of American History*, vol. 2: *Since 1898*, 10th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1973), 96f. See also Wilson's "Annual Message on the State of the Union" of December 7, 1915, esp. the following statement: "We are at peace with all the nations of the world, and there is reason to hope that no question in controversy between this and other Governments will lead to any serious breach of amicable relations, grave as some differences of attitude and policy have been and may yet turn out to be. I am sorry to say that the gravest threats against our national peace and safety have been uttered within our own borders." Arthur S. Link et al., eds., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, vol. 35 (Princeton, N.J., 1980), 306.



Wilson himself had maintained in November 1914, speaking to his equally pro-British intimate Colonel Edward Mandell House, that Germany did not pose any danger to America and that the U.S. could not attack Germany even if the latter should be victorious in Europe.<sup>14</sup> During the election year of 1916, he repeatedly assured his compatriots that America had nothing to do with the causes and objectives of the war in Europe; no statement concerning Germany's war guilt crossed his lips at that time. As late as November 1916, he regarded both German militarism *and* British navalism as mankind's two greatest scourges.<sup>15</sup>

America's neutrality was, however, no end in itself to Wilson. Until January 1917, he regarded it as the precondition for fulfilling his historic mission, i.e. to bring an American peace to an exhausted Europe that was bleeding to death and to go down in history as God's instrument, as a *servus servorum Dei*. His famous speech to the U.S. Senate, delivered on January 22, 1917, in which he proclaimed the principles of a "peace without victory" and a revolution in international politics, ended with the statements of his civil religion which contain the essence of Wilson's idea of America's mission; Wilson himself and the American people appear as the representatives of all mankind: "These are American principles, American policies. We could stand for no others. And they are also the principles and policies of forward looking men and women everywhere, of every modern nation, of every enlightened community. They are the principles of mankind and must prevail."<sup>16</sup>

Wilson's profound hatred of and contempt for the German Empire arose only when Germany's announcement of its unlimited submarine warfare and the Zimmermann telegram not only posed a threat to the interests and the prestige of the United States, but also imperiled his historic mission. Now an agonizing Wilson faced the alternative of either renouncing his mission or of realizing it by means radically different from those just recently proclaimed—not by "peace without victory" but by "war and victory." As far as the president himself was concerned, all other reasons for America's

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<sup>14</sup> Jan Willem Schulte Nordholt, *Woodrow Wilson: A Life for World Peace* (Berkeley, Calif., Los Angeles, and Oxford, 1991), 142, 180.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>16</sup> Commager, *Documents*, vol. 2., 128.

entry into the war paled into insignificance by comparison to this ideological need for action, including even the possible loss of the balance of power through a German victory or the “golden chains” by which America's industries had tied themselves to the Allied economies.

Wilson broke out of his dilemma by using the idea of America's historic mission to legitimize and elevate to a universal level the impending war against Germany. In his message to Congress of April 2, 1917, which he had written himself, he called Germany's submarine warfare a war against all nations, indeed against mankind itself. The very existence of autocratic governments whose organized power was controlled only by themselves and not by the will of their people posed a danger to peace and freedom in the world. Moreover, Prussian autocracy had threatened the domestic peace of the United States by spies and criminal intrigue; it was thus the natural enemy of freedom. The U.S. had no selfish interests of its own. It fought only for a permanent peace and the liberation of all peoples, including the German people, for whom the United States felt nothing but sympathy and friendship. “The world,” he declared, “must be safe for democracy.”

Wilson ended his declaration of war with the following words: “To such a task we can dedicate our lives and our fortunes, everything that we are and everything that we have, with the pride of those who know the day has come when America is privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness and the peace she has treasured.” And he closed in a Lutheran vein: “God helping her, she can do no other.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 132. Among the abundant literature on Wilson and world politics, see Lloyd E. Ambrosius, *Woodrow Wilson and the American Diplomatic Tradition: The Treaty Fight in Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass., 1987); id., *Wilsonian Statecraft: Theory and Practice of Liberal Internationalism during World War I* (Wilmington, Del., 1991); John Milton Cooper, *The Warrior and the Priest: Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983); Patrick Devlin, *Too Proud to Fight Woodrow Wilson's Neutrality* (Oxford, 1975); Robert H. Ferrell, *Woodrow Wilson and World War I, 1917–1921* (New York, 1985); Lloyd C. Gardner, *Safe for Democracy: The Anglo-American Response to Revolution* (New York, 1984); N. Gordon Levin, *Woodrow Wilson and World Politics: America's Response to War and Revolution* (New York, 1968); Arthur S. Link, *The Higher Realism of Woodrow Wilson and Other Essays* (Nashville, Tenn.,

It was a final and necessary consequence of the Manichaeian trap that Wilson was unable to conclude either an armistice or a peace treaty with the evil empire; all the more so, since wartime propaganda had, in the meantime, turned the "autocratic" Empire and its tumor, Prussian militarism, into an "outlaw." The slogan of "Hang the Kaiser" turned the situation into a kind of "shoot-out at high noon," nationalistic Republicans demanded unconditional surrender, and Wilson's Democrats feared heavy losses in the upcoming congressional elections. For all those reasons, Wilson felt he had to respond to the request for a cessation of hostilities, that the government of Max von Baden presented on October 4, 1918, with a demand for the end of the German Empire in its previously constituted form, for a change of government, and for a democratic legitimation of any party to future negotiations. It is well known that the "revolution from above," that is, the change from a constitutional to a parliamentary monarchy, staged by Undersecretary of State Paul von Hintze and by Hindenburg and Ludendorff, took place *because* the leadership of the German Empire had anticipated Wilson's desire. It is equally well-known that a large part of the German public had drawn the conclusion from the deliberately vague wording of Wilson's statements that the American president was actually demanding also the abdication of the emperor and the transition to a German republic. Thus, the pressure on William II increased from all sides, because everyone expected that sacrificing

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1971); id., *Wilson*, vols. 3, 4, 5 (Princeton, N.J., 1960–1965); id., ed., *Woodrow Wilson and a Revolutionary World, 1913–1921* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1982); Ernest R. May, *Imperial Democracy: The Emergence of America as a Great Power* (New York, 1961); id., *The World War and American Isolation, 1914–1917* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959); Arno J. Mayer, *Political Origins of the New Diplomacy, 1917–1918* (New Haven, Conn., 1959); and Schulte Nordholt, *Woodrow Wilson*.

A new interpretation of Wilson is presented by Frank Ninkovich, who portrays Wilson as the founding father of the principles underlying the domino theory. See also his conclusions on Wilson's missionary diplomacy. "The Wilson vision in its full amplitude oscillated between the promise of secular redemption through collective security and the peril of damnation in another world conflagration." "Wilson, as founder of a secular religion, may have been a false prophet, but in his capacity as definer of evil, Americans remained his spiritual children." *Modernity and Power. A History of the Domino Theory in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago, 1994), 67–8.

the emperor would mean better conditions for an armistice and a peace settlement.<sup>18</sup>

In actuality, neither the end of the Empire nor the changes in Germany altered in the least the harsh conditions for peace that Germany had to expect; neither did the German strategy of invoking the Fourteen Points or the right to self-determination as a basis for a future peace treaty. On the contrary, several factors combined to increase Wilson's tendencies toward a punitive peace. There was his newly found conviction that Germany was responsible for the outbreak of the European war—a conviction that, according to Clemenceau, was shared by the entire civilized world. Moreover, during the course of the Paris Peace Conference, Wilson also came to believe increasingly that the new Germany represented nothing but the old Germany in a new guise; and, finally, he had to take into account the strategies and interests of the Allies, especially concerning possible threats to the establishment of the League of Nations idea and to his own role as an *arbiter mundi* by the bitter German criticism.

On the other hand, a peace of punishment and revenge was not to lead to a Carthage on the Rhine. The right to self-determination even for the Germans, considerations of the overall future European order, as well as the fear of the Bolshevik threat kept Wilson from questioning seriously the unity of a German national state. He was strictly opposed to any dissolution of the Empire founded by Bismarck and would not permit France to separate permanently from Germany the territories left of the Rhine. Thus, Wilson was forced to practice at Versailles the very policy that he himself had pilloried as the greatest evil of the system of European powers and that he had intended to supersede by establishing the League of Nations. In other words, he had to act according to the principles governing the balance of power. In terms of power politics, Wilson's European policies already appear to be those of a triple containment: they aim at containing the threat to Europe posed by the Soviet Union and by Germany, coupled with the desire to meet French

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<sup>18</sup> For Wilson and Germany in 1918–1919, see esp. Klaus Schwabe, *Deutsche Revolution und Wilson-Frieden: Die amerikanische und deutsche Friedensstrategie zwischen Ideologie und Machtpolitik 1918/19* (Düsseldorf, 1971); id., *Woodrow Wilson, Revolutionary Germany, and Peacemaking, 1918–1919* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1985).

security concerns, without, at the same time, allowing France to become the hegemonic power in Europe.<sup>19</sup>

As far as America was concerned, the establishment of the Weimar Republic had brought a *de facto* end to the old Empire, even though the Weimar Constitution postulated a continuity with the nation-state founded in 1871 in the very first sentence of Article I, which stated: "The German Empire is a Republic." The Manichaean trap was empty again. As America saw it, Germany deserved the chance—after an appropriate period of remorse, repentance, and reform—to return to the family of nations as a respected power and to prove herself as a liberal, capitalist democracy, as "Little America" in Europe.

Given such conditions, a revision of the Versailles Treaty, which the Senate had not ratified in any case, was quite possible as far as America was concerned. In contrast to French desires, it had never been the objective of U.S. policies to cement the status quo of 1919. Peaceful change was part of the core belief underlying American policies in Europe. It was part of America's enlightened self-interest to support such a change, which would ultimately serve to integrate Germany once again into Europe politically and into the world economically.

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<sup>19</sup> In addition to the titles mentioned in notes 17 and 18, the following studies are relevant for Wilson at the Paris Peace Conference: Lawrence E. Gelfand, *The Inquiry: American Preparations for Peace, 1917–1919* (New Haven, Conn., 1963); Maurice Hankey, *The Supreme Control of the Paris Peace Conference, 1919* (London, 1963); Michael Hogan, "The United States and the Problem of International Economic Control: American Attitudes toward European Reconstruction, 1918–1920," *Pacific Historical Review* 46 (1975): 84–103; Melvin Leffler, *The Elusive Quest: America's Pursuit of European Stability and French Security, 1919–1933* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1979); Arno J. Mayer, *Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking: Containment and Counterrevolution at Versailles, 1918–1919* (London, 1968); Keith L. Nelson, *Victors Divided: America and the Allies in Germany, 1918–1923* (Berkeley, Calif., 1975); Carl R. Parrini, *Heir to Empire: United States Economic Diplomacy, 1916–1923* (Pittsburgh, 1969); Jan Willem Schulte Nordholt, "Wilson in Versailles," *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 80 (1967): 177–99; David F. Trask, *The United States and the Supreme War Council, 1917–1918* (Middletown, Conn., 1961); Arthur C. Walworth, *America's Moment: 1918* (New York, 1977); and id., *Wilson and His Peacemakers: American Diplomacy at the Paris Peace Conference, 1919* (New York, 1986).

As is well known to historians of the Weimar Republic, these were the general tendencies of German-American relations, especially between 1923 and 1929. The decisive turning point was the Dawes Plan of 1924, a concrete result of America's attempt to stabilize the situation in Europe. The economic stability provided by the Dawes Plan made possible the political stability achieved by the security treaty of Locarno, Germany's entry into the League of Nations, and the withdrawal of Allied troops from the Rhineland. This economic intervention by the United States marks the beginning of the end of France's attempt to dominate Central Europe after World War I. American support had freed Germany from its role of helpless object that the country had assumed in 1919. The massive influx of American capital made the U.S. dollar rise like the sun over Germany, as one contemporary noted ironically; it remained an important condition for the period of stability enjoyed by the Weimar Republic until the outbreak of the most serious economic crisis since the beginning of the industrial revolution.<sup>20</sup>

Similar to the years after 1945, when the Americans found in Konrad Adenauer the political powerhouse among the Germans eager to support their plans for the integration of the Federal

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<sup>20</sup> For German-American relations during the period of the Weimar Republic and the American perception of Germany during those years, see Peter Berg, *Deutschland und Amerika 1918–1929. Über das Amerikabild der zwanziger Jahre* (Lübeck and Hamburg, 1963); Manfred Berg, *Gustav Stresemann und die Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika. Weltwirtschaftliche Verflechtung und Revisionspolitik 1907–1929* (Baden-Baden, 1990); id., *Gustav Stresemann. Eine politische Karriere zwischen Reich und Republik* (Göttingen, 1992); Frank C. Costigliola, *Awkward Dominion: American Political, Economic, and Cultural Relations with Europe, 1919–1933* (Ithaca, N.Y., and London, 1984); Peter Bruno Gescher, *Die Vereinigten Staaten von Nordamerika und die Reparationen 1920–1924* (Bonn, 1956); Robert Gottwald, *Die Deutsch-Amerikanischen Beziehungen in der Ära Stresemann* (Berlin, 1965); Peter Krüger, *Die Außenpolitik der Republik von Weimar* (Darmstadt, 1985); Leffler, *Elusive Quest*; Werner Link, *Die amerikanische Stabilisierungspolitik in Deutschland 1921–1932* (Düsseldorf, 1970); William C. McNeil, *American Money and the Weimar Republic: Economics and Politics in the Era of the Great Depression* (New York, 1986); Stephen A. Schuker, *The End of French Predominance in Europe: The Financial Crisis of 1924 and the Adoption of the Dawes Plan* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1976); Eckhard Wandel, *Die Bedeutung der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika für das deutsche Reparationsproblem 1924–1929* (Tübingen, 1971).

Republic into the West, they were fortunate, during the middle period of Weimar, to have in Gustav Stresemann a congenial politician who correctly interpreted the goals of U.S. foreign policy in Europe: to be present economically, though abstain from any entangling alliances; to be open to revisionism by peaceful means; and to pursue a multilateral approach.

To the right-wing nationalists in Germany, who had attacked the loss of sovereignty and of control over the German economy inherent in the Dawes Plan, Stresemann replied: The greater U.S. economic interests in Germany, and the larger American credits granted to Germany, the greater would be America's interest in peaceful change, a change whose ultimate goal—in Stresemann's view—could only be the revision of the Treaty of Versailles and the restoration of Germany to its position as a major power with equal rights in Europe.

World War I had made the United States the dominant economic and trade power in the world; during the 1920s, it further strengthened that position. It increased its status as the leading productive power and became the largest export country as well as the largest consumer of raw materials in the world. America's share of the worldwide production of industrial goods grew from 35.8 percent in 1913 to 46 percent, if one uses the average of the years 1925–29 as a base. In dollars, the national income generated by the United States was as large as that of the next 23 nations taken together, including Great Britain, Germany, France, and Canada. New York became the second leading financial center of the world, rivalling London. The world's economic system had become bicentric if not America-centric. America's cultural influence increased as well; its film industry, for example, began to conquer Europe. Under the catchword of "Americanism," an intense debate ensued in Germany and in other European countries about the influence of the United States, which was (and is) both admired and feared.

The tremendous difference in power between the victorious United States and a defeated Germany resulted in the virtual disappearance of the Weimar Republic from public view in the United States; only a small, informed segment of the public remained involved in developments in Germany. That small group harbored considerable doubts, at least until 1923, whether the German republic would survive and not give way to a dictatorship. Even Stresemann was met with a good deal of skepticism at first; his

metamorphosis into a republican by reason (*Vernunftrepublikaner*) and a politician pursuing a policy of rapprochement had first to be tested. Hindenburg's election as president of the Republic in 1925 met with utter horror and disbelief. In a message to President Calvin Coolidge, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) demanded Hindenburg's arrest and a new election for the office of *Reichspräsident*.<sup>21</sup> It was only after Locarno, after the German cooperation in preparing the Kellogg-Briand Pact, and after Stresemann had received the Nobel Peace Prize that the political classes in the United States began to look at the survival chances of Germany's first democracy with muted optimism. Nothing symbolized the new quality of German-American relations and tensions in the relationship between the United States and France better than the events of May 5, 1928, in Heidelberg, which was both a *dies academicus* and a *dies politicus*. On this day, the University of Heidelberg bestowed an honorary doctoral degree upon both Gustav Stresemann and U.S. Ambassador Jacob Gould Schurman. Stresemann used the occasion to sum up the objectives and methods of his foreign policy, while Schurman stated that he had been struck increasingly, in the course of the preceding three years, by the similarity of the basic ideals inspiring the government and people of the two countries. He continued: "Germany and the United States are marching forward in a great and noble adventure in the cause of human civilization." This statement of the American ambassador met with fierce French criticism. Secretary of State Kellogg realized the threat to the precarious balance of America's European policy, and he issued a statement to the effect that Schurman's speech had not been cleared with the State Department before its publication.<sup>22</sup>

As could have been expected, the result of the National Socialists' rise to power in 1933 and the subsequent installation of dictatorship was a dramatic deterioration of the image of Germany and the Third Reich in the United States. Thanks to the new polling techniques of

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<sup>21</sup> Berg, *Stresemann und die Vereinigten Staaten*, 231–73; for the reaction to the election of Hindenburg, see *ibid.*, 248ff.

<sup>22</sup> Detlef Junker, "Jacob Gould Schurman, die Universität Heidelberg und die deutsch-amerikanischen Beziehungen," in *Semper Apertus. Sechshundert Jahre Ruprecht-Karls Universität Heidelberg 1386–1986. Festschrift in sechs Bänden*, vol. 3 (Berlin, etc., 1986), 328–58; *id.*, "Die USA und die Weimarer Republik," *Heidelberger Jahrbücher* 35 (Berlin and Heidelberg, 1991), 27–34.



Gallup and Roper, this decline in sympathy can even be quantified quite accurately from the mid-1930s on. To the question, which European country they liked best, 55 percent of Americans polled in January 1937 replied England, 11 percent stated France, and 8 percent mentioned Germany. Asked in November 1938 which side they would like to see victorious in a possible war between Germany and Russia, 83 percent answered Russia and only 17 percent preferred Germany. And in a poll taken between September 1 and 6, 1939, 82 percent believed that Germany was responsible for the outbreak of the current war, followed by 3 percent for England and France, 3 percent for the Versailles Treaty, and 1 percent for Poland. At the beginning of March 1940 the question was: Which side would you like to see victorious in the present war? In their answers, 84 percent favored England and France, 1 percent Germany. And a poll taken between June 26 and July 1, 1941, asked a similar question with regard to Russia and Germany, with the result that 72 percent preferred a Russian victory, only 4 percent were on the German side.<sup>23</sup>

During the 1930s, Americans grew increasingly apprehensive that the so-called "League of Friends of the New Germany" or Bund, that presumptive Trojan horse of the NSDAP in the United States, could pose a threat to the domestic security of the United States.

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<sup>23</sup> Printed in Detlef Junker, *Kampf um die Weltmacht. Die USA und das Dritte Reich 1933–1945* (Düsseldorf, 1988), 70–78; for a bibliography of works on German-American relations during this period, see *ibid.*, 173–79. The following remarks are based on my own research: see Detlef Junker, *Der unteilbare Weltmarkt. Das ökonomische Interesse in der Außenpolitik der USA 1933–1941* (Stuttgart, 1975); *id.*, *Franklin D. Roosevelt. Macht und Vision: Präsident in Krisenzeiten*, 2d. ed. (Göttingen, 1989); *id.*, "Deutschland im politischen Kalkül der Vereinigten Staaten 1933–1945," in Wolfgang Michalka, ed., *Der Zweite Weltkrieg* (Munich, 1989), 57–73; *id.*, "The Impact of Foreign Policy on the U.S. Domestic Scene, 1939 to 1941," in Maurizio Vaudagna, ed., *The United States in the Late Thirties*, Special Issue of *Storia Nordamericana*, vol. 6, nos. 1–2 (Turin, 1989); *id.*, "Hitler's Perception of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the United States of America," in Cornelis A. van Minnen and John F. Sears, eds., *FDR and His Contemporaries: Foreign Perception of an American President* (New York, 1992), 145–56; *id.*, "The Continuity of Ambivalence: German Views of America, 1933–1945" (forthcoming in a volume of collected essays published by Cambridge University Press); *id.*, *Von der Weltmacht zur Supermacht. Amerikanische Außenpolitik im 20. Jahrhundert*. Meyers Forum (Mannheim, 1995).

Simultaneously, the foreign policies of the Third Reich were seen as a threat to world peace. This dual fear, however, did *not* lead to a policy of preventive intervention in Europe. On the contrary, it intensified the very basic isolationism of the American people and its tendency not to interfere in European affairs in the face of impending danger. This basic tendency and the objective judgments it contained about America's national interests were the most important determining factors of American foreign policy until the outbreak of World War II in 1939. By passing the neutrality laws and keeping the United States out of Europe and restricted to the Western hemisphere, the U.S. Congress had done during the 1930s what Hitler tried to achieve in vain later on by concluding the Three Power Pact in 1940, by attacking the Soviet Union in 1941, and by forging an alliance with Japan. While aggression and expansion proceeded apace in Europe and Asia, Congress had completed the index of foreign activities prohibited to the Roosevelt administration in time of crisis or war. Thus, on the level of official U.S. foreign policy that was supported by Congress, legislation, and public opinion, President Roosevelt had become an unarmed prophet, a *quantité négligeable* when the European war erupted; Hitler treated him accordingly.

Roosevelt, on the other hand, knew only too well that he would be able to regain his freedom to act and to influence world politics only by changing the "threat perception" of his people, the perception held by Americans about the threat potential to the United States posed by a National Socialist Germany. He had to demonstrate and explain to the American people that it was a dangerous illusion for the United States to restrict its national interests to the Western hemisphere, to isolate itself in a "Fortress America," and to let the changes in Eurasia take their course. Until 1941, "preparedness" was the overriding goal of his foreign policy—the industrial, economic, and ideological preparation for a possible war. In this sense, foreign policy became, in large measure, domestic policy. Roosevelt himself had given the title "The Call to Battle Stations" to his *Public Papers and Addresses* for 1941. Like many others who had lived through World War I, Roosevelt, who had been an ardent Wilsonian and had served as Undersecretary of the Navy at the time, knew that only a threatened nation would be willing to prepare for war, let alone fight in one.

During this educational campaign, this public debate with an isolationist majority, Roosevelt developed both of the major compo-

nents of U.S. global policies in the twentieth century: on the one hand, the warning against the impending world domination by an enemy power (in this case the Third Reich) and, on the other hand, a global definition of U.S. national interest with regard to both its content and its extent. One might even be tempted to assert that it was only the tough domestic debate about the threat posed by the Third Reich and the attack on Pearl Harbor that led most Americans to perceive their country as a global power with interests in all continents and on all the oceans of the world—at least up to the end of the Cold War.

It was only recently that Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., has reminded us—quite correctly, I believe—of the tradition established by Roosevelt's internationalism and globalism.<sup>24</sup> Like Thomas Jefferson, Teddy Roosevelt, and the naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan before him, FDR shared the opinion that a balance of power on the European continent was of vital interest to the United States. Like Woodrow Wilson, he believed in the ideal of a world in which the free self-determination of nations and the principle of collective security would guarantee world peace. He shared the conviction held by his Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, that only a free and open world economy would produce the goods and services needed to maintain world peace in the long run. Hitler obviously threatened all of the above simultaneously: the balance of power in Europe, world peace, and a free world economy. That is the reason why Roosevelt articulated his warning, his globalism, as a threefold anticipation of the future. I have argued along these lines extensively elsewhere and will thus only summarize here in conclusion.<sup>25</sup>

Every military success by Hitler brought closer an economic future whose realization meant *the* ultimate catastrophe for America's economy in Roosevelt's eyes and in those of the internationalists. Its

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<sup>24</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., "Franklin D. Roosevelt's Internationalism," in van Minnen and Sears, eds., *FDR and His Contemporaries*, 1–16.

<sup>25</sup> I am glad to note that Ninkovich, though arguing within a different framework of interpretation, arrives at the same conclusion. Cf. Ninkovich, *Modernity and Power*, 112–22, with Junker, *Der unteilbare Weltmacht*, 163–278. Patrick Hearden obviously does not read German, otherwise he would have noticed that his book *Roosevelt Confronts Hitler: America's Entry into World War II* (DeKalb, Ill., 1987) essentially repeats the findings of my *Der unteilbare Weltmacht*.

basic structure can be described in a few sentences. Any victory by Germany and Italy in Europe and by Japan in the Far East would force those two regions into systems of planned economies that would be virtually autarkic. The U.S. would lose its investments, trade volume would be drastically reduced, and foreign trade would take place under conditions dictated by the Axis powers, if at all. South America, a natural supplier of Europe, would come more and more under the influence of Hitler's Europe. The reduction of both U.S. import and export industries and the related secondary effects generated throughout the domestic economy of the United States would radically intensify the problem of unemployment, as yet unsolved by the New Deal, and would create social tensions that could not be alleviated within the framework of the existing system. In other words: as far as the internationalists were concerned, an open and undivided world market was one of the basic preconditions for the very survival of the American system.

There was a military aspect as well. At the beginning of Roosevelt's presidency, America's security area contained the Western hemisphere and half of the Pacific, or roughly one-third of the globe, as it had done ever since 1898. After Munich and after Japan's proclamation of the "New Order" in East Asia, Roosevelt pushed the limits of U.S. security out further and further until they reached global dimensions in a literal sense by the time the Lend-Lease Program was signed in 1941.

This new global definition of American security became one of the cornerstones of its political re-orientation. To limit oneself to defending the Western hemisphere was viewed as suicidal. The oceans of the world had to be controlled lest they become "highways," as Roosevelt liked to call them, which the Axis powers could use to attack the United States any time they chose. But such a control of the high sea could not be assured by the U.S. Navy on its own. It was possible only if Europe and Asia were not controlled by the Axis Powers, who had the shipbuilding capacity of two continents under their control. France, England, China, and, as of mid-1941, the Soviet Union as well, had to be supported, since they also defended the United States by defending themselves. Thus, the U.S. also had a vital military interest in restoring the balance of power in Europe and Asia.

The third component in redefining U.S. national interests before the entry into World War II was ideological. Roosevelt repeated

again and again, almost *ad nauseam*: the right of all peoples to free self-determination and the duty of all nations to conduct their international policies according to the principles of international law are indivisible. These principles, he argued, applied to all nations anywhere in the world and without reservation. Force and aggression were illegitimate means to achieve any change in the status quo. Roosevelt's administration had thus accepted as its own the Stimson Doctrine of 1932, according to which the United States would refuse to acknowledge territorial changes achieved by force.

As Roosevelt saw it, the impending conflict with the Axis Powers was not merely a conflict between the "Have's" and the "Have-Not's." He interpreted the coming fight as a universal battle for the future shape of the world, a battle between aggressors and peaceful nations, between liberal democracy and fascism, between Western, Christian-humanist civilization and barbarism, between decent citizens and criminals, between good and evil. However, he never even once mentioned the Nazi persecution of the Jews publicly before Hitler's declaration of war. Like Wilson, Roosevelt thus unfolded his Manichaeian world view; like the Kaiser's Empire, the Third Reich found itself locked in the Manichaeian trap.

In conclusion, one can posit that Roosevelt's ideas combined an ideological and economic globalism of freedom (Wilson's liberal globalism) with a new military globalism created by the development of a new military technology and the assumed plans for world domination on the part of Adolf Hitler. The United States ultimately had to enter the war itself, both in order to destroy the "New Orders" in Europe and Asia and to secure its own position as the future world power, to create that *novus ordo seclorum* proclaimed on every dollar bill.

In contrast to Wilson, Roosevelt was determined from the very first day of the war to bring about the destruction of the Empire. For Roosevelt, Hitler was not an exception or aberration; rather, he saw National Socialism as the embodiment of a major tendency of the aggressive Prussian-German national character. Germany had to surrender unconditionally; a negotiated settlement was out of the question for both political and moral reasons. For a long time, he believed that the dismemberment and division of Germany would be the only effective way to keep the evil empire from plunging the world into a third global war.

Although Roosevelt grew somewhat more skeptical of Stalin and the Soviet Union after the Yalta Conference, he could hardly have envisioned before his death the breathtaking reversal of the American "demonology" from 1945 to 1950. The evil Germans, good Russians, evil Japanese, and good Chinese of World War II had turned into the good West Germans, evil Russians, good Japanese, and evil Chinese of the Cold War. At this juncture, it was not Hitler and the Third Reich but Stalin and the Soviet Union who were locked in the Manichaeian trap. After the demise of the Soviet Union, the trap is empty. There are a number of potential candidates, but, fortunately, the present-day democratic Germany is not among them.

**The Missing Dimension  
in the Manichaeic Outlook:  
A Comment**

Paul W. Schroeder

The main thesis of Professor Junker's perceptive and well-reasoned essay seems to me unquestionably sound: that the American government and people from 1871 to 1945 consistently perceived and judged Germany on the basis of whether Germany at different times apparently conformed to American ideals or clashed with them. These ideals, derived from a religiously-inspired sense of mission, cast the United States in the role of leading the world toward freedom, constitutional government, capitalism, democracy, and other noble ends. As Professor Junker knows and indicates, this moral vision of America's mission in the world was more than Janus-faced. It could be reconciled with, and serve to justify, almost any policy, domestic and foreign—an isolationist one of leading and enlightening the world by example, as a city set upon a hill, or an interventionist one of a crusade for democracy; a domestic polity serving to abolish or preserve slavery; the ideal of a Jeffersonian agrarian republic or an active, expansionist commercial-industrial state spreading its goods and know-how around the globe; a stance of solidarity with new democracies and newly liberated or oppressed peoples, or of militant expansionism, hegemony, and empire. Yet, for all its Protean character, America's sense of mission and manifest destiny never became merely a cynical pretext for pursuing American interests while flouting those of others (though it also certainly promoted this). Instead, as the author argues, it genuinely influenced American perceptions and policies generally, and on Germany in particular.

There are certain details of Professor Junker's interpretation I might question (one of the interesting aspects of doing this commentary is that I, an American specializing in European international history, seem to judge American policy, especially in World War II, more severely than Professor Junker, a German authority on American foreign policy). Yet the disagreements are so minor, in the nature of "Yes, but-" rather than, "Here I think you are wrong,"

that they cannot serve as the focus of my comments, especially on an essay that ranges so widely and presents so broad and general an interpretation. Therefore, having little to disagree with or to add directly to the theme, I must also range widely. I propose to discuss another aspect of American perceptions of Germany not included here, not in order to criticize or correct this essay, but to complement it. Professor Junker deals with what Americans knew and took into consideration in their perceptions and judgment of Germany and the German question. I wish to point out something they failed to know or take into consideration. He shows the latent or patent tensions between the ideals that Americans wanted to see realized in Europe and the world and the practical necessities and realities of great-power balance politics. I see an equally striking gap between American ideals and international realities in regard to an aspect of the German question that Americans failed to consider. He points up the remarkable persistence and continuity in the ideals and the Manichaeic outlook that Americans displayed. I intend to argue that, in at least one important respect, there was discontinuity. The American outlook toward Germany in the nineteenth century was rooted in ignorance and illusions, which rendered its Manichaeic character especially unrealistic and dangerous. By the late twentieth century, however, American ideas about Germany had become much more informed and sophisticated, so that whatever Manichaeism still adhered to them had become at least more tolerable and less dangerous, if not actually benign. This change, I will suggest, was the result not simply of a general growth in American knowledge and sophistication in world affairs, but also of acquiring a better understanding of a particular dimension to the German question long ignored and neglected. Given the limited space available for these remarks, I can naturally only sketch out my argument, not develop it or, still less, prove it. It may, however, contribute something to our reflections on "the Manichaeic trap."

The missing dimension in American perceptions of Germany was the failure to see Germany and the German question in its full, essential Central and East European setting. By this I mean that Americans, as Professor Junker indicates, thought of Germany in terms of the Little German Reich created in 1871, or an idealized version of it that coincided with their image of the world, of the United States, and of America's role in it. Germany was expected to be a normal nation-state and a European great power that, led by



Prussia and basically Protestant, progressive, and constitutional, would grow in commerce and industry, evolve toward democracy, and play a moderating, peaceful role in the European balance. They never thought seriously about the historic Central and East European setting—thought, that is, of Germany and the Germans as one large, dynamic element in the larger arena of Central and Eastern Europe, intimately and inseparably bound up with it. Therefore, they never considered what unification and self-determination for the Germans must mean for the existence of other multinational empires in the region (Russia, the Ottoman Empire, and, above all, the Habsburg Monarchy), and for the fates and aspirations of all the smaller peoples living intermingled in the space between Germans and Great Russians. The pattern of American perceptions and reactions is thus something as follows: a certain amount of attention, interest, and even Platonic friendship is given Prussian Little Germany as the legitimate representative of German aspirations, and Germany's right to self-determination and nationhood is recognized; but this initial sympathy turns into aversion and mounts to hatred and hostility to the degree to which Germany disappoints American expectations, crosses American interests, rivals American power, and, above all, violates American ideas of the correct world order. At the same time, however, ignorance, inattention, and indifference prevail with regard to Germany and the German question in relation to Central and Eastern Europe as a whole—to the Habsburg Monarchy and the Balkans, to the relations between Germans and the other smaller peoples inhabiting Central and Eastern Europe, to the tensions and ethnic conflicts created by the rise of nationalism and the triumph of *Realpolitik*, and the growing belief in a great racial and cultural conflict being fought out in that region, a struggle for mastery between Teuton and Slav. Note: I do not claim that Americans were wholly ignorant of these developments, though their knowledge of them was doubtless slight and superficial. I only wish to stress that they saw these developments as Austria-Hungary's problems, or Balkan problems, or individual state rivalries, or general ethnic and nationality and religious problems, and not as a vital dimension of the German question.

Once aware of this pattern, this missing dimension, one sees evidence of it in every period. Going back a bit before 1871, one sees it in the American reaction to the 1848 revolutions and their aftermath—general sympathy for the Frankfurt Parliament and Ger-

man nationalism, popular enthusiasm for Italian liberation and Hungarian independence, but indifference verging on contempt for the Habsburg Monarchy in its life-and-death crisis and for the possible consequences of its demise. It is illustrated in the way the United States immediately recognized the Kingdom of Italy in January 1861, approving both the nationalities principle on which the new state rested and the revolutionary power politics used to found it, and then tried with remarkable persistence to send an ardent advocate of Italian self-determination, unification, and further territorial claims against Austria to Vienna as the American ambassador.<sup>1</sup> As Professor Junker explains, Americans noted and generally approved the results of 1870–71. But they hardly noticed the developments of 1866, whose impact was far greater on the German question, the Habsburg Monarchy, and the emerging nationalities questions of East Central Europe. Washington gradually became disillusioned with Imperial Germany, especially after Bismarck fell, because Germany developed into a naval, colonial, and trade rival that tried to bluster its way onto the world stage (an instance, one might remark, of seeing the mote in the other's eye but not the beam in one's own)—but not because Germany was repressing its Polish inhabitants, encouraging an anti-Slav, German-Hungarian dualist policy in Austria, and preparing for a Teuton-Slav confrontation in Eastern Europe.

Nowhere is the contrast between American attention to Germany and indifference verging on contempt toward Austria and the rest of Central Europe more clear than in World War I. German-American quarrels over neutral rights and submarine warfare were real and serious, repeatedly threatening a breach in relations and war. Yet Germany could get away with one of its most serious violations, the Ancona affair, because Austria accepted responsibility and made the necessary apologies, and the United States did not take Austria

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<sup>1</sup> To be sure, when the American Union collapsed a few months later, with the Confederate states claiming their right to secede on grounds of self-determination, the Union government, fearing that Austria might recognize the Confederacy on the same grounds on which the United States had recognized Italy and contemplated recognizing Hungary, pleaded that it not do so, arguing that the situations were entirely different. The Austrian government readily complied, remarking dryly that its consistent policy was not to recognize rebels against a legitimate regime.

seriously. Wilson at least paid attention to the German peace move of December 1916 and made it the basis for his own; no Austrian attempt to enlist neutral America as a peacemaker ever got anywhere. Despite being directly challenged by the German declaration of unconditional submarine warfare and the Zimmermann telegram, Wilson hesitated long before calling for war on Germany, and, to the end, there was some opposition to war in Congress. But, when the administration decided in December 1917 on purely expedient political and military grounds to go to war with Austria-Hungary as well, the Congress threw out the administration's war message that justified the move merely on general principles, substituted its own list of fabricated charges against Austria, and declared war virtually unanimously. The Fourteen Points were reasonably clear on the German question and ensured that, whatever Germany had to do or pay for losing the war, it would still continue in existence as a large united state. No one could say precisely what was meant in the Fourteen Points by autonomy for the peoples of Austria-Hungary. A sensible observer, however, could see that, combined with other provisions concerning gains for Serbia and Italy and independence for Poland, they spelled the doom of the historic Habsburg Monarchy, and, by mid-1918, the American government had itself recognized this.

The same trend would continue in the peace settlement and the postwar era. The Treaty of Versailles, whatever its faults, was at least a serious attempt at a peace settlement, negotiated long and carefully between the main allies if not with Germany, and with Germany's grievances given some attention. The treaties with Germany's allies, in contrast, were written in almost indecent haste and recklessness and were considerably harsher and more unenforceable than Versailles. Despite the American rejection of Versailles and the League, the United States, as is well known, actively participated in Western European affairs after the war, especially in economic diplomacy, and was a main source of loans to Germany. But Poland, Czechoslovakia, and other countries sought similar attention and help in vain.

Even the American reaction to the rising German threat in the 1930's, where President Roosevelt, if not American leaders and the public as a whole, must be credited with considerable perceptiveness, shows this same pattern of attention to Germany, but only a limited understanding at best of the Central and East European context. What Roosevelt and other internationalists saw in Nazi Germany

was a strategic threat to Europe, in particular its Western neighbors France and Britain, and therefore ultimately to the security of the United States, and a general threat to the values of liberal Western civilization—all of which Nazi Germany certainly represented. What they did not clearly see, however, was the special, immediate, and main threat that Germany posed to Central and Eastern Europe. This, it seems to me, helps explain why Roosevelt, though anti-Nazi and even anti-German, could play a minor role in encouraging the Munich Settlement and commend Chamberlain for having concluded it.

Even during the war, when anti-German sentiment was at its height in the United States, one notes this same gap in understanding in the dominant American analysis of the German menace and the necessary remedy to it. As Professor Junker notes, what Americans, including Roosevelt and many other leaders, saw as the root evil behind Nazism and German aggression was Prussian militarism and traditional German obedience to authority—to cite the then-current phrase, the line from Luther to Hitler. Without wishing to whitewash Prussian militarism and traditional German authoritarianism or deny the German people's share of responsibility for Nazi crimes and aggression, one can, I think, recognize that the main sources of Nazism were not these, but a combination of historic Austro-German and *Volksdeutsch* nationalism and racism and an extreme Social Darwinist-biological world view that targeted first and foremost the "inferior" peoples of Central and Eastern Europe, above all the Jews, for decimation and/or extinction—a program both reactionary and modern, but distinctly not traditionally Prussian or German authoritarian. This particular American understanding of the German problem contributed significantly to American wartime and immediate postwar policy on Germany (and here I may disagree slightly with Professor Junker in taking more seriously what he terms "the brief and inconsequential interlude of the plans concerning the division of Germany or the Morgenthau Plan during the Second World War"). Roosevelt and other American officials were seriously bent on a permanent, sweeping territorial partition of Germany and a long-term policy of holding Germany down and preventing any resurgence of its power. The Morgenthau Plan was real American policy, endorsed by the president and accepted by the British, which failed to be executed except in certain of its lesser occupational provisions, not because Roosevelt reconsidered, but because it broke

down over its own inherent absurdities and the reaction against it from other American leaders and the press when it became public. This American (or at least Rooseveltian) determination to destroy Germany permanently as a unified independent state and major economic power is important, I think, not just as a break with America's oft-proclaimed ideals and war aims of self-determination and freedom (which Roosevelt, in any case, interpreted very opportunistically, not just in regard to Germany and other enemies, but also in regard to France, Poland, and many other smaller countries); nor just as a reflection of the American Manichaeian view of Germany as an evil empire (a view, as Junker says, that is justified by the Nazi record); but also and specifically as another evidence of a failure to see the German question in its full Central and East European context. For this policy coincided with and conformed to a bigger and more fundamental American determination: to rest its hopes for world peace on the continuation of the wartime alliance with the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and China. Essential to that alliance was the acceptance of Soviet domination of the greater part of Europe, embracing all of Eastern Europe and much of Central Europe including eastern Germany, not simply because it was unavoidable militarily and expedient politically, but because Soviet hegemony was an integral part of the general scheme by which the Four Policemen would police the world for peace. This scheme, of course, contradicted the concept of a balance of power in Europe and Asia, as well as historic American ideals of self-determination, national sovereignty, and a world order of independent, juridically equal and coordinate states. But it also, like the American policy on Germany, specifically ignored the central historic problem of Central and Eastern Europe—how to have a reasonable independence and security for its various peoples without domination and oppression by either Germany or Russia or both.

Thus, consistently from 1871 to 1945, American perceptions of Germany were colored not only by a general Manichaeian outlook derived from America's moral ideals and sense of mission, but also from a specific failure to see Germany in its Central and East European context and to consider the rights and fates of its other countries and peoples together with Germany's in accordance with the same ideals.

What changed this? I think it was clearly the Cold War. Two main things happened, as everyone knows: Germany became, once

again, the focal point of a new European and world rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, and East Central Europe, including part of Germany, became part of the Soviet empire, cut off from Western Europe. It would be far too simple to say that Germany's (better, West Germany's) image in American eyes was changed from evil empire to good ally because Americans shifted the designation of evil empire to Soviet Russia. That did happen, of course, with surprising speed, though not without much debate, controversy, and hesitation. More important for our purposes, however, is the fact that the Cold War for the first time forged an effective link in American minds and American policy between the German question and the broader Central and East European questions. It meant that Germany would be viewed not simply in terms of its role in an overall European and world balance of power (though that was certainly important and often foremost), or as a disputed prize and center of confrontation and possible conflict in the East-West struggle (though that, too, tended to dominate, especially at critical stages), but quite specifically as the key factor in the ultimate fate of all of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe as well. In a strange, ironic way, Americans learned better to appreciate Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, and other states as independent countries and vital contributors to a common European civilization and a particular European region *after* all of them but Austria had lost their independence and become Soviet satellites. They perceived the unity of Europe, and the special mediating character of Central and Eastern Europe with its ties to the West as well as East, only after the Iron Curtain had divided Europe and Soviet-style communism was threatening to extinguish those ties. This recognition derived not just from sentiment or nostalgia but from practical politics. While the prime goal of American policy on Germany was no doubt to tie West Germany firmly to the Western alliance and use it to bolster the West's military, economic, and political defenses in the Cold War, nonetheless this had to be done in such a way as would not revive German nationalism or revanchism or drive Poles, Czechs, and others more deeply into the Soviet camp. Hence, the United States could not support West Germany, however important it was as an ally, without considering the implications of that support not only for other allies like the other NATO countries, but also Germany's neighbors in the Soviet bloc.

This seems to me, though I am no expert on American postwar policy, to have affected American policies and attitudes in various ways. It helped insure, that is, that American rhetoric about liberation, rollback, and self-determination for Central and Eastern Europe would not be translated into action during any of the major postwar crises (1948–49, 1953, 1956, 1961). No doubt, the main motives were fear of nuclear war and the advice and pressure of America's allies, but another reason also was the reluctance to encourage German revisionism or alienate the peoples within the Soviet bloc. The same holds true generally of American words and actions in regard to the Oder-Neisse line, the 1937 German frontiers, German reunification, German rearmament, the Hallstein Doctrine, and other issues: limited verbal support, often more pro forma than real, for German rights, but careful avoidance of any suggestion of action, or the notion that German rights were the only ones that counted. Even more important was the American acceptance and encouragement from 1961 on of West Germany's own initiatives intended gradually to overcome the division of Germany and of Europe, now rightly seen as inseparable phenomena: *détente*, *Ostpolitik*, the recognition of East European regimes and their frontiers, expansion of trade, travel, and cultural contacts, even distasteful and one-sided deals with the East German regime for humanitarian purposes.

The importance of this hitherto missing dimension seems to me most clear and dramatic in the American reaction to the events of 1989–90, which Professor Junker analyzes. German unification could be so readily endorsed and supported by the United States precisely because it was part and parcel of a general process of Central and East European liberation, extending beyond the Soviet empire even finally to the breakup of the Soviet Union itself. This endorsement and support, moreover, was not given in order to exploit a victory over a defeated foe, but build and consolidate a new order that would, in time, include that foe. German unification was supported not simply because Germans and Germany had changed decisively since 1945 and were now on the side of the angels in the Manichaeian scheme of things (though they had changed decisively), but because Poles, Czechs, Baltic peoples, and a host of others including even the Russians were now also on the side of the angels. More concretely, a united Germany was willing to confirm its abandonment of historic claims to East Prussia, Silesia, and parts of Bohemia

(the Americans were as firm as other governments in insisting on this condition); because a united Germany firmly tied to the West and without independent armed forces would not threaten its neighbors but build bridges and potentially support their independence; and because even Russia could be reconciled to a united Germany as an asset in its own transformation.

If this general thesis is correct, that along with the Manichaeian aspect of American perceptions of Germany from 1871 to 1945 went a missing dimension, the absent sense of the Central and East European context, and that a big difference in the American outlook after 1945 was made by the acquisition of that missing dimension, it calls for two final observations.

First, as Professor Junker suggests and Henry Kissinger stresses (overstresses, in my view) in his recent work *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), there is something special about the role of America's moral vision, ideals, and sense of mission in historic American policy. It is certainly not unique. Many states develop a strong sense of mission, often including moral ideals or based on them, and these can at times strongly influence policy. One thinks, for example, of the England of Gladstone or the Russia of Alexander I's Holy Alliance. But it is true that most states in modern European history at least have tended to separate their sense of a national mission and ideals from the working rules and practical realities of international politics more consistently than have Americans. If, however, we compare the American view of Germany from 1871 to 1945 with that of other countries on the score of the missing dimension I have discussed, then we immediately see that, in this respect, Americans represent not an exception but the rule. Englishmen, Frenchmen, Italians, Russians, even Germans themselves saw Germany and the German question not in its Central and East European context, inseparable from, and requiring to be addressed in conjunction with, the rights and destinies of all the other countries and peoples of the region, but as a self-standing problem, a question of how a great power should act in relation to other great powers. This was one major source of the tragedy.

Second, Professor Junker's penetrating discussion of the Manichaeian trap suggests that Americans need to escape it, get over this way of thinking, without attempting to prescribe just how. Others, like Henry Kissinger, propose an answer: without abandoning their ideals, Americans must come to terms with the permanent, unchang-



ing realities of international politics; namely, the preeminence of national interests and the exigencies of power politics and the balance of power. This, in my view, is the wrong answer, or at least an inadequate and misleading one. The Manichaeian trap is not the only one into which states and peoples can fall. There is also its opposite, the power-political Machiavellian trap, and many more, I think, have fallen into it than into the former, with worse results. The answer to the shortcomings of a Manichaeian vision is not an abandonment of legitimate ideals or their relegation to a purely hypothetical and secondary influence on policy, but deeper historical understanding—seeing problems, dangers, and potential solutions in broad contexts and applying one's ideals realistically to those contexts. This proved vital in 1989–90, as often before, and as it often will be again. Which, in turn, means that, however little power we historians possess to influence day-to-day decisions in policy, and however little competence we may feel to exert any, what we do or fail to do in our daily task ultimately makes a difference.