

Dr. Egbert Klautke

University College London

School of Slavonic and East European Studies

## A New World? German and French Debates about America and Europe during World War I

for Matthew D'Auria and Jan Vermeiren, eds, *The Great War and the Idea of Europe*  
(Palgrave Macmillan)

By the turn of the century, the U.S.A. had developed into a political and economic power that challenged the established Eurocentric world order. In the wake of the American victory over Spain in 1898, when the last European colonial power was chased away from the North American continent, the U.S.A. started building an informal colonial empire of its own in the Pacific. Simultaneously, the European nations were increasingly confronted with economic competition from the U.S.A. when American companies successfully entered European markets and began undermining the dominance of French, German and British manufacturers. In response, French commentators in particular were quick to warn of an imminent 'American peril' to their international status as a colonial power, while German authors were using the same slogan to warn of the threat American exports posed to their industries and markets. The Prussian civil servant Hugo von Knebel-Doerberitz summarized the mood in Germany in dramatic terms: 'Isn't America's positive balance of trade with Germany a dangerous symptom of the fact that we are no longer able to compete with the

younger nation? Aren't we witnessing an ever increasing American "invasion", about which we can complain, but which we can't prevent?'<sup>1</sup>

The rise of the U.S.A. to the status of an international power *sui generis* was accompanied by wide-ranging public debates that betrayed a general thirst for information about anything American in the 'old world'. Hundreds of travel accounts, articles in newspapers and journals as well academic treatises provided knowledge and interpretations of all aspects of American society and culture, its peculiarities, the reasons for its economic rise, and the 'national character' of the Americans. The journalist and businessmen Ludwig Max Goldberger contributed to this European vogue of Americana and invented a long-lasting journalistic cliché when he described the U.S.A. as the 'country of unlimited opportunities'.<sup>2</sup> Some of the contributions to this debate were penned by important academics and intellectuals: in France, Paul Adam, Georges d'Avenel and Emile Boutmy were among the many authors of 'America-books', while the socialists Alphonse Merrheim and Emile Pouget discussed the importance of American business methods for the future of labour relations.<sup>3</sup> In Germany, Max Weber, Karl Lamprecht and Werner Sombart published

---

<sup>1</sup> Hugo von Knebel-Doerberitz, *Besteht für Deutschland eine amerikanische Gefahr?* (Berlin: Mittler, 1904), IV, 1; Octave Noël, 'Le péril américain', *Le Correspondant*, 25 March 1899, pp. 1083–1104, 10 April 1899, pp. 116–144; Thomas Lenschau, *Die amerikanische Gefahr* (Berlin: Siemenroth, 1902); see Jacques Portes, *Une fascination réticente: les Etats-Unis dans l'opinion française, 1870–1914* (Nancy: Presses Universitaires de Nancy 1990), pp. 341–345; Egbert Klautke, *Unbegrenzte Möglichkeiten: 'Amerikanisierung' in Deutschland und Frankreich, 1900–1933* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2003), 38–58.

<sup>2</sup> Ludwig Max Goldberger, *Das Land der unbegrenzten Möglichkeiten: Betrachtungen über das Wirtschaftsleben in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika* (Berlin and Leipzig: Fontane, 1903).

<sup>3</sup> Paul Adam, *Vues d'Amérique, ou La nouvelle jeunesse* (Paris: Société d'éditions littéraires et artistiques, 1906); Georges d'Avenel, *Aux Etats-Unis: les champs, les affaires, les idées* (Paris: Flammarion, 1908); Emile Boutmy, *Éléments d'une psychologie politique du peuple*

academic studies on the United States after they had participated in the International Congress of Sciences held in St. Louis in 1904, while writers such as Ernst von Wolzogen and Ludwig Fulda contributed to the vast number of travel accounts aimed at general public.<sup>4</sup> Regardless of its genre and context, much of this literature was driven by the assumption that American society, as the epitome of a modern, capitalist society, provided Europeans with an idea about the direction that their own societies would take: America appeared as the ‘land of the future’. Not only would America very soon play an important part as a powerful ‘civilized nation’ on par with the traditional European powers, it would moreover, many French and German authors were convinced, allow Europeans a glimpse into a their own future.

Despite many condescending comments about American materialism, lack of culture and refinement and the general deficits of the American ‘character’, genuine anti-Americanism was rare in French and German publications before the First World War. Still, while the majority of European observers showed a critical, but balanced view of the New World, not everyone felt comfortable with the prospect of the imminent ‘Americanization of the World’, as the British journalist W. T. Stead dubbed it.<sup>5</sup> Some anxious commentators

---

*américain: La nation, la patrie, l'état, la religion* (Paris: Colin, 1902); Alphonse Merrheim, “La méthode Taylor”, *La Vie Ouvrière*, 20 February 1913, 210–226, 5 March 1913, 298–309; Emile Pouget, *L'organisation du surménagement. (Le système Taylor)* (Paris: Rivère, 1914).

<sup>4</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, [1904]; Karl Lamprecht, *Americana: Reiseeindrücke, Betrachtungen, Geschichtliche Gesamtansicht* (Freiburg: Hezfelder, 1906); Werner Sombart, *Warum gibt es in den Vereinigten Staaten keinen Sozialismus?* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1906); Ernst von Wolzogen, *Der Dichter in Dollarica: Blumen-, Frucht- und Dornenstücke aus dem Märchenlande der unbedingten Gegenwart* (Berlin: Fontane, 1912); Ludwig Fulda, *Amerikanische Eindrücke* (Stuttgart and Berlin: Cotta, 1906).

<sup>5</sup> William T. Stead, *The Americanization of the World: or, The Trend of the Twentieth Century* (New York and London: Horace Markley, 1902).

were worried that in the wake of American economic success ‘materialist’ values, ideas and practises would dominate and undermine European culture and civilization. As a concerned secondary school teacher put it in a pamphlet published under the pseudonym “Germanus” put it: not American economic success was dangerous, but American ideas and thinking.<sup>6</sup> The Americans had certainly made enormous progress in developing their society, but had not quite caught up with the European nations in terms of cultural and artistic achievement and refinement. While the Americans excelled in economic and technological matters, where they had shown to be innovative and creative, culture, the arts and education were lacking behind compared to European standards and expectations. For the foreseeable future, most European intellectuals agreed, the Americans remain dependent on the old world and follow European models in the arts and general culture, regardless of their economic success.<sup>7</sup>

With the outbreak of the First World War in the summer of 1914, debates about the possibility of a future ‘Americanization of Europe’ came to a sudden halt, even if only for a short period of time. During the first years of the First World War, academics, journalists and intellectuals in all European nations engaged in a ‘war of words’ that sought to justify each nation’s position in the conflict. Initially, the U.S.A. played a only minor role within these debates. The longer the conflict lasted, however, the more important the U.S.A. became for the outcome of the war, the more these European debates focused on American policies, and in particular on the American president Woodrow Wilson. In this chapter, I will assess public

---

<sup>6</sup> Franz-Erich Junge, *Amerikanische Wirtschaftspolitik: Ihre ökonomischen Grundlagen, ihre sozialen Auswirkungen und ihre Lehren für die Volkswirtschaft* (Berlin: Springer, 1910); Germanus [Gustav Friedrich], *Die amerikanische Gefahr, keine wirtschaftliche, sondern eine geistige*

<sup>7</sup> Klautke, *Unbegrenzte Möglichkeiten*, pp. 87-109; Alexander Schmidt, *Reisen in die Moderne: Der Amerika-Diskurs des Deutschland Bürgertums for dem Ersten Weltkrieg im europäischen Vergleich* (Berlin: Akademie, 1997).

debates in Germany and France about the United States of America during and immediately after the First World War, and how these affected respective views of Europe in both countries.<sup>8</sup>

Shortly after the outbreak of the war, a number German authors complained bitterly about the ‘bias’ of the U.S.A. which, despite officially declaring their country’s neutrality, were openly supporting, or at least sympathising with, the Entente. Quite naturally, the argument went, President Woodrow Wilson’s government as well as the majority of the American people supported England, America’s former ‘mother country’. To many German observers, America’s behaviour during the conflict revealed one of her basic character traits: hypocrisy. The Americans were as insincere as the English ‘nation of shopkeepers’ which had become the main target of German public anger and criticism.<sup>9</sup> German authors repeatedly blamed England for the attitudes held by the majority of Americans: by cutting the transcontinental telegraph lines, England had monopolized control of the news from Europe that reached the United States and had thus full control over American public opinion. Therefore, German commentators argued, the distorted, one-sided and untrue version of the events in Europe as reported by English propaganda was all the American public heard about the conduct of war. The gullible Americans, the German-American journalist Karl Knortz complained, were believing even the most blatant lies about German war atrocities. This came as no surprise, Knortz explained, since the average American showed similar character

---

<sup>8</sup> Klautke, *Unbegrenzte Möglichkeiten*, pp. 109—152; see Jörn Leonhard, *Die Büchse der Pandora der Pandora: Geschichte des Ersten Weltkriegs* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2014); David W. Ellwood, *The Shock of America: Europe and the Challenge of the Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Mary Nolan, *The Transatlantic Century: Europe and America, 1890–2010* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> See e.g. Franz Klein, *Amerika und der große Krieg* (Vienna: Manz, 1915), p. 13.

traits as his English cousins: he was arrogant, compelled to dominate others (*herrsüchtig*) and envious.

Many German commentators agreed that the war had exposed the true national character of the Americans: they were first and foremost English, and for this reason they instinctively supported their mother country in the conflict.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, Rudolf Leonhard, a professor of law who before the war had spent a year at Columbia University in New York as a visiting professor and thus knew the U.S.A. from personal experience, explained that the United States were not a ‘new Europe’, i.e. a mixture and melting pot of all European nations, but simply a ‘second England’. English culture formed the basis of the American national character, and this fact easily explained the behaviour of the U.S.A. towards Europe.<sup>11</sup> To many Germans, the U.S.A. appeared as a lesser version of Germany’s most hated enemy during the First World War: in cultural terms, the U.S.A. had remained a British colony and displayed all the characteristics and flaws of their mother country. Just like the English, the Americans were full of hatred and envy of German successes, the playwright Ludwig Fulda – also a former traveller to the United States – explained.<sup>12</sup>

While many German authors thus stressed the ‘English’ character of the Americans to make sense of their ‘partial neutrality’, others hoped that the large number of Americans of German descent would support the Central powers and thus prevent the U.S.A. from joining the Entente in the war. The historian Eduard Meyer, another former visiting professor in the United States who intervened as an ‘expert witness’ on American affairs, hoped that the

---

<sup>10</sup> Karl Knortz, *Die Deutschfeindlichkeit Amerikas*, (Leipzig: Gestenberg, 1915), pp. 5, 27.

<sup>11</sup> Rudolf Leonhard, *Amerika während des Weltkrieges. (Deutsche Reden in schwerer Zeit, No. 16)*, (Berlin: Hezmann, 1915), pp. 9, 11.

<sup>12</sup> Ludwig Fulda, *Amerika und Deutschland während des Weltkrieges* (Dresden and Leipzig: Globus, 1916), pp. 19—22; similar Karl Jünger, *Deutsch-Amerika Mobil!* (Berlin and Leipzig; Behr, 1915, pp. 44, 71.

German-Americans would convince the American president Woodrow Wilson to stay out of the European conflict. He appealed to his ‘fellow Germans’ across the ocean to stand up to English control of the American public and act as a counterweight to English propaganda.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, and full of pathos, the historian Hermann Oncken send an address to German-Americans across the Atlantic and thanked them for the solidarity they had shown with their German fatherland. The German-Americans had provided much needed moral support to their former homeland, which had been ‘encircled’ by a ‘world of enemies’ and was forced to defend German *Kultur* on its own.<sup>14</sup> Some authors went even further and regarded the war as an opportunity to ‘bring home’ the German-Americans and re-integrate them into the German ‘national community’ (*Volksgemeinschaft*). These hopes resembled expectations that the war would have a cathartic effect on German society and would heal the internal fractions of the German nation brought about by rapid industrialization and urbanization.<sup>15</sup>

The eventual entry of the U.S.A. into the war in 1917 disappointed these and other hopes, and the German-Americans were held partly responsible for American policies: in addition to the discrimination and violence German-speakers were exposed to in the U.S.A., as members of an enemy nation, they were now blamed for their failure to keep America out

---

<sup>13</sup> Eduard Meyer, *Nordamerika und Deutschland* (Berlin: Curtius, 1915), p. 22. On Meyer see Mortimer Chambers, ‘The “Most Eminent Historian, the One Final Authority”. Eduard Meyer in America’, in *Eduard Meyer: Leben und Leistung eines Universalhistorikers*, ed. by William M. Calder III and Alexander Demandt (Leiden: Brill, 1990), pp. 97—131.

<sup>14</sup> Hermann Oncken, *Deutschlands Weltkrieg und die Deutsch-Amerikaner: Ein Gruß des Vaterlandes über den Ozean* (Stuttgart and Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1914), pp. 5—6, 19—20. Typically, Oncken forgot to mention the war effort of the Habsburg Empire.

<sup>15</sup> Jünger, *Deutsch-Amerika*, p. 131. See Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth and Mobilization in Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

of the war.<sup>16</sup> Angry and disappointed German commentators concluded that the inability of the German-Americans to influence the American public revealed a serious character flaw: they were mainly interested in their personal, material success and well-being, not in the fate of their home-nation across the Atlantic. Apparently, they already resembled the superficial and materialistic Americans more than their ‘idealistic’ forefathers who fought for the survival of German culture. Therefore, instead of supporting the German war effort, they acted selfishly and followed their private business interests. Again, the German-American community had shown that it was incapable of political organization and action, in contrast to the dominant ‘Anglo-Saxons’. This line of argument resembled accusations the controversial cultural historian Karl Lamprecht had made before the First World War when he had described the German-Americans as a naïve and politically untalented lot who had too easily succumbed to English domination and thus missed the opportunity to influence American society and politics: vast beer gardens were the main German contribution to American culture, according to Lamprecht.<sup>17</sup>

Once the United States had entered the war as an ‘associated nation’ of the Entente, the notion that the prevailing anti-German attitudes in the United States were caused by

---

<sup>16</sup> On German-Americans and the First World War see Katja Wüstenbecker, *Deutsch-Amerikaner im Ersten Weltkrieg: US-Politik und nationale Identitäten im Mittleren Westen* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2007); Phyllis Keller, *States of Belonging: German-American Intellectuals and the First World War* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1979); Frederick C. Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German-Americans and World War I* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974).

<sup>17</sup> Spiridion Gopcevic, *Amerikas Rolle im Weltkriege* (Leipzig: Elischer, 1917), p. 7; O. Krahl, *Die Rolle Amerikas im Weltkriege? Ein Beitrag zur Wahrheit*, in *Amerika geschrieben* (Berlin and Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1920), p. 6; Lamprecht, *Americana*, p. 25. See Roger Chickering, *Karl Lamprecht: A German Academic Life (1856–1915)* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Transaction 1993).



English propaganda was not convincing anymore. Therefore, German commentators now argued that the Americans pursued their very own interests when they entered the war: above all, they were defending their economic interests. This argument was immediately convincing to large parts of the German public since it made use of the most common European stereotype about the American national character, according to which the U.S.A. were dominated by rampant materialism, and American society was ‘ruled by the dollar’.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, Eugen Kühnemann explained that ‘the American war is first of all a gigantic business. In a more undisguised and shameless way than it is the case in other nations, the American war is the war of capitalism. Capitalism revealed itself to be the true master of America.’<sup>19</sup> This notion did not contradict the common view that America was little more than a blown-up version of her mother country, England: the ‘perfidious Albion’ was, after all, denounced for its materialism. The problem of the English, as Werner Sombart explained, was that they were a nation of ‘merchants’, not ‘heroes’. To Kühnemann, America represented the worst traits of the English in an almost pure form: ‘According to this concept, America is the perfected English idea – Anglo-Saxon freedom cleansed of the last remains of European feudal aristocracies –, the world of the free bourgeoisie. But what is the soul of this

---

<sup>18</sup> See for instance J. H. West, *Hie Europe! Hie Amerika! Aus dem Lande der krassen Utilität* (Berlin: Siemenroth, 1904); Karl Machalla, *Amerika, das Land des unbehinderten Erwerbs* (Vienna: Amonesta, 1905); Wolzogen, *Der Dichter in Dollarica*.

<sup>19</sup> Eugen Kühnemann, *Amerika als Deutschlands Feind* (Berlin: Siegismund, 1918), p. 41: ‘Der amerikanische Krieg ist in erster Linie ein riesiges Geldgeschäft. Unverhüllter und schamloser als bei den anderen Mächten ist der amerikanische Krieg der Krieg des Kapitalismus. Der Kapitalismus erwies sich als der wahre Herr Amerikas.’ Similar Emo Descovich, *Das Doppelgesicht: Amerikas Verhalten im Weltkriege* (Berlin: Siegismund, 1917), pp. 153-55.

bourgeoisie? Making money.'<sup>20</sup> American materialism acted as the driving force of a peculiarly American form of imperialism – 'Yankee imperialism' – that used economic power and influence as its main tools. From this perspective, the American entry into the war appeared as a logical step in the continuous process of expansion of the United States, which had become obvious with the American-Spanish war in 1898. With the American entry into the World War, Germany had become the victim of American imperialism.<sup>21</sup> At long last, Woodrow Wilson had shown America's true nature, and proved those voices wrong who had put their hopes for a negotiated peace on the American president.<sup>22</sup>

From early 1917 until well after the truce in 1918, German debates about the U.S.A. centred on president Woodrow Wilson.<sup>23</sup> To his many critics, Wilson represented and epitomized the national character of the Americans: he was cynical, hypocritical, at best naïve, but certainly not in a position to act as an honest and neutral peace broker between the European nations. Unsurprisingly, German authors stressed the 'Englishness' of Wilson: according to Eugen Kühnemann, Wilson was English 'by blood, education and conviction'. 'Deep inside', he continued, Wilson was a school master who dared to lecture the German

---

<sup>20</sup> Kühnemann, *Amerika als Deutschlands Feind*, p. 42: 'Amerika ist nach diesem Begriff der vollendete englische Gedanke, – die angelsächsische Freiheit gereinigt von den letzten Erdenresten der europäischen feudalen Aristokratien, – die Welt der freien Bürgerlichkeit. Was aber ist die Seele dieser Bürgerlichkeit? Das Geldverdienen.'

<sup>21</sup> O. Preusse-Sperber, *Yankee-Imperialismus und Dollar-Diplomatie* (Charlottenburg, 1918), p. 3; Georg Barthelme, *Aus meinem amerikanischen Skizzenbuch* (Cologne, 1918), p. 72; Siegmund Hellmann, *Deutschland und Amerika* (Munich, 1917), p. 17.

<sup>22</sup> Dietrich Schäfer, *Die Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika als Weltmacht: Eine geschichtliche Betrachtung zur Beleuchtung der Gegenwart* (Berlin, 1917), pp. 5-6.

<sup>23</sup> Reinhard R. Doerries, 'Woodrow Wilson: The View from Germany', in Guido Müller, ed., *Deutschland und der Westen: Internationale Beziehungen im 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 1998), pp. 92-100; Ernst Fraenkel, 'Das deutsche Wilsonbild', in *Jahrbuch für Amerikastudien* 5 (1960), pp. 66-120.

nation, and a 'despot', a master in the English art of presenting personal material interests as matters of human rights, law and freedom.<sup>24</sup> Wilson's idealism, and in particular his attempt to reform and organize international law in order to prevent future wars, was ridiculed; it showed Wilson's limited understanding of history. According to Eduard Spiess, author of an anti-Wilsonian pamphlet, the American president treated nations in the same way as individuals, and foolishly tried to apply the principles of civic law to international relations. The 'life of nations', however, was governed by power, not by the rule of law. Wilson's posture as the 'guardian angel of world peace' was meant to hide America's, and the Entente's, real interests, i.e. to contain German expansion and maintain the global dominance of the Western nations.<sup>25</sup> The theologian Adolf von Harnack, one of the powerful 'mandarins' of Imperial Germany's university system, considered Wilson's speech with which he had justified the American entry into the war the 'most shameless, insincere and presumptuous announcement' of a head of state to another nation since the days of Napoleon I. Harnack's speech listed complaints and accusations of Wilson, and the U.S.A. more generally, that were common in German war-time publications: the Americans' sympathy and support for the Entente had violated their neutrality; the Americans envied the achievements of the German empire; they had willingly believed in English anti-German propaganda; the real reasons for the Americans to enter the war were their economic interests, but not Wilson's apparent attempts 'to make the world safe for democracy'.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Kühnemann, *Amerika als Deutschlands Feind*, p. 37-38.

<sup>25</sup> Eduard Spiess, *Anti-Wilson: Eine Studie und eine Streitschrift* (Berlin, 1917), pp. 11-13, 42.

<sup>26</sup> Adolf von Harnack, 'Wilsons Botschaft und die deutsche Freiheit', in *Die deutsche Freiheit: Fünf Vorträge* (Gotha, 1917), pp. 1-13. See also Herman George Scheffauer, 'Wilsons Mißerfolge', in *Die Glocke 2* (1917), pp. 945-950. Despite its angry tone, Harnack's was still a rather modest contribution, compared to other authors. See for instance Barthelme, *Skizzenbuch*, p. 2.

Still, even after the U.S.A. had entered the war, many moderate Germans sympathized with Wilson's ideas and his vision for a radical reform of international relations that would prevent future armed conflicts of the scale of the World War. The economist Moritz Julius Bonn provided one of these moderate voices who favoured a negotiated peace and opposed the resumption of submarine warfare, which would force the U.S.A. to declare war to the Central Powers. Bonn defended Wilson against common accusations and tried to show that he was neither a representative of 'English interests' in the U.S.A. nor a 'slave of Wall Street'. Wilson's main aim had always been to end the war as soon as possible, Bonn maintained, and the American entry into the war had not changed this basic fact. Wilson was certainly not a hypocrite, as his critics kept repeating, but rather the opposite: a politician who tried to act according to general ethical principles that he deeply believed in.<sup>27</sup> Karl Kautsky, one of Germany's leading Social Democratic theorists, agreed with Bonn that Wilson was neither a hypocrite nor the stooge of Wall Street. He fully supported Wilson's '14 points', in particular the idea of a League of Nations that would radically re-organize international relations after the war. Wilson's vision allowed for a peace that would leave no irredenta and would thus leave no room for revanchist forces, Kautsky believed.<sup>28</sup>

To the actor and theater director Carl Meinhard, Wilson embodied the eternal idea of universal peace and understanding. Even if it turned out that Wilson had indeed been a lackey of Wall Street and a hypocrite, Meinhard argued, the abstract principles of 'Wilsonism' would endure beyond the current conflict, and for this reason alone Wilson needed to be

---

<sup>27</sup> Moritz Julius Bonn, *Was will Wilson?* (Munich, 1918), pp. 14-15, 39.

<sup>28</sup> Karl Kautsky, *Die Wurzeln der Politik Wilsons* (Berlin, 1919), p. 4, 40. Similar Karl Hönn, *Woodrow Wilson, dem Präsidenten der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika. Offener Brief* (Gotha, 1919).

praised and honoured.<sup>29</sup> The diplomat Robert von Scheller-Steinwartz agreed that a League of Nations as the expression of universal ideas would become the lasting legacy of Wilson.<sup>30</sup> The philosopher Karl Vorländer pointed at the similarities between Immanuel Kant's ideas for a 'perpetual peace' and the underlying principles of Wilson's 14 points which gave him hope that a peace settlement along Wilsonian lines would prevent armed conflict in the future and assure that the 'oceans of blood and tears' had not been shed in vain.<sup>31</sup>

When the conditions of the truce shattered any hopes for a mild 'Wilson peace' that would spare Germany the full consequences of its military defeat in 1918, and even more so after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, Wilson – and his German supporters – became the target of an disillusioned, disappointed and angry German public. Wilson's critics, who had never believed in nor supported his aims and principles, now saw their worst fears confirmed. Wilson, they claimed, had never played with open cards, but had deliberately hidden his real motives. His aim had always been the annihilation of Germany as a leading world power and the elevation of the United States in its stead, O. Krahl proclaimed.<sup>32</sup> Wilson was not an idealist who tried to make the world 'safe for democracy', Hermann von Rosen wrote in the *Deutsche Rundschau*, but above all a calculating politician and a smart businessman who tried to secure and strengthen the political and economic position of the U.S.A.. Rosen described the League of Nation as an anti-German military alliance and proposed a German-Russian economic and political Entente – including Poland, Bohemia and Hungary – as a counterforce that could rescue Europe from world-political

---

<sup>29</sup> Carl Meinhard, 'Wilsonismus', in *Die Weltbühne* 14.2 (1918), pp. 578-580.

<sup>30</sup> Robert R. Scheller-Steinwartz, *Amerika und Wir: Ein Wink am Scheideweg* (Munich, 1919), pp. 3, 79.

<sup>31</sup> Karl Vorländer, *Kant und der Gedanke des Völkerbundes. Mit einem Anhang: Kant und Wilson* (Leipzig, 1919), p. 13.

<sup>32</sup> Krahl, *Die Rolle Amerikas*, p. 214.

insignificance.<sup>33</sup> The radical-nationalist *Alldeutsche Blätter*, the journal of the Pan-German League, complained as much about Wilson as about his German supporters and followers who had naively believed in the sincerity and honesty of the American President. To them, Wilson had acted as the pied piper of the German people, whom he had seduced and abused, against the warnings from the Pan-Germans. This had clearly been the work of ‘international Jewry’, whose interests Wilson represented.<sup>34</sup> More moderate authors complained not about Wilson’s insincerity, but his naivety: the American president had certainly acted in an honest way and had believed that he would be able to broker a just peace and be able to revolutionize international politics and diplomacy. But he had foolishly underestimated British and French interests and revealed himself as illusionary and feeble-minded.<sup>35</sup>

The trajectory of French debates about the U.S.A. during the First World War was surprisingly similar to the German one, even though, for obvious reasons, across the Rhine judgements about American behaviour and attitudes differed sharply. While German observers berated the hardly disguised American support for the Entente, French authors were equally critical about American neutrality, albeit for different reasons. Despite the obvious sympathies the American government under President Woodrow Wilson showed for the Entente, the *Revue de Paris* accused the Americans of cowardice for not reacting

---

<sup>33</sup> Hermann von Rosen, ‘Wilsonismus und Bolschewismus’, in *Deutsche Rundschau* 179 (1919), pp. 244-259, at pp. 245-46.: ‘Ein solcher Wirtschaftsband

<sup>34</sup> Dr. Dumecke, ‘Das Selbstbestimmungsrecht der Völker – Lüge und Trauerspiel’, in *Alldeutsche Blätter* 29 (1919), pp. 145-46.

<sup>35</sup> See e.g. Eugen Knupfer, ‘Wilson’, in *Hochland* 16.2 (1919), pp. 564-568; Paul Rohrbach, ‘Die Krisis der amerikanischen Politik’, in *Deutsche Politik* 4.2 (1919), pp. 323-327; Eduard Meyer, *Die Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika: Geschichte, Kultur, Verfassung und Politik* (Frankfurt am Main, 1920), p. 253.

decisively to the German invasion of neutral Belgium and declare war on the Central Powers. To the anonymous author of this article, American inaction during the war revealed the ‘immaturity’ of the American nation: their character was not properly developed; therefore the Americans were unable to make the right decision and support the French nation in her defence of civilization. American inaction also confirmed the widely held belief that the American national character was dominated by materialism: since the Americans were afraid of losing their business interests in Germany and Central Europe, they did not dare to openly support France’s (and Britain’s) just war against the Central Powers.<sup>36</sup> The economist Raphaël-Georges Levy criticized president Wilson for his indecisiveness and lack of action even after German submarines had sunk the RMS Lusitania and killed more than one hundred American citizens.<sup>37</sup> While Levy did find some praise for American financial and economic support for the Entente, Emile Hovelacque dismissed American attitudes and behaviour completely. To him, neutrality itself – in the face of German atrocities, the breaking of international treaties and acts of sabotage by German-Americans on American soil – came close to a crime, since nothing less than the survival of democracy and the rule of law were at stake in the European war. According to Hovelacque, public declarations of sympathy with the Entente only covered up the despicable indifference of the Americans towards French suffering.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> E.A.B., ‘A propos de la neutralité américain, in *Revue de Paris*, 1 November 1915, pp. 212–224. See Jean-Jacques Becker and Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *La France, la nation, la guerre: 1850–1920* (Paris, 1995), pp. 294–299; Yves-Henri Nouailhat, *La France et les Etats-Unis: Août 1914–Avril 1917* (Lille, 1977), pp. 663–670.

<sup>37</sup> Raphaël-Georges Levy, ‘Les Etats-Unis pendant la grand guerre’, in *Revue des deux mondes*, 15 October 1915, pp. 829–861, at p. 860.

<sup>38</sup> Emile Hovelacque, ‘L’opinion américaine et la guerre’, in *La revue de Paris*, 15 February 1916, pp. 866–894, at p. 866.

When the U.S.A. finally entered the war in 1917, German and French debates about America intensified, and increasingly focused on the personality of Woodrow Wilson. French authors now needed to revise their previously damaging judgements about the character of the American president and provide a story that would make sense of his behaviour during the war. To this end, César Chabrun, a professor of law at the Sorbonne, explained to his fellow countrymen that they had so far completely misunderstood Wilson's motives and course of action. In the first place, Chabrun argued, Wilson was a philosophically trained and systematic thinker, whose point of view could only be understood in the context of the principles of international law that he believed in. Therefore, the French had too quickly condemned American neutrality as a pro-German stance. A highly distinguished mind, Wilson had needed time to reconcile his theoretical convictions with his practical politics, which had led to unjust accusations of indecisiveness or even support of Germany. As evidenced by his ideas for a League of Nations and his 14 points, Wilson closely followed Kant's ideas on international relations as laid out in his 'Perpetual Peace'. Despite his Kantianism, however, Wilson's thinking could not be labelled 'German'. The Germans had long abandoned the idealism of Kant, Chabrun explained, and the German mind had changed completely under the influence of the nationalist philosophies of Hegel and Fichte. Most importantly, the American declaration of war had proved unmistakably that Wilson and the United States stood firmly on the side of law and justice and agreed fully with the Entente.<sup>39</sup>

Chabrun's intervention belonged to a more general war-time debate in France about German philosophy and culture. Was it necessary to reject any German philosophy as part of Prussian *kultur*, and hence militarism and barbarism? Or did Immanuel Kant, who was

---

<sup>39</sup> César Chabrun, 'Kant et M. Wilson', in *Revue des deux mondes*, 15 February 1917, pp. 848–861.



admired by many French intellectuals, belong to a different tradition, to a different Germany? To Chabrun, the answer was obvious: Kant and German idealism belonged to the ‘other Germany’ that he distinguished from Prussian militarism and barbarity.<sup>40</sup> Daniel Halévy, by contrast, found a different solution to the puzzle of the German character. He argued that it was not Wilson who was influenced by Kant, but rather Kant who had been influenced by Wilson: while writing his essay on ‘Perpetual Peace’, Halévy argued, Kant had been inspired by American political philosophy. Wilson was simply continuing this genuinely American tradition, and not following in Kant’s footsteps.<sup>41</sup> Still, like Chabrun, Halévy tried to refute common French criticisms of Wilson’s policy of neutrality which had caused suspicion and anger before the American declaration of war. To this end, and like many of his German contemporaries, he stressed Wilson’s ‘Englishness’ and argued that throughout the war, the American president had supported England and the Entente against the German and Austrian Empires. The influence of the American Pacifist movement, however, supported by German propaganda, acts of sabotage and the German-Americans, had prevented him from joining the Entente earlier. So while Wilson was increasingly praised and supported, the French public had discovered a new villain: the American pacifists, and in particular the former Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan, who had resigned from this post in 1915 out of protest against Wilson’s ‘partial neutrality’. Bryan, the American pacifists and their German-American supporters provided suitable scapegoats for French authors that helped to explain and defend Wilson’s inactivity during the first years of the war. Tellingly, and quite in contrast to the

---

<sup>40</sup> On the debate about Kant and the “other Germany” see Martha Hanna, *The Mobilization of Intellect: French Scholars and Writers during the Great War* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1996), pp. 106-141.

<sup>41</sup> Daniel Halévy, *Le président Wilson: étude sur la démocratie américaine* (Paris: Payot, 1918), p. 216.

debate in Germany, the American pacifists were depicted by French authors as typical representatives of American ‘materialism’ since they tried to keep the United States out of the war to protect their business interests. Wilson, in contrast, appeared as the embodiment of American idealism who personally guaranteed French-American friendship and cooperation.<sup>42</sup> Emile Hovelacque, who in 1916 had harshly criticised American neutrality, was forced to change his position completely after the American entry to the war: he now celebrated Wilson for overcoming the opposition of American isolationists and pacifists and for reinvigorating the great American tradition of idealism.<sup>43</sup>

The economic historian Georges d’Avenel, author of a popular book on America published in 1908, agreed with most European observers of the U.S.A. that Americans were basically materialistic, interested merely in economic success, profit and comfort. The fact that they had joined a ‘holy crusade’ against militarism and barbarity, solely guided by their ideals, was all the more remarkable and admirable to d’Avenel. Independent of any selfish interests, the Americans had overcome their materialism and utilitarianism and had decided to support France in defending civilization.<sup>44</sup> Emile Hovelacque agreed: the American entry to the war was a victory of idealism over materialism. The U.S.A. were not fighting for any power-political aim of their own, but for the ideal of ‘civilization’, represented by the French nation. President Wilson had revealed himself as the true leader of his nation, and thus a worthy successor to Abraham Lincoln and George Washington. For the first time in world

---

<sup>42</sup> Halévy, *Le président Wilson*, p. 220-21. Emile Hovelacque, ‘De la neutralité à la croisade. L’évolution guerrière des Etats-Unis’, in *Revue des deux mondes*, 15 February 1919, p. 889-920, at p. 889.

<sup>43</sup> Emile Hovelacque, ‘Les écrivains américains et la guerre’, in *Revue des deux mondes*, 15 April 1917, pp. 894-928.

<sup>44</sup> Georges Vicomte d’Avenel, ‘La “croisade” américain’, in *Revue des deux mondes*, 15 April 1918, pp. 374-393, at pp. 374, 378. See Georges Vicomte d’Avenel, xxx

history, Hovelacque continued, a whole nation had devoted itself completely to a cause in which it had no material or political interests. America was sacrificing her sons for France, which in her defence of civilization represented the whole of humanity.<sup>45</sup> To d'Avenel, with their support for France in her defence of civilization against Prussian militarism the Americans had drawn the correct conclusion of their own historical experience. They had realized that they stood in the debt of France, which had supported America in her revolutionary war against England and helped her become a free and independent nation. Now it was the turn of the Americans to pay back this historical debt: 'I don't know how much the government of Louis XVI spent on the expedition to America, but it seems that the United States are paying back the little present we gave them 140 years ago a hundred times over. But money means nothing, considering the blood they are willing to shed for our cause, and which, across the ocean, established an eternal bond between our nations.'<sup>46</sup> In a similar vein, the diplomat Jules Cambon stressed the historical friendship between France and the U.S.A, in particular the French intellectual contribution to the birth of American democracy. While drafting the American Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson had been inspired by French philosophers of the eighteenth century; LaFayette's enthusiasm for the American revolution was now matched by the Americans' enthusiasm for the defence of the law on French soil.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> Hovelacque, *De la neutralité*, pp. 902-3.

<sup>46</sup> D'Avenel, *La 'croisade' américain*, p. 393: 'J'ignore ce que l'expédition d'Amérique avait coûté au gouvernement de Louis XVI; il semble bien que les Etats-Unis nous rendent au centuple le cadeau que nous leur avons fait il y a cent quarante ans, Mais l'argent est peu de chose auprès du sang qu'ils appréhendent à verser pour notre cause et qui cimente entre eux et nous, à travers l'Océan, des liens éternels.'

<sup>47</sup> Jules Cambon, 'L'erreur allemande sur les Etats-Unis', in *Revue des deux mondes*, 1 February 1919, pp. 535-36: 'La France a eu sa part, et la plus grande part, dans la naissance de la grande démocratie américaine. Jefferson qui rédigea la déclaration d'indépendance était imbu

Naturally, Woodrow Wilson became the person who epitomised French-American unity, love and friendship. French authors now presented him as a true hero and leader of his nation, a man with a flawless character who was driven by the most noble ideals, full of passion for the cause of civilization and law, imbued with honourable traditions.<sup>48</sup> Even Wilson's academic work, which German authors had dismissed and ridiculed, was praised in the highest tones.<sup>49</sup> By the summer of 1918, even the radical nationalist Charles Maurras of the 'Action Française', who had been an outspoken critic of American neutrality, found it necessary to publicly praise Woodrow Wilson, even if for the 'authoritarian character' of his presidency.<sup>50</sup> The euphoric public mood in the wake of Germany's defeat turned the arrival of president Wilson in Paris, who had travelled across the Atlantic to participate in the peace conferences, into a genuine triumph. Once again, the French public from left to right was united in their appreciation of Wilson and heaped praise on the American president. However, this French-American honeymoon lasted only for the short period of time between the declaration of the truce in November 1918 and the signing of the Paris peace treaties in 1919. The effusive celebrations of French-American friendship and the eulogies on President Wilson had only concealed very different interests, expectations and ideas in France and the

---

des idées de nos philosophes du XVIIIe siècle, et nos idées comme nos soldats ont combattu pour la jeune république.'

<sup>48</sup> Maurice Lewandowski, 'La puissance financière des Etats-Unis et son expansion mondiale', in *Revue des deux mondes*, 1 February 1918, pp. 662-691, at p. 662; Camille A.A. Ferri-Pisani, *L'intérêt et l'idéal des Etats-Unis dans la guerre mondiale* (Paris: Perrin, 1918), pp. 124, 133-34.

<sup>49</sup> Emile Boutroux, 'Le président Wilson. Historien du peuple américain', in *Revue des deux mondes*, 1 November 1918, pp. 5-26.

<sup>50</sup> Charles Maurras, 'La politique', in *L'action française*, 6 July 1918; similar Léon Daudet, 'Honneur au président Wilson!', in *L'Action française*, 14 Dec. 1918; Jacques Bainville, 'Notre hommage au président Wilson', in *L'Action française*, 13. Dec. 1918. see Hanna, *Mobilization of Intellect*, pp. 138-39.

United States about a ‘good peace’. It soon became evident that Wilson was not willing to agree to a peace treaty that would punish Germany harshly and eliminate her as a factor of European and world politics. Hence French euphoria towards Wilson soon and quickly turned into deep disappointment. The shock and disappointment about the peace treaty did not run as deep as in Germany; after all, France had eventually won the war. But Wilson became equally associated with a ‘bad peace’ that did not meet French expectations; hence attitudes in Germany and France towards the American president and the U.S.A., which had radically differed during the war, converged only shortly after the end of the conflict. Even the radical antisemitic denunciations of the Pan-German League and its derivatives found their equal in France: Roger Lambelin, editor of a French translation of the notorious ‘Protocols of the elders of Zion’, depicted Woodrow Wilson – as well as Lloyd George – as an ‘agent of Judaism’ and presented the Versailles treaty as an instrument to increase the power of ‘international Jewry’, to the detriment of European nations.<sup>51</sup>

The conflict over the economic and financial arrangements after the war disturbed American-French relations almost immediately after the Treaty of Versailles was signed. By 1920, Camille Ferri-Pisani had all but forgotten his previous enthusiasm for president Wilson. He now blamed the Americans for taking advantage of the financial hardship of the Europeans – an argument that formed the basis of French complaints about America throughout the 1920s and 1930s: ‘The monetary bluff of the Yankees has not directly ruined Europe, but it has prevented it from resurrecting itself from the rubble.’<sup>52</sup> Maurice Muret made Wilson personally responsible for the disappointing results of the Treaty of Versailles

---

<sup>51</sup> Roger Lambelin, *Le règne d’Israël chez les Anglo-Saxons* (Paris 1921), pp. 4-5

<sup>52</sup> Ferri-Pisani, ‘Le dollar et la dépréciation de l’or’, in *Mercure de France*, 15 December 1920, pp. 667-686, at p. 675: ‘Le bluff monétaire yankee n’a pas positivement ruiné l’Europe, mais il l’empêche de se relever de ses ruines.’

at a time when French complaints about the intransigent position of the U.S.A. regarding French war debts had become a major problem.<sup>53</sup> French authors now ridiculed the intellectual quality of Wilson in a similar way as German authors had done during the war, and accused him of insincerity and hypocrisy in his negotiations of the Versailles Treaty.<sup>54</sup> André Tardieu, later to become French minister president, explained in a detailed assessment of French-American relations that the U.S.A. had not entered the war to defend the ideal of civilisation, but to defend their business interests in Europe.<sup>55</sup>

Tardieu published his study at a time when the debate about French war debts had become a major concern and poisoned French-American relations. The American insistence that France, and all other European nations, had to pay back their war debts in full, was interpreted as a great ‘injustice’ in France, not least since the Germans profited at the same time from American loans agreed in the Dawes Plan of 1924. During the war, the argument went, France had defended civilization against tyranny and militarism, in an alliance with all free nations. She had sacrificed herself and paid a high price in terms of casualties and material destructions. The only ‘free nation’ that had profited from the war were the U. S., who were now acting like ‘Uncle Shylock’ – the Jewish usurer from *The Merchant of Venice* – when they demanded their money back; their position might have been legally correct, but morally it was clearly wrong in the eyes of French commentators. Octave Homberg, a French diplomat, summed up this general attitude in a succinct way: In their fight against Prussia, French soldiers had given their lives also for the Americans, to prevent Prussian domination

---

<sup>53</sup> Maurice Muret, ‘L’opinion américaine et la France’, in *Revue de Paris*, 1 March 1927, pp. 24-43, at p. 26.

<sup>54</sup> Octave Homberg, *L’impérialisme américain* (Paris: Plon, 1929), p. 26; Kadmi-Cohen, *L’abomination américaine: essai politique* (Paris: Flammarion, 1930), p. 56.

<sup>55</sup> André Tardieu, *Devant l’obstacle. L’Amérique et nous* (Paris, Emile-Paul Frères, 1927), p. 153. Similar Henri Hauser, *L’Amérique vivante* (Paris: Plon, 1924), p. 32.

of Europe as a whole. Therefore, insisting on the repayment of war debts was narrow-minded and obscene.<sup>56</sup> This acrimonious debate damaged the public image of the U.S.A. in France and convinced politicians and intellectuals that the Americans were following a plan to subject Europe to a form of ‘Dollar Diplomacy’ that resembled their policies in Latin America. This new form of financial imperialism would leave Europe completely dependent on the interests of Wall Street and reduce the European nations to second-rate powers. These ‘anti-imperialist’ arguments were an attempt to defend the ‘French predominance’ over Europe that the Peace treaties were meant to establish. They frequently employed antisemitic tropes when America was characterized as ‘Uncle Shylock’, as a state dominated by the interests of Jewish bankers and financiers.<sup>57</sup> The bitter complaints about American intransigence over the war debts united much of the French public in the 1920s, and were almost organically linked to even more general criticisms of American society that focused on American technology, society and culture. ‘Americanism’ undermined French civilization in the wake of the American rise to power after the World War. In these anti-American pamphlets, led by George Duhamel’s *Scènes de la vie future* and followed by ‘non-conformist’ intellectuals such as Robert Aron, Arnaud Dandieu or Thierry Maulnier, the U.S.A. as a whole were blamed for the ills of modern industrial society and made responsible

---

<sup>56</sup> Homberg, *L’impérialisme américain*, p. 24. See Melvyn P. Leffler, *The Elusive Quest: America’s Pursuit of European Stability and French Security, 1919–1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press); Stephen A. Schuker, *The End of French Predominance in Europe: The financial Crisis of 1924 and the Adoption of the Dawes Plan* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1976).

<sup>57</sup> J. L. Chastanet, *L’Oncle Shylock ou l’impérialisme américain à la conquête du monde* (Paris: Flammarion, 1927); Homberg, *L’impérialisme américain*; Octave Homberg, *La grande injustice: la question des dettes interalliés* (Paris: Grasset, 1926) Kadmi-Cohen, *L’abomination américaine*; Pierre Laurent, *L’impérialisme économique américaine* (Paris: Recueil Sirey, 1931); Charles Pomaret, *L’Amérique à la conquête du monde* (Paris: Colin, 1931).

for the crisis of liberalism of the interwar period. To these authors, the U.S.A. embodied the kind of shallow utilitarian modernity that threatened to destroy the foundations of European society. ‘Americanism’ had actively undermined French civilization when it imposed its commercialist, materialist values upon it; this development needed to be stopped and reversed.<sup>58</sup>

Towards the end of the post-war decade, German attitudes towards ‘Americanism’ were hardly more positive than in France. Even though German authors had appreciated the fact that the American Senate had rejected the Versailles Treaty and thus seemed to have condoned German criticism of the Treaty, they remained as critical of Woodrow Wilson throughout the 1920s as their French counterparts. Honest Americans were as incensed as the German public by Wilson’s untruthfulness, Eduard Meyer maintained.<sup>59</sup> When the former American president died in 1924, the German foreign minister Gustav Stresemann instructed the German embassy in Washington D.C. not to lower its flag to half-mast to pay tribute to Wilson, as diplomatic etiquette would have requested. He thus caused a minor diplomatic crisis that did not help Stresemann’s pro-American policies, but attested to the deep-seated German hatred of Wilson and his role during the First World War.<sup>60</sup> While the short-lived

---

<sup>58</sup> Georges Duhamel, *Scènes de la vie future* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1930); Robert Aron and Arnaud Dandieu, *Le cancer américain* (Paris: Rieder, 1931); see Seth D. Armus, *French Anti-Americanism, 1930–1948. Critical Moments in a Complex History* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007); Denis Lacorne, Jacques Rupnik and Marie-France Toinet, eds, *The Rise and Fall of French Anti-Americanism. A Century of French Perception* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990); Philippe Roger, *The American Enemy. A Story of French Anti-Americanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); David Strauss, *Menace in the West. The Rise of French Anti-Americanism in Modern Times* (Westport: Greenwood, 1978).

<sup>59</sup> Meyer, *Vereinigte Staaten von Amerika*, pp. 287-8.

<sup>60</sup> Manfred Berg, *Gustav Stresemann und die Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika: weltwirtschaftliche Verflechtung und Revisionspolitik 1907-1929* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1990), p. 238.



recovery of the German economy in the second half of the 1920s depended on American loans and American mediation in the debate about reparations, German authors were as concerned about the prospects of ‘American imperialism’ as their French counterparts. Authors on the far-right of the political spectrum, such as Alexander Graf von Brockdorff, a leading member of the Pan-German League, argued that with accepting American loans, Germany had become a victim of the same kind of Dollar-Diplomacy that the Americans had used to subjugate and control Central America. Even worse, von Brockdorff argued, the Americans were not content with the financial and economic penetration of Germany, they were also imposing their values, life-styles and mentality on the old continent.<sup>61</sup>

Many commentators agreed with this alarming assessment that identified ‘Americanization’ as one of the most dangerous threats to German culture and society. The journal *Die Tat* for example warned that the Americanization of German intellectual life would prove even worse than any form of ‘technological Americanism’ such as Fordism or Taylorism, since it poisoned the true German character with catch-phrases, superficiality and monotone mechanization.<sup>62</sup> Such arguments were summarized and expanded in the most

---

<sup>61</sup> Alexander Graf von Brockdorff, *Amerikanische Weltherrschaft?* (Berlin: Albrecht, 1929); see Klaus Schwabe, ‘Anti-Americanism within the German Right’, *American Studies* 21 (1976), pp. 89–107.

<sup>62</sup> Alfred Ehrentreich, ‘Americana’, *Die Tat* 19 (1927/28), pp. 789–92. Zum deutschen Antiamerikanismus der Zwischenkriegszeit siehe Egbert Klautke, *Unbegrenzte Möglichkeiten. „Amerikanisierung“ in Deutschland und Frankreich, 1900–1933*, Stuttgart: Steiner, 2003; Mary Nolan, *Visions of Modernity. American Business and the Modernization of Germany*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994; Philipp Gassert, *Amerika im Dritten Reich. Ideologie, Propaganda und Volksmeinung, 1933–1945*, Stuttgart: Steiner, 1997. Einen zusammenfassenden Überblick zur Zwischenkriegszeit gibt Bernd Weisbrod, *Das doppelte Gesicht Amerikas in der Weimarer Republik*, in: Frank Kelleter/Wolfgang Knöbl (Hg.), *Amerika und Deutschland. Ambivalente Begegnungen*, Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006, S. 194–210.

famous anti-American book published in Germany in the 1920s, 'America and Americanism' by the journalist Adolf Halfeld. The message of Halfeld's book was very similar to George Duhamel's, published only a few years later: 'Americanism' posed a lethal threat to Europe; Americanization had to be stopped by any means. Halfeld presented a venomous critique of American society, its underlying values and the Americans' mission to export and impose these on Europe. Halfeld presented a compendium of well-established clichés and prejudices about America and the Americans when he accused them of rampant materialism, mechanization and standardization, hypocrisy, a fundamental lack of cultural refinement, and not least 'cultural feminism'. What gave his book its particular urgency was the assumption that the process of the 'Americanization of Europe' was already well underway and threatening to eradicate European traditions and culture.<sup>63</sup>

German debates of the 'Americanisation' of Europe, which gained momentum from the mid-1920s and fuelled such anti-American polemics, revolved around abstract topics, in particular about the opportunities and dangers of 'Fordism', i.e. the introduction of American business methods and technology, and about the impact of American popular culture on German society. French inter-war anti-Americanism, which employed very similar tropes and stereotypes as the German version, was in turn more directly related to the outcome of the First World War, which had given rise to fears about the 'decline of the West' and led to perceptions of an irreversible loss of European power. By the end of the decade, and despite their radically different positions towards the U.S.A. during and immediately after the war, images and perceptions of America in both countries almost converged again. Alarmed commentators in France and in Germany now perceived Europe as the victim of the same

---

<sup>63</sup> Alfred Halfeld, *Amerika und der Amerikanismus. Bekenntnisse eines Europäers* (Jena: Diederich, 1927).

kind of ‘Yankee imperialism’ and ‘Dollar Diplomacy’ that the Americans had used to subjugate the Caribbean and parts of Latin America around the turn of the century. With hindsight, America’s contribution to the First World War appeared as the prelude to a new era in world politics, characterized by European crisis and decline at the expense of the U.S.A.<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> Klautke, *Unbegrenzte Möglichkeiten*, pp. 152–182; Armus, *French Anti-Americanism*; Strauss, *Menace in the West*.