

**Fashoda Incident - III**

**Lead: In the fall of 1898, France and Britain found themselves in a tense standoff over possession of the tiny upper Nile Valley village of Fashoda in the Sudan.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: Diplomatic disputes are rarely simple. They usually involve the stated reason for conflict, but after the passage of time, often can be peeled like an onion. Later reflection reveals layers of subtle reasoning and motivation, some not so obvious.**

**France's support for the American Revolution after 1788 was hardly enthusiasm for democracy by the autocratic government of Louis XVI, rather it was in large measure a barely-disguised attempt at revenge for France's losses in the Seven Years' War earlier in the century. So too the Fashoda incident involved more than a tense stalemate between a British Army under General Kitchener and a few French troops led by Colonel Marchand over who would control a little spit of high ground miles from nowhere in sub-Saharan Sudan. Kitchener and Marchand kept the matter on the scene at a polite standoff while London and Paris circled around one another with teeth bared in an elaborate diplomatic minuet.**

**The French had sent Marchand across the continent from Gabon to stake a claim to a part of the Nile Valley. The British considered this a form of malicious effrontery since its client state, Egypt, had ancient claims in the Sudan, and Kitchener had just completed a slow march south, up the Nile from Cairo, clearing out all native rivals and reestablishing British/Egyptian rule over the River Valley. French Foreign Minister Théophile Delcassé at first enflamed public opinion by defiant support for Marchand's mission, but as the French position became increasingly perilous, embarrassed ordered him to withdraw. The real reason for Delcassé was much closer than a remote outpost**

**on the Nile. Modern Germany, united, industrialized, and powerful threatened just to the East. France needed an ally and Britain was the logical choice. This necessity led to Marchand's withdrawal, accommodation in Africa the following spring and, in 1904, the Anglo-French Entente.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

## Resources

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**Lewis, David L.** *The Race to Fashoda: European Colonialism and African Resistance in the Scramble for Africa.* New York, NY: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987.

**Ray, James Lee.** *Democracy and international Conflict: An Evaluation of the Democratic Peace Proposition.* Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1995.

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