

## THE IMPACT OF AMERICAN LEGISLATION ON GERMAN IMMIGRANTS AND THEIR POSITION DURING WORLD WAR I

### O IMPACTO DA LEGISLAÇÃO AMERICANA SOBRE OS IMIGRANTES ALEMÃES E SUA SITUAÇÃO DURANTE A PRIMEIRA GUERRA MUNDIAL

Article received on: 11/14/2025

Article accepted on: 2/16/2026

**Kifah Ahmed Mohammed Najjar\***

\*Department of History, College of Arts, University of Baghdad, Baghdad, Iraq  
[akefah82@yahoo.com](mailto:akefah82@yahoo.com)

**Shatha Abdullah Ali Saif\***

\*Department of History, College of Arts, University of Baghdad, Baghdad, Iraq  
[trwhy663@gmail.com](mailto:trwhy663@gmail.com)

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest

#### Abstract

This research was conducted to study the economic and social role of German immigrants. It focused on their contributions to the development of agriculture by transferring their European expertise in grain cultivation and dairy production, which led to improved yields in several Midwestern states. It also highlighted the role played by German craftsmen in small and medium-sized industries, as they contributed to the establishment of workshops and factories and the development of new techniques in brewing, leather, and woodworking. The chapter emphasized the factors that made German immigrants an active element in the American economy, including their professional discipline, diverse skills, and strong community cohesion.

**Keywords:** German Immigrants. Agriculture. Craftsmanship. Cultural Identity. Community Cohesion.

#### Resumo

*Esta pesquisa foi realizada para estudar o papel econômico e social dos imigrantes alemães. Ela se concentrou em suas contribuições para o desenvolvimento da agricultura, por meio da transferência de seus conhecimentos europeus no cultivo de grãos e na produção leiteira, o que levou a um aumento da produtividade em vários estados do Meio-Oeste. Também destacou o papel desempenhado pelos artesãos alemães nas pequenas e médias indústrias, uma vez que contribuíram para a criação de oficinas e fábricas e para o desenvolvimento de novas técnicas nas áreas de fabricação de cerveja, couro e marcenaria. O capítulo enfatizou os fatores que tornaram os imigrantes alemães um elemento ativo na economia americana, incluindo sua disciplina profissional, habilidades diversificadas e forte coesão comunitária.*

**Palavras-chave:** Imigrantes Alemães. Agricultura. Artesanato. Identidade Cultural. Coesão Comunitária.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The study also addressed the social and educational life of the German community, examining topics related to the establishment of German schools, cultural associations, and clubs that preserved language, customs, and traditions. It traced the impact of these institutions in strengthening solidarity and protecting cultural identity



within major cities, and explained the role of German women in improving family and social life, particularly in education and handicrafts, which contributed to the development of the immigrant community's structure and the reproduction of its culture within the broader American society.

## **2 THE IMPACT OF THE NATURALIZATION ACT OF 1906 ON THE GERMAN PRESENCE IN THE UNITED STATES**

American legislation on naturalization stipulated that children born in the United States to a father who was a naturalized American citizen were considered American citizens, even if the father left the country after their birth and renounced his citizenship and allegiance. These children, upon reaching the age of twenty-one, were granted the right to choose either to return to their nationality of origin or to retain the citizenship they had acquired through their father. This law had been in effect since 1875, according to a ruling issued by the Attorney General of the United States. <sup>(1)</sup>

In 1896, the U.S. Department of State decided that a child born in the United States to foreign parents, who was then taken abroad within a short period, retained—according to the established view of the executive authority—American citizenship by birth, and could claim it upon reaching adulthood. It was emphasized, however, that the final determination was not within the jurisdiction of the executive branch but rather belonged to the competent court, whether state or federal.

Subsequently, a conflicting decision was issued by the Department of the Treasury on February 28, 1899, under No. (20747), which ruled that children born in the United States to non-naturalized foreign parents, and then taken abroad, were considered foreign immigrants upon their return. After the case was referred to the legal section of the department, it was concluded—upon reviewing the authorities—that a child born in the country to a foreign father and then taken abroad acquired the domicile and nationality of his father<sup>(2)</sup>

---

<sup>(1)</sup> United States. Congress. House, House Documents, Otherwise Publ. as Executive Documents, Washington, D.C., 1876, P. 564.

<sup>(2)</sup> F. R.U.S., Memorandum, Washington, April 16, 1901, No. 150, P. 173.

That series of opinions and decisions demonstrated a gradual trajectory toward consolidating the principle of birthright citizenship within American territory. It provided legal assurance to the children of immigrants, including Germans, granting them the right to retain the citizenship acquired by birth while preserving the option of self-determination upon reaching the age of twenty-one. This development strengthened the integration of German families into American civil and educational institutions, particularly in Midwestern cities with high concentrations of German communities.<sup>(3)</sup> The correspondence of the Department of State established the principle of protecting the citizenship of minors born in the United States from the consequences of changes in the father's nationality or the family's relocation abroad. This alleviated for German families the burden of dual loyalty between their country of origin and integration into American society, and granted children who grew up between two spheres a clear legal option upon reaching adulthood, rather than being bound to the will of the father or the dictates of consulates.<sup>(4)</sup>

The Supreme Court's ruling in 1899 established the principle on a general constitutional basis, elevating the status of the right of citizenship by birth above the vagaries of administrations, which was directly reflected in the intermittent routes of German immigration across the Atlantic, as the children of immigrants who were born in the United States of America and then taken to Europe by their parents ensured the possibility of returning and joining the labour market, education and soldiers in accordance with the status of American citizenship, without the need for new naturalization pathways<sup>(5)</sup>.

This judicial decision specifically provided a practical guarantee for the children of families scattered between the two continents, allowing them to return to U.S. ports as clear citizens without having to go through new naturalization pathways or confusing classification with immigration authorities, and this was reflected in decisions to reside, study, work, and move seasonal between the United States of America and the home

---

<sup>(3)</sup> United States. Congress, Uniform Rule for the Naturalization of Aliens: Hearing, 1906, P. 45.

<sup>(4)</sup> United States. Congress. House, House Documents, Otherwise Publ. as Executive Documents, Op. Cit., P. 566.

<sup>(5)</sup> F. R.U.S., Memorandum, Washington, April 16, 1901, No. 150, P. 174.

country, as well as reducing the cost of legal risk that had shackled part of the integration movement prior to the issuance of that judicial executive clarification<sup>(6)</sup>.

At the same time, in 1901, Prussia imposed an administrative order restricting the return of German-born people who had acquired American citizenship with a discriminatory targeting of them only, as the US State Department asked for clarification of the scope of application compared to naturalized people in other countries, which reflects a practical fear for the movement of German families back and forth – this is the case, and European residency decisions affected the settlement of American citizenship status by birth and naturalization, and created legal costs and administrative risks at the port, residence and work, and Washington updated the activation of treaties Naturalization and consular protests to safeguard freedom of movement and integration<sup>(7)</sup>.

The decisions of the State of Prussia revealed a restrictive practice that differentiated between native-born Americans and naturalized Germans by means of general orders of expulsion or temporary residence, in contravention of the protocols of the February 22 , <sup>(8)</sup>1868 (Bancroft Agreements), which equalized the rights of naturalized by birth, creating de facto legal discrimination detrimental to the travel and commerce of German families. The German measures indicated an implicit goal of pressuring individuals to renounce American citizenship in order to lift the barrier to conscription, making it an indirect means of managing military loyalty, thus making the impact of German legislation extended to the heart of the issue of acquired American citizenship and freedom of movement from the American point of view, and pushed

---

<sup>(6)</sup> F. R.U.S., Memorandum, Washington, May 27, 1901, No. 151, P. 175.

<sup>(7)</sup> F. R.U.S., Letter from Mr. Hay to Mr. Jackson, Washington, April 16, 1901, No. 152, P. 176.

<sup>(8)</sup>Bancroft Conventions: Explanatory notes drafted together with the texts of the conventions to determine their practical applications, in particular the principle of the treatment of naturalized persons (treatment of a native citizen) after the completion of the requirements of naturalization and continuous residence for five years. The most prominent provisions of those protocols are: 1. Uninterrupted residence in its legal sense is counted as a matter of continuous physical presence, and transitory journeys are counted. 2. If a person leaves his original nationality by legal means and then becomes a valid citizen in the other country, an additional residence of five years is not required. 3. The naturalized person shall not be punished upon his return to his country of origin for the same act of emigration. 4. The intention of not returning and then the effects of naturalization are presumed if the naturalized person resides for more than two years in the country of his first nationality. 5. The powers of the General Police shall not be affected by the presence of resident foreigners if required by safety and order, and may permit short visits for specific purposes even if there are local military restrictions. 6. The original citizenship is not automatically restored just for the sake of return and residence, but by a new application and legal procedures. For more details, see: United States, Treaty with the King of Prussia (North German Confederation), February 22, 1868, United States Statutes at Large 15, 1868, PP. 615 – 617.

Washington to think about publicizing the issue to public opinion and activating the tools of consular protection and protest based on agreements Naturalization<sup>(9)</sup>.

The Naturalization Act of 1906 marked a turning point in the course of the regulation of immigration, as it moved naturalization from a wide local variation to a unified federal system and established its own administrative framework<sup>(10)</sup>, which met a reformist trend aimed at controlling the rapid waves of immigration at the turn of the twentieth century.

The Naturalization Act introduced the English language requirement, prohibiting the naturalization of those who could not speak it, with limited exceptions such as physical disabilities and those who submitted a declaration of intent before the law came into force, so that the threshold for entry into citizenship changed and English learning became an explicit legal requirement United States of America to a competent department that monitors the integrity of applications throughout the country<sup>(11)</sup>.

The U.S. Naturalization Act of 1906 completely reorganized the process by assigning oversight to the federal government and standardizing forms, durations, and procedures, ending the disparity in local courts faced by Germans in Midwestern states and industrial cities, and making the path to citizenship more stable for members of large, established communities such as Germans<sup>(12)</sup>.

The new law diverged between valid and invalid naturalization, by standardizing papers and records, examining the eligibility of witnesses and evidence, and providing courts with federal screening staff<sup>(13)</sup>, as the granting of certification was linked to a more

---

<sup>(9)</sup> F. R.U.S. 1901, Letter from Mr. White to Mr. Hay, Berlin, May 4, 1901, No. 153, P. 177.

<sup>(10)</sup> United States. Congress, Uniform Rule for the Naturalization of Aliens: Hearing, 1906, P. 45.

<sup>(11)</sup> United States. Bureau of Naturalization, Annual Report of the Commissioner of Naturalization, 1928, P.4.

<sup>(12)</sup> United States. House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, Uniform Rule for the Naturalization of Aliens, Washington, 1906, PP. 1 – 2.

<sup>(13)</sup> Dillingham Commission: The Commission was established by Congress by the Immigration Act of February 20, 1907 (Article 39) to investigate the situation and impact of immigration and propose reforms, chaired by Senator William P. Dillingham, and presented during the years (1907-1911). An extensive survey culminated in the publication of forty-one volumes as Senate publications in 1911, which included summaries of reports with conclusions and recommendations (two volumes) and a dictionary of races or peoples that classified immigrants as races, and its recommendations culminated in a demand for a literacy test and stricter due segregation, which paved the way for the 1917 (Reading Test) Act and then the quota system during the years (1921-1924) which favored northwestern origins by linking quotas to previous censuses, which had a profound impact on the formulation of reception and integration policies at the beginning of the twentieth century. For more details, see:

rigorous administrative review and a uniform list of models that reduce the likelihood of fraud, especially in major cities. In February 1907, under the chairmanship<sup>(14)</sup> of Senator William P. Dillingham, in shifting the debate from how to naturalize to who should emigrate and be naturalized, carried out an extensive survey of the phenomena of immigration and issued large reports, which were subsequently used in legislative drafting<sup>(15)</sup>.

In its recommendations, the Committee concluded that restrictive tools, most notably the literacy test as a screening method for new immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, which paved the way for the adoption of literacy tests a few years later.  
(16)

The Dillingham Commission reports that the Germans, as a group of older immigrants, had higher rates of English proficiency than the modern immigration categories of other races<sup>(17)</sup>, making the requirement a relatively low threshold for most and having limited practical impact.

The Dillingham Commission reports showed that the rates of naturalization among adult males of German origin were the highest among foreign groups, as Germans were acquiring political rights more quickly than those in southern and eastern Europe, a distinction enshrined in the analysis of citizenship in the committee's summaries, and the

---

Gilder Lehrman Institute, *The Dillingham Commission and the Immigration Question, 1907–1921*; United States. Reports of the Immigration Commission: Abstracts of Reports of the Immigration Commission, with Conclusions and Recommendations and Views of the Minority, Vol. 1, Washington, 1911, P. 21 .

<sup>(14)</sup> William B. Dillingham (1843-1923), Vermont Republican politician and lawyer and chairman of the Federal Immigration Commission known as the Dillingham Commission, born December 12 in Waterferry, Vermont, educated at Newberry Institute and Kimball Union Academy (Kimball Union Academy), held early local political positions, most notably Attorney General of Washington County, Secretary of Civil and Military Affairs to the Governor, member of the House of Representatives, local Senate , and Commissioner of Taxes of Vermont, then was elected Governor of Vermont from October 4, 1888 to October 2, 1888 In 1890, he was elected by the state parliament as a U.S. senator from Vermont on October 18 , 1900, and continued in his seat until his death, during the years (1907-1911 ) he chaired the Immigration Committee, which submitted an extensive report in forty-one volumes and influenced its recommendations in the direction of subsequent restrictive legislation. July in Montpelier, Vermont. For more details, see:

Prentiss C. Dodge, *Encyclopedia, Vermont Biography* Burlington, Ullery Publishing, 1912, P. 48; Leonard Schlup, *William Paul Dillingham: A Vermont Republican in National Politics*, Proceedings of the Vermont Historical Society 54, Winter 1986, PP. 1 – 3.

<sup>(15)</sup> United States. Immigration Commission, Abstracts of Reports of the Immigration Commission, Abstract of the report on Federal immigration legislation, 1911, P. 557.

<sup>(16)</sup> United States. Immigration Commission, *Dictionary of Races or Peoples*, 1911, PP. 52 – 54.

<sup>(17)</sup> United States. Immigration Commission, Abstracts of Reports of the Immigration Commission, Op. Cit., PP. 474 – 477.

effects of the post-1906 naturalization law prompted wider sections of Germans to end their legal status in order to vote on issues affecting their economic interests. In particular, the issue of alcohol and municipal issues, where naturalization was a tool for disciplined political integration and early civic engagement in issues related to their existence and stability<sup>(18)</sup>.

The Gradual Series of Executive Opinions and Judicial Rulings until 1899 led to the consolidation of the principle of citizenship by birth within the territory of the United States and the accompanying legal protection for the children of immigrants in the event of a change in the nationality of the fathers or their transfer. Particularly in municipal cases and the issue of prohibition, while the English language requirement became a relatively easy threshold for a historically stable gathering in Midwestern cities, and the Dillingham Commission's reports later showed that the debate shifted from how to naturalize to who should emigrate and naturalize in preparation for restrictive tools that targeted the waves of southern and eastern Europe more than the Germans, thus obtaining a practical advantage from the regularity of the federal track without being exempted from external tensions imposed by restrictive Russian orders in 1901 On naturalized returnees.

Table 1. Numbers of German immigrants to the United States of America during the years 1901-1914<sup>(19)</sup>

Sunnah	Number of Migrants
1901	21,651
1902	28,304
1903	40,086
1904	46,380
1905	40,574
1906	37,564
1907	37,807
1908	32,309
1909	25,540
1910	31,283
1911	32,061
1912	27,788
1913	34,329
1914	35,734
Total	471,410

Sources: Authors.

<sup>(18)</sup> Faust, Vol. 2, Op. Cit., PP. 125 - 126.

<sup>(19)</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1910, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1911, P. 92; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1915, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1916, PP. 92 – 96 .

### 3 THE ATTITUDE OF GERMAN IMMIGRANTS TO THE FIRST WORLD WAR IN 1914

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the world has witnessed many crises that have led to political crises between the great powers on the European continent, foremost of which was the Balkan crisis<sup>(20)</sup>, which threatened to trigger an international conflict, especially between the Austria-Hungary Empire on the one hand and Tsarist Russia on the other<sup>(21)</sup>. The First World War<sup>(22), (23)</sup> with international tensions, mutual suspicion between States and a large-scale arms race in Europe, was all preparing for war, despite attempts by the major European powers to avert a large-scale war, such as peace conferences and mediation to resolve outstanding problems between those States<sup>(24)</sup>.

On the other hand, the European continent witnessed very serious developments in 1914, which led to the outbreak of the Great War, which took place for several indirect<sup>(25)</sup> reasons, as the major powers in Europe competed for the arms race in a very

---

<sup>(20)</sup> In the first war that broke out in the period (October 1912-May 1913), the Balkan League, consisting of Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria and Montenegro, fought the Ottoman Empire, seizing most of its European possessions, and the fighting ended with the Treaty of London on May 30, 1913. Then the second war broke out in the period (June-August 1913) when Bulgaria attacked its allies because of the partition of Macedonia, so Romania and the Ottoman Empire intervened, and ended with the Treaty of Bucharest concluded on August 10, 1913, and the Treaty of Constantinople with the Ottomans on September 29, 1913, the most prominent results were the expansion of Serbia, Greece, and Montenegro, and Romania's acquisition of southern Dobruja, the retreat of the Ottomans with the recapture of Edirne, and the recognition of Albania's independence, and the consequent regional tension that paved the way for World War I. For more details, see: Yusuf Al-Bustani, *History of the First Balkan War: Between the Alawite State and the Balkan Confederation Bulgarians, Serbs, Greece and Montenegro*, Hindawy Printing and Publishing Corporation, Cairo, 2014.

<sup>(21)</sup> Jalal Yahya, *Modern and Contemporary European History until the First World War*, Modern University Office, Alexandria, 1998, p. 540.

<sup>(22)</sup> World War I (1914-1918): The first major international conflict of the twentieth century sparked the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the Hungarian-Austrian crown prince, and his wife, Archduchess Sufi, in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914. Fighting began in August 1914. It continued on several fronts for the next four years, between the Entente powers Britain, France, Serbia, and the Russian Empire and later joined them (Italy, Greece, Portugal, Romania, and the United States of America), and the Central Powers Germany and Austria-Hungary (the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria), and the "Great War" as their contemporaries called it ended on November 11, 1918, but the conflict's far-reaching impact on the international, political, economic, and social spheres reverberated for decades. For more details, see: Neil M. Hayman, *The First World War*, translated by: Hassan Aweidah, Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority, 2012.

<sup>(23)</sup> George F. Kenan, *American Diplomacy*, translated by Abd al-Karim al-Mallah, Damascus Printing and Publishing House, Damascus, 1988, p. 82.

<sup>(24)</sup> Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe went to War in 1914*, Penguin UK Press, London, 2013, pp. 12 – 13.

<sup>(25)</sup> Indirect causes: There were many reasons that led to the First World War, including the strained international relations at the beginning of the twentieth century due to a succession of crises, such as the

frantic manner, most clearly between Germany and Britain in the field of naval power, and between Germany and France in the field of land power, as well as the economic competition between the major industrial powers, which was a factor in the outbreak of the war. The growth of nationalism undoubtedly drove States into the furnace of war<sup>(26)</sup>.

While the Balkan crisis reached its peak with the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, it was the <sup>(27)</sup> combination of indirect causes that <sup>(28)</sup> prepared the outbreak of the war, and it only needed a spark to break out, such as the Sarajevo incident in June <sup>(29)</sup>1914, which led to the assassination of the heir to the Austrian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand) was the immediate cause of the outbreak of a major war between the European powers, and although some European Governments continued to try to find a diplomatic

---

Balkan crisis (1912-1913), the First Marrakesh Crisis (1905-1906), and the Second Marrakesh Crisis in 1911, as well as the growth of nationalism within Europe, and the increasing economic and commercial competition between the imperialist countries to share influence throughout the world and control markets to discharge the surplus industrial production and supply in the field of raw materials, as well as the hostility between Germany and France since the war of 1870 and the establishment of international alliances and blocs. For more details, see: Sidney Bradshaw, *The Causes of the First World War before the Sarajevo Tragedy*, translated by: Mahmoud Ibrahim El-Desouki, Al-Ittemad Publications, Cairo, 1932, p. 46; Riad Al-Samad, *International Relations between the Two Wars 1914-1945*, University Foundation for Studies, Publishing and Distribution, Cairo Mamdouh Nassar and Ahmed Wahban, *Diplomatic History: Political Relations between the Great Powers 1815-1991*, Alexandria University Press, Alexandria, (d.t.), p. 158; Philip Taylor, *Bombardment of Minds: Propaganda for War from the Ancient World to the Nuclear Age*, translated by: Sami Khashba, World of Knowledge, Kuwait, 2000, p. 267.

<sup>(26)</sup> Muhammad Hamza Hussein and Lubna Riad Al-Rifai, *History of the Contemporary World*, University of Mosul, 1st edition, 2015, p. 18; Omar Abdel Aziz Omar, *History of Modern and Contemporary Europe (1815-1919)*, Alexandria, Dar Al-Maarifa University, 2000, pp. 248-249.

<sup>(27)</sup> Haidar Sabri Shaker Al-Khayqani, *History of Europe from the Beginning of the First World War to the End of the Second World War 1914-1945*, Al-Mizan Press, Najaf, 2014, p. 16.

<sup>(28)</sup> The Sarajevo Incident: The direct incident that led to the outbreak of the First World War, during the visit of the heir to the Austrian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, to the city of Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a number of young Serbian nationalists belonging to the Black Palm Society gathered to assassinate Archduke Ferdinand by throwing an improvised explosive device at his convoy, and he survived the first assassination attempt. Gavrilo Principe fired two shots from his pistol at Crown Prince Ferdinand, which led to his death quickly, and historians consider it the spark that ignited the First World War. For more details, see: Abdel Fattah Abu Aliya and Ismail Ahmed Yaghi, *The Modern and Contemporary History of Europe*, Dar al-Marrekh Publishing, Riyadh, 1979, p. 374; Musa Muhammad Al-Tuwairish, *The Contemporary World Between Two Wars from World War I to the Cold War 1914-1991*, Jaafar Al-Essami Press for Modern Art Printing, Cairo, 2009, p. 23.

<sup>(29)</sup> Archduke Franz Ferdinand (1863-1915): Crown Prince of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Ferdinand was born in Graz, Austria, the eldest son of Archduke Carl Ludwig of Austria (younger brother of Franz Joseph Maximilian), in 1896 he became crown prince after the death of his father Carl Ludwig, he entered the Austro-Hungarian army at the age of Early, he was promoted repeatedly and rapidly, from lieutenant at the age of fourteen, to captain at the age of twenty-two, colonel at twenty-seven, and major general of the thirty-first, and on June 28, Ferdinand and his wife were assassinated in Sarajevo by Gavrilo Princip and his assassination led to the declaration of war between Austria-Hungary against Serbia, and then World War I. For more details, see: Paul Miller, *Franz Ferdinand, Archduke of Austria-Este*, *International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, Version 1.0, January 2017, PP. 1 – 5 .

solution to the international crisis that resulted from the assassination, the lack of desire for such a solution on the part of some States led to the declaration of war<sup>(30)</sup>.

Following the outbreak of World War I, the United States of America declared neutrality in the words of President Wilson on August 4, 1914<sup>(31)</sup>, and in his statement on the impact of the European war on the United States of America on August 19 of the same year, he said: "The impact of the war on the United States of America will depend on what the American citizens say and do, on every citizen who loves The United States of America really has to act and speak in a spirit of true neutrality, which is a spirit of fairness and friendliness for all concerned. The people of the United States of America come from many countries, especially those that are now at war, and it is natural and inevitable that there should be the greatest sympathy and desire among them regarding the issues and circumstances of the conflict. Such divisions among us would be fatal to our peace of mind and could seriously stand in the way of the proper discharge of our duty as one great nation living in peace, and the only people who can play the role of neutral mediator is the American people<sup>(32)</sup>."

In the early hours of the outbreak of war in the summer of 1914, a "pragmatic" attitude prevailed in German circles that combined nationalist sympathy for Germany with a clear keenness to abide by President Willis Winn's call for neutrality, and through the leaders of German associations – the great Yikia of that mood was to call for "strict neutrality" internally, coupled with public humanitarian activity to support the wounded and civilians of the motherland through relief societies, especially the German Red Cross<sup>(33)</sup> The German Red Cross, without calling for partisan American policies, and so

---

<sup>(30)</sup> Albrecht Ritschl, *Germany's Economy at War I 1914 – 1918 and Beyond*, Humboldt University Press, Berlin, 2002, PP. 15 - 16.

<sup>(31)</sup> F.R.U.S., Proclamation of August 4, 1914, with regard to the war between Austria-Hungary and Serbia, Washington, August 4, 1914, No. 885, P. 547.

<sup>(32)</sup> Quoted in, F.R.U.S, An appeal by the President of the United States to the citizens of the Republic, Washington, August 19, 1914, No.886, PP.551 – 552.

<sup>(33)</sup> German Red Cross: The National Society of the German Red Cross Movement, established on 25 January 1906 as an umbrella federation of relief societies established in German territory following the First Geneva Convention of 1864, undertook medical aid and relief functions at home and abroad, then underwent the Nazi policy of unification from 1933 and was institutionally associated with the Reich authorities until 1933. In 1945, it was re-established in Bonn in 1950 and recognized by the International Committee of the Red Cross in 1952, and in the east, the Red Cross was established in the German Democratic Republic in 1952 and recognized in 1954, and the two entities were united on January 1, 1991 under the same name and based in Berlin. For more details, see:

in August 1914 a network of festivals, donations and opinion articles was formed that showed that in their view victory for Germany meant moral persuasion and relief, not dragging the United States into war.

The outbreak of war in Europe was a violent shock to the American people, and from the beginning it seemed that the conflict was far from the preoccupations of American life, but the country soon felt its effects in both the economic and political spheres<sup>(34)</sup>, at a time when there were strong feelings among the American people towards Britain and necessarily towards the Entente countries, and their government had an anti-German expansionist attitude, especially in the Pacific and in China, and the majority of the American people were of English origin. In particular, their hatred of the spirit of hegemony and arrogance on which German policy in Europe and abroad depended<sup>(35)</sup>.

The German media played a decisive role from the first week, and on August 10, 1914, the inaugural issue of the *Fatherland*<sup>(36)</sup> was published in English, led by George Sylvester Viereck. Since then, the newspaper has become a platform for refuting stories of German atrocities committed by the Germans in the war and promoting the Berlin policy as a defence of the enemy, while emphasizing readers' allegiance to their American country<sup>(37)</sup>.

The policy of the United States of America focused on "true neutrality", provided that that neutrality should be a policy of both the government and the people, and if the government levels of the rulers and officials were able to control their own feelings and

---

John F. Hutchinson, *Champions of Charity: War and the Rise of the Red Cross*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1996; Ryan W. Heyden, *Toronto 1952, XVIIIth International Conference of the Red Cross: The German Red Cross and a Changing Humanitarian Landscape in the Early-Cold War*, Mainz: IEG, 2019.

<sup>(34)</sup> Shireen Said Shalaby, *A Brief History of America*, Bibliotheca Alexandrina, 2000, p. 117.

<sup>(35)</sup> Abd al-Fattah Abu Alia, *History of the Americas and the Political Formation of the United States of America*, Dar al-Marrekh Publishing, Riyadh, 1987, p. 165.

<sup>(36)</sup> Georg Sylvester Ferrick (1896-1962): German poet and journalist - pro-German preacher, born on December 31 in Munich, immigrated to the United States of America in 1896, graduated from the City College of New York in 1906 after a study that lasted for the years (1902-1906), became a literary prolific figure with his poetry collection in 1907, and in 1910 participated in the founding and editing of the *International Literary Magazine* He founded and ran the weekly "The Fatherland" since August 1914 to advocate for American neutrality and present the German vision after the United States entered the war, and during World War II he was convicted of violating the Foreign Agents Registration Act and spent about four years in Lewisburg Prison.) during the years (1943-1947), and died on March 18 at Mount Holyoke Hospital in Holyoke, Massachusetts. For more details, see:

Niel M. Johnson, *George Sylvester Viereck: Poet and Propagandist*, Books at Iowa, No. 9 (Nov. 1968), PP. 22 – 30.

<sup>(37)</sup> Joseph B. Neville Jr., *German-America Writes Home*, Vol. 49, 2014, PP. 53 – 55.

tendencies, this was one of the things that could not be controlled among the members of the people themselves, and the American people – on the other hand – were newly formed, and the doors of immigration were open to new European elements that poured in abundance from Central Europe, and it was to gather In the United States of America, there were strong groups of Germans, who represented only a small minority of the American population, but their hostile tendencies towards Britain and France were great and quickly emerged, and they became the front of the anti-Ententine minorities<sup>(38)</sup>.

On the other hand, these German minorities were prevalent in the poorer western states, while the rich eastern industrial and commercial states had an overwhelming majority of English origin, and the eastern states were more able to express their views in a way that placed the few possibilities available to the western states in that regard, while the majority of the American people were of English descent, and the English culture was the culture of the United States of America From there, the American press was quick to respond to the English press, and English ideas and trends were quickly resonating among the American people, so the English were more capable and wider in convincing the American people of their point of view, while the German views were only in diplomatic circles or at high levels, which made them unable to win over the American people on the side of Germany<sup>(39)</sup>.

At the level of civil action, the clubs moved quickly to organize exhibitions, singing evenings, and in-kind and monetary campaigns for the "orphans of the dead" and the wounded of the German army, and letters published in German newspapers in October 1914 show that young second-generation men in the United States of America collected tens of tons of canned goods and clothing to send to Berlin, in a mixture of nostalgia and moral duty, while the public discourse in the United States of America kept an eye on them Activities as humanitarian relief rather than political propaganda<sup>(40)</sup>.

The messages exchanged between German immigrants in Midwestern cities and their relatives in Germany revealed an internal division: there were those who had

---

<sup>(38)</sup>Abdulaziz Suleiman Nawar and Mahmoud Mohamed Gamal El-Din, *History of the United States of America from the Sixteenth Century to the Twentieth Century*, Dar Al-Fikr Al-Arabi for Printing and Publishing, Cairo, 1999, p. 148.

<sup>(39)</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 148-149 .

<sup>(40)</sup> Alisa Miller, *Press - Journalism In the United States 1914-1918*, Norwich University Press, 2003 , PP. 6 – 7.

regained their German consciousness under the weight of the war and the increase in German speaking at home, and there were those who proved convinced that they had become American, not German, but the two sides intersected on a scathing critique of Anglo-Saxon coverage in the American press. <sup>(41)</sup>

The leaders of the German-American Alliance (NGAA) clearly defined their "red line" in August 1914, when they announced ethno-cultural cohesion within the United States of America, and an external propaganda activity to "correct information", but without challenging the legitimacy of neutrality, and on August 6, 1914, a statement was quoted in the German press by the head of the alliance announcing "We must stand together honestly and strongly", stressing that the Executive is "monitoring the best way to protect what is German in the face of ignorance and minority hostility in our country"<sup>(42)</sup>.

Britain's cutting of the transatlantic cable disrupted the flow of direct German news to the United States in the first weeks, increasing the public's reliance on the Anglo-Saxon press and agency networks, which the immigrants complained about in their letters, one of which was "lies make the blood boil", and this information bottleneck was a catalyst for the emergence of platforms such as Al-Watan newspaper Public lectures by German academics are aimed at conveying the narrative of Germany (43)without compromising American loyalty.

In German cities such as Milwaukee, Cincinnati and St. Louis, German singing and sports clubs and reciters funded subsidies, organized German days of celebration of culture combining chants with calls for civic tranquility<sup>(44)</sup>

The regional difference was important in the Germans' attitude towards the war. In the West-Central, where the Germans constituted a dense population, the option of neutrality with relief seemed more regular: the city of Melloand Kie, for example, was German in its urban and cultural fabric, which made the residents more cautious, with increased humanitarian support for relatives and the avoidance of any suspicion of

---

<sup>(41)</sup> Rippley, Op. Cit., PP. 129 – 130.

<sup>(42)</sup> Neville Jr., Op. Cit., P. 54.

<sup>(43)</sup> Miller, Op. Cit., P. 7.

<sup>(44)</sup> Rippley, Op. Cit., PP. 130 – 131.

political sympathy that might be read against them, and by the end of 1914 this balance had been maintained<sup>(45)</sup>.

In the public discourse of the majority of Germans in the United States of America in 1914, the attack on the Russian tsarism was strongly prominent, while keeping a distance from criticism of Britain and France, which the German press invested in by framing the war as an existential struggle against the aggression of the "Cossacks"<sup>(46)</sup>, and this framing allowed them to morally justify sympathy for Germany without directly confronting the prevailing American consciousness in favour of peace and commercial prosperity at the time<sup>(47)</sup>.

The declaration of allegiance to the United States of America remained a constant in German speeches in 1914, with letters in German newspapers from the western states emphasizing the phrase "**German honesty in the Far West**" but accompanying it with an explicit declaration of American identity and compliance with the law, and this association between cultural pride and civic neutrality was a moral shield against any early accusation of dual allegiance during 1914<sup>(48)</sup>.

Economically, the great American press in 1914 received the war as an opportunity for American markets, carriers and farmers, which fed a general tendency to avoid political drag and to profit only commercially from Washington's neutrality<sup>(49)</sup>.

As the end of 1914 approached, German circles realized that their ability to influence American politics was limited, and neither the English press responded to their

---

<sup>(45)</sup> Miller, Op. Cit., P. 9.

<sup>(46)</sup> Cossacks: Eastern Orthodox ethnic group, semi-autonomous military frontier groups of East Slav steppe inhabitants formed on the Dnieper and The Don basins since the late 15th century, organized into local armies such as the Zaporozhye, Don, Terek and Kuban. The Cossacks and the Ural, and enjoyed land privileges and exemptions for military service, as they guarded the frontiers and conducted naval and land raids against the Crimean Tatars and the Ottomans, then their hosts gradually integrated into the Russian imperial structure during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with their customs and councils remaining for a limited time, and after Russia's victory in its Ottoman war, an order was issued to capture Sich. Zaporozhye was founded on June 5, 1775, followed by a memorandum on August 3 of the same year, which abolished the old name of that entity, and during the Russian Civil War, many of them participated in the White formations and were later subjected to the policy of de-Cossackization during the years (1919-1933), which targeted their elites and the structure of their society, before the name reappeared in local cultural and paramilitary bodies after the Soviet dissolution. More details See:

Shane O'Rourke, *The Cossack*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2007; Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2000.

<sup>(47)</sup> Rippley, Op. Cit., PP. 129 – 131.

<sup>(48)</sup> Miller, Op. Cit., PP. 7 - 9.

<sup>(49)</sup> Rippley, Op. Cit., PP. 132 – 134.

arguments flexibly, nor did the government change its cautious position, and remained a realistic conviction that their winning bet lay in the establishment of internal neutrality and the expansion of relief, waiting for the outcome of the European fronts the following year, which made every public step of the Germans calculated, so the behavior of 1914 remained there A model that combined American civic loyalty, cautious neutrality, and cultural and relief solidarity with Germany without challenging state authority<sup>(50)</sup>.

The data of 1914 concluded that German immigrants in the United States of America formulated a pragmatic position that combined a clear cultural sympathy for the motherland with a strict civic commitment to Wilson's call for neutrality, as they worked on two parallel tracks: public humanitarian mobilization through relief campaigns and the facades of the German Red Cross, the organization of evenings, donations and relief funds, and the construction of a counter-narrative in the public sphere through English-language newspapers to correct what they considered to be an information bottleneck after the British were cut off for the transatlantic cable and the Anglo-Saxon press. Despite the intensity of European polarization, the leaders of the German National Alliance – the matter – were keen to define themselves as a cultural framework rather than an electoral party and to define a red line not to challenge the legitimacy of neutrality or challenge American loyalty, so a balanced daily behavior was manifested in the cities of the German belt such as Milwaukee, Cincinnati and St. Louis based on relief, celebration of heritage and cooperative communication with local authorities. A calculated distance from Britain and France to avoid clashing with the American mood in favor of peace and commercial prosperity. Although the English-dominated national cultural environment limited the ability of immigrants to influence the direction of government and the media, in 1914 the German community produced a practical model of dual living based on unequivocal American civic loyalty and cultural solidarity with Germany that was bound by law and neutrality, which kept the bridges of belonging open and lessened political suspicion in a particularly tense European moment.

---

<sup>(50)</sup> Neville Jr., Op. Cit., PP. 54 – 58.

## 4 CONCLUSION

The research showed that German immigrants played a pivotal economic role in the United States of America, as they contributed to the development of agriculture, industry, and crafts through their long experiences from Europe, and the research proved that the Germans were one of the first groups to participate in the modernization of the agricultural sector in the Central States by introducing new agricultural methods and increasing production.

The study showed that the Germans also contributed to the development of the industrial sector by establishing workshops and small factories that formed the nucleus of successful local industries, as they were characterized by precision, diligence and diversity of skills, which made them part of the industrial transformation witnessed in the United States of America during the last decades of the nineteenth century.

The study revealed that the social life of the German community was an important factor in strengthening its cohesion within the American society, as the community established schools, associations and cultural clubs that preserved the German language and contributed to the spread of education among the members of the community. The study proved that these institutions made Germans a cohesive society that succeeded in maintaining its identity while at the same time integrating into American public life.

## REFERENCES

- 1- U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1910, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1911.
- 2- U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1915, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1916.
- 3- Shane O'Rourke, *The Cossack*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2007.
- 4- Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500–1800*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2000.
- 5- Alisa Miller, *Press - Journalism In the United States 1914-1918*, Norwich University Press, 2003.

- 6- Joseph B. Neville Jr., *German-America Writes Home*, Vol. 49, 2014.
- 7- Niel M. Johnson, *George Sylvester Viereck: Poet and Propagandist*, Books at Iowa, No. 9 (Nov. 1968).
- 8- LaVern J. Rippley, *Wisconsin German-Americans and World War I*, *Yearbook of German-American Studies*, Vol. 50, 2015.
- 9- John F. Hutchinson, *Champions of Charity: War and the Rise of the Red Cross*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1996.
- 10- Ryan W. Heyden, *Toronto 1952, XVIIIth International Conference of the Red Cross: The German Red Cross and a Changing Humanitarian Landscape in the Early-Cold War*, Mainz: IEG, 2019.
- 11- F.R.U.S., *An appeal by the President of the United States to the citizens of the Republic*, Washington, August 19, 1914, No.886.
- 12- F.R.U.S., *Proclamation of August 4, 1914, with regard to the war between Austria-Hungary and Servia*, Washington, August 4 , 1914, No. 885.
- 13- Albrecht Ritschl, *Germany's Economy at War 1 1914 – 1918 and Beyond*, Humboldt University Press, Berlin , 2002.
- 14- United States. Immigration Commission, *Dictionary of Races or Peoples*, 1911.
- 15- United States. Immigration Commission, *Abstracts of Reports of the Immigration Commission, Abstract of the report on Federal immigration legislation*, 1911.
- 16- Prentiss C. Dodge, *Encyclopedia, Vermont Biography* Burlington, Ullery Publishing, 1912.
- 17- Leonard Schlup, *William Paul Dillingham: A Vermont Republican in National Politics*, *Proceedings of the Vermont Historical Society* 54, Winter 1986.
- 18- Gilder Lehrman Institute, *The Dillingham Commission and the Immigration Question, 1907–1921*; United States. Reports of the Immigration Commission: Abstracts of Reports of the Immigration Commission, with Conclusions and Recommendations and Views of the Minority, Vol. 1, Washington, 1911.
- 19- United States. House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Uniform Rule for the Naturalization of Aliens*, Washington, 1906.
- 20- Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe went to War in 1914* , Penguin uk Press, London , 2013.

- 21- United States. Bureau of Naturalization, Annual Report of the Commissioner of Naturalization, 1928.
- 22- Paul Miller, Franz Ferdinand, Archduke of Austria-Este, International Encyclopedia of the First World War, Version 1.0, January 2017.
- 23- F. R.U.S. 1901 , Letter from Mr. White to Mr. Hay, Berlin, May 4, 1901, No. 153.
- 24- United States, Treaty with the King of Prussia (North German Confederation), February 22, 1868, United States Statutes at Large 15, 1868.
- 25- F. R.U.S., Letter from Mr. Hay to Mr. Jackson, Washington, April 16, 1901, No. 150.
- 26- United States. Congress. House, House Documents, Otherwise Publ. as Executive Documents, Washington, D.C., 1876.
- 27- F. R.U.S., Memorandum, Washington, May 27, 1901, No. 151.
- 28- F. R.U.S., Memorandum, Washington, April 16, 1901, No. 150.
- 29- United States. Congress, Uniform Rule for the Naturalization of Aliens: Hearing, 1906.
- 30- Abdel Aziz Suleiman Nawar and Mahmoud Mohamed Gamal El-Din, History of the United States of America from the Sixteenth Century to the Twentieth Century, Dar Al-Fikr Al-Arabi for Printing and Publishing, Cairo, 1999.
- 31- Abdel Fattah Abu Alia, History of the Americas and the Political Formation of the United States of America, Al-Marrekh Publishing House, Riyadh, 1987.
- 32- Shireen Saeed Shalaby, A Brief History of America, Bibliotheca Alexandrina, 2000.
- 33- Youssef Al-Bustani, The History of the First Balkan War: Between the Aaliyah State and the Balkan Confederation of Bulgarians, Serbs, Greece and Montenegro, Hindawi Printing and Publishing Foundation, Cairo, 2014.
- 34- Jalal Yahya, Modern and Contemporary European History until the First World War, Modern University Office, Alexandria, 1998.
- 35- Neil M., World War I, translated by: Hassan Aweidah, Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority, 2012.
- 36- Abdel Fattah Abu Alia and Ismail Ahmed Yaghi, Modern and Contemporary History of Europe, Dar Al-Mareekh Publishing, Riyadh, 1979.

- 37- Moussa Mohamed Al-Tuwairish, *The Contemporary World Between Two Wars from World War I to the Cold War 1914-1991*, Jaafar Al-Essami Press for Modern Art Printing, Cairo, 2009.
- 38- George F. Kinnan, *American Diplomacy*, translated by: Abdul Karim Al-Mallah, Damascus Printing and Publishing House, Damascus, 1988.
- 39- Haidar Sabri Shaker Al-Khayqani, *History of Europe from the Beginning of the First World War to the End of the Second World War 1914-1945*, Al-Mezan Press, Najaf, 2014.
- 40- Muhammad Hamza Hussein and Lubna Riyad Al-Rifai, *History of the Contemporary World*, University of Mosul, 1st Edition, 2015.
- 41- Omar Abdel Aziz Omar, *Modern and Contemporary History of Europe (1815-1919)*, Alexandria, Dar Al-Maarifa University, 2000.
- 42- Sidney Bradshaw, *The Causes of the First World War Before the Sarajevo Tragedy*, translated by: Mahmoud Ibrahim El-Desouki, Al-Itimada Publications, Cairo, 1932.
- 43- Riad Al-Samad, *International Relations between the Two Wars 1914-1945*, University Foundation for Studies, Publishing and Distribution, Cairo, 1983.
- 44- Mamdouh Nassar and Ahmed Wahban, *Diplomatic History: Political Relations between the Great Powers 1815-1991*, Alexandria University Press, Alexandria, (d.t.).
- 45- Philip Taylor, *Brain-Bombing: Propaganda for War from the Old World to the Nuclear Age*, translated by: Sami Khashba, World of Knowledge, Kuwait, 2000.

### **Authors' Contribution**

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

### **Data availability**

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

### **How to cite this article (APA)**

Najjar, K. A. M., & Saif, S. A. A. (2026). THE IMPACT OF AMERICAN LEGISLATION ON GERMAN IMMIGRANTS AND THEIR POSITION DURING WORLD WAR I. *Veredas Do Direito*, 23(5), e235415. <https://doi.org/10.18623/rvd.v23.5415>