THE ANGLO-FRENCH MILITARY AND NAVAL CONVERSATIONS, 1906-1912: A STUDY IN PRE-WAR DIPLOMACY

THESIS

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FOREWORD

The period following the Treaty of Frankfort in 1871 saw the hegemony of Western Europe pass from Paris to Berlin. To maintain this new status, Otto von Bismarck, German Chancellor, knew that France must be diplomatically quarantined and the remainder of his public career was dedicated to that purpose. In France, during this time and for more than two decades following the fall of Bismarck, there were those leaders who were equally dedicated to undoing the work of the Iron Chancellor and lifting the international quarantine of France.

The French nation has been prolific of consummate diplomatists all through history, but her annals record no more brilliant achievement than that of Théophile Delcassé and Paul Cambon when they brought Great Britain into a French alliance. Even those who disapprove the consequences of their act must admit the skill and the pertinacity with which the two statesmen pursued their purpose. Their difficulties were stupendous; British governments had for years stood aloof from Continental agreements, but precedent was forced to give way before the perspicacity and perseverance of these two French statesmen.

Delcassé had contributed the Entente Cordiale to the French cause in 1904. This understanding pledged British diplomatic support
to France in her imperialistic venture in Morocco—nothing more; but it also provided a foundation upon which Cambon could exercise his talents in leading Great Britain into a trap. The result of these activities was the equivalent of an Anglo-French alliance.

The French, to accomplish their purpose, led the British into a series of military and naval conversations as a means of working out plans of joint operations whereby the latter could assist the former in case of a Franco-German war. The conversations had their official beginning in 1906 and continued until the outbreak of war in 1914, by which time Britain was so completely obligated to France as to make her entry into the war a foregone conclusion.

In tracing the development of the conversations the British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914, are a primary source of information. These documents, however, have one incriminating weakness: many of them relating to the conversations were found to be missing at the time of publication. The Documents diplomatiques français, 1871-1914, provide a second primary source, but this work, published after the British Documents, shows signs of careful editing to provide no more information than is revealed by the British. The French Documents do, however, provide supplementary information.

Secondary studies are numerous, although in some cases partisan; such accounts as Edward Grey's Twenty-Five Years, H. H. Asquith's The Genesis of the War, Winston S. Churchill's The World
Crisis, R. B. Haldane's Before the War, and Lord Newton's Lord Lansdowne, A Biography, are all slanted to defend the actions taken by the British Cabinet before the war. The best account of the beginning of the conversations is contained in The First World War, 1914-1918, by C. A'Court Repington. And some splendid background material is given in Charles W. Porter's The Career of Théophile Delcassé.
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CHAPTER I

A CORDIAL UNDERSTANDING AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

In the spring of 1903 a pronounced spirit of friendliness was much in evidence toward England in the French Foreign Office. This attitude of rapprochement was under the guiding genius of Théophile Delcassé, French Foreign Minister, who at this point was ready to follow the old adage of joining an opposition that had proven too difficult to surmount. ¹ In London the feeling was mutual. The British Foreign Office, under the direction of Lord Lansdowne, mindful of the failure in 1901 of Chamberlain's last attempt at an Anglo-German alliance, thought that in a Europe divided between the Triple and Dual Alliances this was the proper time for Great Britain to take a position on the side of France. ²

According to Eyre Crowe, the effort toward a better understanding between these two traditional foes in the arena of foreign policy was given its initial impetus by the British, and "it was creditable to M. Delcassé's sagacity and public spirit that he decided to grasp the hand which the

British Government held out to him."³ Shortly before his retirement, July 12, 1902, Lord Salisbury discussed the matter with the French Ambassador, Paul Cambon, but at this time both felt that the ill feeling created in France by the Fashoda incident and the Boer War rendered any attempt at an understanding futile.

Soon after Lord Salisbury's retirement to private life, however, Cambon approached Lansdowne, who now had a free hand, and told him of his talks with Salisbury. During the conversation the Ambassador mentioned a number of subjects upon which he would like to negotiate an agreement, and, seeing that Lansdowne was interested, promised to put his ideas into writing in the form of a letter to the Foreign Secretary. This letter was subsequently brought to the attention of King Edward VII and the Prince of Wales; both of whom were entirely favorable to the idea of an agreement with France on the subjects mentioned.⁴

To expedite the policy of closer relationship between the two governments, the King, in March of 1903, prepared to take a cruise in the Mediterranean, after which he would visit the French capital if it was found to be agreeable to the President, Emile Loubet. Lord Lansdowne consulted Sir E. Monson, British Ambassador at Paris, in the


matter, and on March 13 the latter advised:

The intimation of His Majesty's desire was welcomed by the President with unmistakable delight, as I had expected would be the case. He said that a visit from the King would, in the present temper of France, do an amount of good which is probably not realised in England. He hoped, indeed, that H. M. G. were already aware of the extent to which cordiality to England had increased in France, but probably the public at large were not to the same extent informed as to the growth of that sentiment in Paris and throughout the country. In this capital H. M., while Prince of Wales, had acquired an exceptional personal popularity, and his many old friends would be overjoyed to see him again; but this statement was not confined to his old friends and was general among all classes. 5

The visit was fixed for the beginning of May, and the King proceeded on his voyage which took him to Lisbon and Rome before reaching Paris on May 1.

There was much apprehension within the French Foreign Office as to the results of the proposed royal visit. While it was true that considerable amity had resulted from the meeting of the British Chambers of Commerce in Paris in 1900 and the consequent increase in numbers of English visitors to the French capital, there were still those Frenchmen who had not forgotten the vituperative campaign which had raged in the French and British press during the Boer War, the Fashoda Crisis, and the Dreyfus Affair. The fears of this group were not entirely unfounded, as was shown by the early reception given to the royal visitor; the first reaction of the French to the visiting monarch was, if not

5 Lord Newton, Lord Lansdowne, A Biography, p. 275.
frigid, at least cool. "The first day they behaved well; the second day, they merely displayed interest; but the third day, 'c'était attrisant—ils ont acclamé le Roi!'"\(^6\)

This change in attitude was due, at least in part, to the personal note struck by the King in one of his early speeches:

> It is scarcely necessary to tell you with what sincere pleasure I find myself once more in Paris, to which, as you know, I have paid very frequent visits with ever-increasing pleasure, and for which I feel an attachment fortified by so many happy and ineffaceable memories. The days of hostility between the two countries are, I am certain, happily at an end. I know of no two countries whose prosperity is more interdependent. There may have been misunderstandings and causes of dissention in the past; but that is all happily over and forgotten. The friendship of the two countries is my constant preoccupation, and I count on you all, who enjoy French hospitality in their magnificent city, to aid me to reach this goal.\(^7\)

The King's visit and this speech had a profound effect upon French public opinion—the effect desired by Delcassé, and also by those in the British Foreign Office who had arranged for the King to visit Paris. It is a matter of general acceptance that Edward VII was sent to Paris as a means of preparing the way for an entente between the two powers, and that he did not go on his own initiative.\(^8\) In this instance, the British Monarch was serving in the capacity of a public relations expert for

\(^6\)Ibid., p. 278.

\(^7\)Gooch, op. cit., p. 307.

\(^8\)Newton, op. cit., pp. 279 and 293.
those who were working in the direction of better relations between France and Britain, specifically Lansdowne and Cambon. He played his part, and he played it with charm and skill.

Soon after Edward's visit to Paris preparations were made for President Loubet to visit London. The social amenities must be observed, and the King gave assurance that "M. Loubet would be more heartily welcomed in England than any chief of state had ever been." In July, accompanied by Delcassé, President Loubet returned the King's visit, and on this occasion the Entente Cordiale was spoken of as having been established. The President, lodged at St. James' Palace, became the first French Chief of State to cross the Channel since Napoleon III.

In welcoming the French Foreign Minister to London, Lansdowne lost no time in coming to the point and a long interview ensued. It was decided to discuss all outstanding differences as a whole, rather than to consider isolated problems, because "however impossible it might appear to settle particular issues in isolation, sacrifices might be tolerable as items in a balanced settlement."

Of first concern to those engaged in the conversations—the two Foreign Ministers and Paul Cambon, with assistance from Sir Eldon Gorst, Financial Adviser to the Egyptian Government—were the problems of Egypt and Morocco. Great Britain wanted a free hand in Egypt, and

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France, of course, wished to clear her path of operations in the Sherifian Empire. Delcassé had, in 1900, secured the benevolent neutrality of Italy in the matter of Morocco, by recognition of Italian claims to Tripoli. In addition to these two problems there was the controversy in Newfoundland, and Great Britain's desire to sweep away the "French Shore" grievance. On the other hand, there were the minor territorial ambitions of France in West Africa; ambitions which Britain could easily satisfy. Again, there were problems in Siam, the New Hebrides, Madagascar, Sokoto, and of the treatment of British firms in French Congo. The French Minister stated frankly that if they could come to terms over Morocco, "all other difficulties would disappear, or become comparatively easy to deal with." Delcassé presented a general view of the French plans for Morocco, and indicated that what his country wished was "a reasonable assurance that their policy would not be obstructed by Great Britain."\(^{10}\) In reply, Lord Lansdowne made three conditions for an accord on this problem. First, British interests in the Mediterranean seaboard of Morocco, particularly in Tangier and the neighboring coast, must be protected. Second, Spanish ambitions must be fairly dealt with. Third, complete equality of economic opportunity in Morocco must be assured. Delcassé unhesitatingly accepted all three stipulations. Then the British Minister proposed that they make the settlement a comprehensive one by including the Egyptian question. The French Minister acquiesced,

\(^{10}\) *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.
provided they could reach an agreement on the Moroccan question that would be satisfactory to both nations. 11

The French plans in the Moorish Empire, according to Delcassé, were not unreasonable. France had no idea of annexing Morocco or deposing the Sultan, nor of forcing a peace there; but, on the other hand, in view of the chronic state of disorder in the Sultan's realm, France thought that she, and not any other power, should undertake the task of restoring order.

As the quid pro quo for these concessions to France, the British would require in Egypt the lifting of the time limit to the British occupation and the French sanction of the abolishment of the caisse de la dette, the reorganization of the railway administration, and the conversion of the Egyptian debt. The other questions considered in the conversations, those of Newfoundland, Siam, New Hebrides, Nigeria, Zanzibar, and Madagascar, were less significant. Much bargaining was to follow before the final settlement was made, but in view of the partisan interests involved, final agreement was reached.

On April 8, 1904, a Convention relating to Newfoundland and West Africa, accompanied by four Declarations, concerning respectively Egypt and Morocco, Siam, Madagascar, and the New Hebrides, was signed. The most important of the agreements which collectively form

the Treaty of 1904 was the declaration respecting Egypt and Morocco, Article Nine of which provided for the means, or the extent, to which the participating nations would go in carrying out the agreement. This Article was as follows:

IX. The two Governments agree to afford to one another their diplomatic support, in order to obtain the execution of the clauses of the present Declaration regarding Egypt and Morocco. 12

The declaration, as published in 1904, was an apparently harmless understanding reached between the two nations on certain problems, some of which had been outstanding for a considerable period of time. But the declaration also contained four "Secret Articles," not published until 1911, which strongly suggested that France might not intend to respect the status quo in Morocco for very long. 13

There is little reason to doubt that the agreement reached between the two powers was made in good faith, and that each fully intended to carry out its obligation; each had much to gain from this cordial understanding. Needless to say, there were undoubtedly many motives which did not show up in the conversations that had been carried on during the period from the visit of Edward VII to Paris in early May of 1903, until the final signing of the Entente on April 8, 1904.

12 Declaration between the United Kingdom and France respecting Egypt and Morocco, April 8, 1904, B. D., II, p. 392.

13 George B. Manhart, Alliance and Entente, 1871-1914, pp. 40-41.
Britain, for her part, was much concerned over the growing commercial rivalry with Germany. Running parallel to this commercial expansion on the part of Germany was her spectacular growth as a colonial power. Also, in view of these expansions, William II, Emperor of Germany, had felt the need of a stronger navy, and plans had been in progress under the able guidance of Admiral von Tirpitz pointing to the day when England's control of the seas would be contested by Germany.

Of these various causes of tension between Great Britain and Germany in the years following the Boer War, undoubtedly the main one was the resolve of Germany to build a formidable fleet. As early as 1898, Germany had begun a program of construction to be carried out by 1904, and the German Navy League was founded. The Kaiser used events during the Boer War—occasions on which German vessels were stopped by the British—to secure acceptance by the Reichstag of a greatly enlarged program of construction to be completed in 1917. This program was the cause of considerable anxiety in Britain, even though assurances were given by Germany that only a defensive fleet was contemplated. British apprehensions continued, regardless of German assurances, and a considerable shifting of naval units to the North Sea and the Channel was carried out during the period in which the understanding with France was negotiated. In October, 1905, the Dreadnought, the largest and most heavily armed vessel in the world, was
laid down, which served to increase the mistrust between the two powers, as many people in Germany now concluded that their country was threatened by a sudden attack. 14 Another outgrowth of the naval rivalry had been the signing of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance which was concluded in February, 1902. This was an attempt by Britain to augment her position of naval supremacy in the Far East, so that she would be in a position to move units from that area to European waters.

These were, in brief summary, some of the underlying causes that stimulated the British desire for an understanding with France in the years around the turn of the century. It is now necessary to consider the French position, and here the answer is obvious: the French position derives from the career of one man, Théophile Delcassé.

Théophile Delcassé, whose career was so closely connected with French policy in the years preceding the First World War, was the product of an age that saw his beloved homeland humiliated at Sedan and reduced by the Treaty of Frankfort in 1871. Born on March 1, 1852, in the Department of Ariège and educated at Pamiers and Toulouse, he had reached his eighteenth year in 1870 when catastrophe struck the Second Empire of Napoleon III. Meanwhile, two years before this event, the future Foreign Minister had come under the influence of the champion of republicanism in France, the eloquent Léon Gambetta. Gambetta became and remained for life his idol and his ideal. The Treaty of

Frankfort, which deprived France of Alsace-Lorraine, outraged his ardent patriotism. Henceforth, he brooded over the frontier question and was always profoundly distrustful of German intentions toward France. In 1875 Delcassé went to Paris and embarked upon a career as a journalist, and in 1879 became associated with Gambetta's journal, La République Française. From the beginning of his newspaper career Delcassé specialized in foreign and colonial affairs and of this phase of his career it has been said by his biographer:

The importance of this phase of Delcassé's career cannot be overestimated. Not only was this Delcassé's real preparation for his life work, since it gave him an opportunity to study European diplomacy and work out a French foreign policy, but the paper was the oracle of Republicanism in France, and brought his ideas daily before a circulation of forty thousand readers. Thus, at the very time Delcassé was formulating his later system of diplomacy, he was preparing a favorable reception for that foreign policy in the minds of tens of thousands of French people.

These years in the early career of Delcassé are also marked by the writing of a political pamphlet, the primary purpose of which was a criticism of the Freycinet government of January, 1882. It was a small effort, some thirty-odd pages, under the title Alerte! Ou Allons-Nous? The last eleven pages were devoted to foreign policy, or rather a lack of a definite policy to offset the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria, and Italy. In Delcassé's opinion:

16 Ibid., p. 16.
Another danger, without doubt the greatest of all, is the complete lack of a foreign policy. . . . When on the ruins of the old balance of power a monstrous and formidable coalition has formed itself [the Triple Alliance], is it possible for France to continue to live in the isolation to which she has been reduced by her disaster [of 1870], without worrying about the future and without any determined purpose?

Do you not see that on all sides of you in Europe there are [Powers with] interests identical to yours, and that the union of these with us would not only be a strong union because there seems to be no reason for conflict between these Powers, but, on the contrary, should form an indestructible fasces! . . . for lack of a hand to guide them and draw them together, these interests instead of seeking each other, disregard each other, flee from each other, and you remain isolated, living from day to day at the mercy of events beyond your control because the strings that govern them are not in your hands. 17

Thus, as early as May of 1882 did Delcassé indicate his ideas of a proper foreign policy for France; thus did he lay out a course of attack and of action that he was to follow throughout the coming years—years that were to give him seven years of uninterrupted tenure as head of the French Foreign Office from 1898 to 1905.

As early as October, 1887, Delcassé had become interested in Morocco, and was willing to let Italy have Tripoli in order to establish an entente with her that would facilitate French ambitions in the Sherifian Empire. It was his opinion that if the Sultan lost control in his country, then French ambitions were a natural consequence of the extended western frontier of Algeria. He reasoned, at this time, that Germany, not being a Mediterranean Power, should not be considered in any

17Ibid., pp. 19-20.
arrangements between the Powers over the ultimate disposition of Morocco. 18

In 1886 and 1887 steps were taken by Flourens, the French Foreign Minister, to establish a Franco-Russian alliance. This work met with the immediate and enthusiastic support of Delcassé, the journalist. As he viewed the situation, the great enemy of France was Germany; the alliance was to be directed against her for the purpose of pressing all of the outstanding claims that had arisen since Sedan. He saw in the Franco-Russian Alliance a chance to cripple Germany by obliging her to fight on two sides at once and he looked upon Russia as the natural leader of the Balkan Slavs. It is significant to note that Delcassé thought it unnecessary to seal the rapprochement of France and Russia by a formal alliance. It was his opinion that the community of interests that brought about a well-established entente was more important than a paper document:

... there is between France and Russia a community of interests which renders treaties superfluous and which is one hundred times preferable to the best of treaties ... 19

The year 1888 found Delcassé agitating for a triple entente of France, England, and Russia. Inasmuch as he looked upon an understanding with Russia as an accomplished fact, his thinking naturally turned to Anglo-French relations, and to the historic instances of friendship between these two nations:

18 Ibid., p. 25. 19 Ibid., p. 34.
... [He] found in the past ample argument for Anglo-French cordiality. He cited the "fraternité anglo-française" championed in 1791 by Mirabeau and pursued by Talleyrand during his mission to London in 1792, and said that Mirabeau and Talleyrand were right in declaring that England had every reason for drawing closer to France and that "what was true at the end of the eighteenth century" was "still more true today." 20

At this time he discounted any idea of war between the two nations as being utterly frivolous, saying, with some humor:

But, after all, why should we make war on the English? To take a strip of territory from them? But we acquired our natural frontiers on the northwest centuries ago, and it is not on the Channel that we have been mutilated. To take away their colonies? But the exploitation of those we already possess will keep us employed for a long time to come. 21

This line of reasoning was to appear again at a later date, and at a time when it represented the official attitude of the French Foreign Office. It was to be used by Cambon in his negotiations with Lansdowne in August, 1902, which laid the basis for the Anglo-French Entente. Nor was it forgotten by Delcassé when, on July 7, 1903, the now Foreign Minister was conversing with Lansdowne. 22

These few excerpts are characteristic of the writings of Delcassé, and indicate that years before he entered the Foreign Office he was working earnestly for a rapprochement with Italy and a triple alliance between France, Russia, and England. It seems superfluous to add that, as the

20 Ibid., p. 35.  
21 Ibid., p. 36.  
disciple of Gambetta, there was always present in the thinking of Delcassé the desire to regain the lost provinces—Alsace and Lorraine.

On July 15, 1888, Delcassé made his entry into formal politics when elected to the Conseil General of the Department of Ariege, and in September of the following year, at the general election for the Chamber of Deputies, he was selected to represent the city of Foix in that body. Once admitted to the Chamber, he immediately asked permission to express himself on foreign policy and announced that he would like to be a minister. This ambition led to his appointment as Under Secretary of State for the Colonies on January 17, 1893.

This assignment soon involved Delcassé in foreign affairs, and it was a logical step that placed him in the Quai d'Orsay some years later, in June, 1898—placed him in a position to direct the foreign affairs of France along the road that led to the signing of the Entente Cordiale with Great Britain in 1904. It was a long and devious road; a road he travelled by way of Fashoda, a point at which it seemed that his goal of securing the friendship of Britain would never be reached. Yet, it was a goal that proved eminently worthwhile in the light of events that the coming decade was to produce.

On coming to the Quai d'Orsay, the new Foreign Minister transferred Paul Cambon from Constantinople to London, there to serve as French Ambassador. Cambon was considered by Delcassé to be one of
the ablest men in the French diplomatic service; a man who possessed all
of the characteristics becoming an outstanding diplomatist. With the pas-
sage of time, Paul Cambon became one of the chief mentors upon whom
Delcassé relied for advice in carrying out his projects. Although the
main lines of his foreign policy were clearly fixed in his mind when he
came to power, he needed the advice of seasoned diplomats for its execu-
tion. The appointment of the elder Cambon to the London Embassy pays
tribute to the high priority given the understanding with England in the
plans of Delcassé. The Ambassador was known to be a warm friend of
England whose tact and experience promised to dissipate the persistent
misunderstandings between the two countries. 23

While it would seem that the appointment of Cambon to fill the
position in London was a calculated move on the part of Delcassé, there
are those who contend that the Ambassador, rather than the Foreign
Minister, was the architect of the Entente Cordiale. Sir E. J. Monson,
British Ambassador at Paris, writing to Lord Lansdowne in December,
1902, said:

It is difficult to ascertain Cambon's exact relations with
Delcassé, but I believe that he plays very much for his own
hand and counts upon being approved and supported without
waiting for any definite instructions. I am assured that there
is no definite intimacy or sympathy between the two men. 24

23Porter, op. cit., p. 134.

24Newton, op. cit., p. 270.
Also, Swain, in his excellent survey of the period, concludes that "a more important person than Delcassé was Paul Cambon, the French Ambassador at London from 1898 to 1921," and goes so far as to say that the idea of securing British aid for France's plans in Morocco was initiated by Cambon.  

Probably the more accurate conclusion would be that the understanding with Britain had the wholehearted and active support of both. Later events, however, would seem to indicate that while Delcassé was satisfied for the time being with a static agreement with Britain, Cambon worked diligently in the direction of a closer relationship between the two Powers. Out of this constant, and often subtle, effort on the part of the Ambassador was to come the military and naval agreements between Britain and France which, by 1912, had the two Powers so involved as to make British participation in a war between France and Germany a foregone conclusion.

The next logical step, after the conclusion of the Anglo-French Entente in 1904, from the point of view of the French Foreign Office, would be a rapprochement between her new friends and Russia, her old ally. Desirable as such an arrangement would have been, however, the differences separating the Czar's foreign policy from that of the British Empire were too great. The matter of an agreement with Russia was

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given serious consideration during the period of the Anglo-French negotiations, but the points of conflict between the two countries were too numerous and the gulf that separated their interests was too wide at this time. Anglo-Russian interests collided in Persia, in Afghanistan, and in Tibet, and to the British it seemed that the Russian government was unwilling to take a position that would make any attempt at an understanding plausible. Furthermore, as Russia was at war with Britain's Far Eastern ally, Japan, it was decided that the time was not appropriate for an understanding between the two governments. 26

On the other hand, the Russo-Japanese War constituted a force which might ultimately lead to an Anglo-Russian entente. It was a paradoxical situation, in that France's ally was at war with the ally of her new friend. This made for a rather tense situation—naturally one in which Russia sought the neutrality of Britain, and in which France used her good offices to assist in bettering relations between the two. During the war the help of a third Power was needed to maintain peace between Russia and England. Particularly was this true at such times as Russia's interception of British shipments of contraband to the Far East, and on the occasion of the Dogger Bank affair. Likewise, the war served to establish an understanding between England and Russia by its outcome. When Russia was torn by revolution, after her unexpected defeat

26 Lansdowne to Spring Rice, April 22, 1904, B. D., IV, no. 183, p. 188, and Newton, op. cit., p. 332.
by the Japanese, it became imperative that the Czar should make as many friends as possible and thereby strengthen his weakened government. This course of action was to lead ultimately to the Triple Entente, but numerous events were to occur before this agreement was reached.

In 1904, with the signing of the Entente Cordiale, Delcassé could view with a measure of pride his accomplishments to that date. He had suffered losses, it was true; he had lost Egypt at Fashoda, and by signing the Entente with Britain he had acknowledged that loss. His settlement of the Newfoundland controversy had not met with unanimous approval in France; especially in those provinces in which the fishing rights in the territory were of value. To offset these losses he had acquired the friendship of Britain, and he had received a measure of approval from that nation for his designs on Morocco. Of added value in this connection was the prestige given to France in her dealings with Spain in regard to Morocco. When Britain acquiesced to French plans in the Sherifian Empire, Spain's role in the area was established for her; regardless of provisions in the Entente for the protection of Spain, she could only expect to get such territory as France and Britain saw fit to give her. Thus, Delcassé, with the bold and able assistance of Jules Cambon, lost no time in reaching a formal agreement with Spain in relation to Morocco.

Delcassé, by the time he reached manhood, was a man with a mission in life. His mission was to restore his douce France to her former
position of eminence in the affairs of Europe—a position from which she had fallen at Frankfort in 1871. As the disciple of Gambetta, his life's work was dedicated to the erasure of the achievements of Bismarck, who had sought to quarantine France after the Franco-Prussian War by isolating his victim from the Powers of Europe. In Delcassé's view, France had taken a step in the right direction by the signing of the Dual Alliance with Russia in 1894. True, his agreement with England was not an alliance; England had limited her support of France to diplomatic aid, but it was a "foot in the door," which by careful manipulation in skillful hands might eventually lead to better things. Equally true, the agreement dealt only with questions which had arisen in the past, with but a limited promise of things to come—to the extent that France intimated a limited penetration of Morocco in exchange for her withdrawal from Egypt. It was to be a small-scale colonial venture. But the French Foreign Minister was well aware, as he had already admitted, that colonial affairs would have to be settled on the battlefields of Europe.

In the opinion of Delcassé, Germany had been able to make her rapid advance as a colonial power due to the preponderance which she asserted in Europe. In recognition of this principle, it may well be assumed that the French Minister proposed to make use of the friendship of England to its fullest extent in enhancing the power of his government in dealing with the European colonial powers.

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27 Porter, op. cit., p. 69.
Now, in what instance could this newly acquired asset be used? Italy had been placated in 1900 by France's invitation and suggestion that she take Tripoli. Spain had agreed to work hand-in-hand with France in Morocco to a degree that would render the possibility of friction remote. Austria was without pronounced colonial ambitions. The Entente Cordiale, as a diplomatic weapon, could be directed only against Germany—the arch foe of France in Delcassé's over-all foreign policy—and a motivating influence in Britain's desire to enter an agreement with France in the first place.

It must have been obvious to the Wilhelmstrasse that these diplomatic moves on the part of the French and British Foreign Offices held a future threat for Germany. What, then, was Germany's reaction to the forming of the Anglo-French Entente? Oddly enough, in the beginning, the idea of an understanding between the two Powers was looked upon with favor in Germany. That an agreement between the two was being considered was reported by Count von Metternich, German Ambassador in London, as early as January 30, 1902—a fact that Lord Lansdowne promptly denied. The first inclination in Germany was to think of the proposal in terms of an understanding between England, Russia, and France; and, Anglo-Russian differences being what they were at the time, such an achievement was not considered likely by Berlin. As the understanding progressed, during the next several
months, and Germany saw that it was headed toward a satisfactory conclusion, it was still looked upon as no cause for alarm. Metternich, in London, writing to the Chancellor in June, 1903, closed his dispatch by saying:

I am convinced that the British Government, by the progressive reconciliation with France which has fallen so neatly into their lap, means no contrary implication as regards Germany. They have the satisfactory feeling of having one rival the less, without any sacrifice involved. Their prestige is increased at home and to some extent abroad also. Reconciliation with one opponent does not necessarily imply enmity with another. . . .

An Anglo-French alliance was considered in Berlin as "music of the future," and it was believed that the Franco-Russian Alliance was slowly breaking under the strain of conflicting interests in the Balkans. Count Bulow and Baron von Holstein had the international situation carefully figured out and were not alarmed at what the future held in store for Germany. The Chancellor was of the opinion that,

Delcassé's coquetting with England would become serious for us only in case he should also succeed in bringing about a rapprochement between England and Russia. . . . Otherwise his wooing of England will . . . strengthen Count Lamsdorff in the thought that the former League of the Three Emperors is, all things considered, the best combination for Russian autocracy. But the present grouping will change soon, and in my opinion, we cannot take things too coolly.


29 Anderson, op. cit., p. 135.
This opinion was shared by the Kaiser, who, asserting that Germany was not interested in Morocco, went so far as to speak to the British Ambassador, Sir Frank Lascelles, who reported the conversation to Lansdowne, of his desire for an Anglo-German understanding similar to that between France and Britain. On this occasion, however, the Kaiser was not given much encouragement that such an understanding was possible in the immediate future.  

On May 10, 1903, the German complacency regarding the Anglo-French situation received its first jolt in the form of a report from Baron Eckardstein, formerly first secretary of the German embassy in London. It was the Baron's belief that the Entente not only would be concluded, but that it would not cause a breach in the Dual Alliance. Instead, as Eckardstein saw the situation,

... A new Triple Alliance is being formed, which, although it may assume no written form and perhaps may endure only for a number of years, will for a time cause us everywhere at least economic and political difficulties.  

In September, German uneasiness was further aggravated by the news that the Anglo-French settlement was already far advanced and that France and Spain were also negotiating over Morocco.

At this point Germany decided to intervene. The German Ambassador at Madrid, Joseph von Radowitz, was instructed to make every

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30 Lascelles to Lansdowne, May 18, 1904, B. D., III, no. 1, p. 1.
31 Anderson, op. cit., p. 136.
effort to protect the economic interests of Germany in Morocco, either "through direct negotiations with Spain, through breaking the way for participation in the negotiations of the most interested states, or through proposing a conference." 32 At this time, it appears that the German government began to see the decline of its diplomatic position and the improvement in the position of France; consequently, Germany now hoped to divide Morocco with Great Britain, France, and Spain.

This interest of Germany in the division of the territory covered by the Entente Cordiale was destined to lead to the First Moroccan Crisis which provided the necessary stimulus in making the Entente Cordiale something more than a mere understanding between the two Powers. Actually, this crisis precipitated Anglo-French military and naval conversations, which represent a French attempt to turn the understanding with England into an alliance.

32 Ibid., p. 137.
CHAPTER II

THE FIRST MOROCCAN CRISIS, 1904-1906

The year 1904 was to be one of the high-water marks in the career of Théophile Delcassé. The understanding reached with Britain held implications of inestimable value to a man of vision and purpose; it also contained concrete terms, open and secret, which, if carried out with dexterity, would result in French domination in the Sherifian Empire. French public opinion considered that in the Fashoda incident the homeland had suffered a staggering colonial loss. Consequently, there had been outspoken criticism of the policies of the Foreign Minister. Now, with the Entente Cordiale concluded, Delcassé set to work to recoup French losses.

Morocco, the prize in case Delcassé's aspirations were realized, was a country which would make a considerable effort worth-while. Much of the land is fertile and, thanks to the protection of the Atlas Mountains, the climate in the western and northern parts of the country is both pleasant and healthful. It is an African land in which Europeans can live in comfort. In addition to the advantages of soil and climate, it was thought, in 1904, that the country held a tremendous mineral potential. Then again, its location made it desirable from the standpoint
of the French. Located at the western end of the north-African coast, just south of Gibraltar, its eastern boundary is for many miles conterminous with Algeria. Just as it had once become necessary for France, according to imperialistic logic, to acquire Tunis on the east of Algeria, Morocco, on the west, now became equally indispensable. It is perhaps odd that such a prize would be available at this late date in European imperialistic affairs.

Regardless of the attractions of the country and its strategic importance, it was one of the last parts of Africa to be appropriated by European imperialism. The reasons for this anomaly are two: First, the war-like qualities of its inhabitants, the Berber tribesmen of the mountains and the Arabs and Moors of the plains, who gave but little allegiance to the Sultan who headed the central government, were of sufficient strength to discourage European encroachments. Second, and perhaps the better reason, "is the fact that too many European powers were interested in preventing any one empire from swallowing up the Sultan's realm."¹

In partial disregard of this second reason, Delcassé prepared to move in 1904. He had assiduously prepared the way in all important quarters except one—Germany. This mistake was to prove his undoing.

¹Parker T. Moon, Imperialism and World Politics, pp. 197-198.
The program which the French Foreign Minister sought to follow in Morocco was one of pacific penetration. To make this action possible, the French Parliament voted to provide a fund of 600,000 francs. The next step was the sending of a mission to Fez under the Count de Saint-Aulaire, First Secretary of the legation in Tangier. It was the purpose of this mission to make known to the Sultan the friendly interest of France; to state the need of progressive reforms in his domain; and to acquaint him with the terms of the Anglo-French agreement of April 8, 1904.²

News of the plans which France and Britain had agreed upon for Morocco must have been disquieting to the Sultan. Far-reaching plans had been worked out among the Powers, and he had not been consulted. Practically all elements among his people were opposed to foreign control of any kind, and if he submitted, his actions might well lead to a revolt which would endanger his position as ruler. Fortunately for the Sultan's peace of mind, he did not know at this time of the secret provisions of the Anglo-French treaty. Nevertheless, since the Count de Saint-Aulaire took particular pains to explain the situation in such a way as to hide the full significance of the accord, the holder of the "Umbrella" soon calmed down, and began to think of ways in which the new status of affairs would be of profit to himself.

²Anderson, op. cit., p. 128.
The first possible benefit which occurred to the Sultan was a loan; the Moroccan ruler was without funds. And because of this difficulty he could not collect taxes nor maintain an army. Earlier in the year he had begun negotiations with the Banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas for a loan. In seeking this loan he had asked the help of the French government. Delcassé had readily promised his support. In this situation the Sultan could only show favor toward the Anglo-French agreement. In June he was able to conclude the transaction for the loan.

This was not the first venture of the Sultan, Abdul Aziz, in the field of borrowing from European sources. He had received funds on previous occasions from France, England, and Spain, but they had been of relatively small amounts and had not led to serious consequences. It should be said of Abdul that he had not always spent his money in a very judicious manner, as most of the proceeds had gone for such things as bicycles and player pianos for his harem, and fireworks for the entertainment of his court. In 1904, however, the loan was much larger and the provisions were more involved.

On June 12, 1904, a consortium of eleven French banks headed by the Banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas, fulfilled political as well as economic purposes by granting the loan, for it was backed by the French

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3 Lansdowne to Monson, April 12, 1904, B. D., III, no. 26, pp. 27-28.


government and its provisions were suitable for the purpose of carrying out the pacific penetration of Morocco. The loan has been described as follows:

The amount was 62,500,000 francs (Art. X), of which 80 per cent was actually to be credited to the Sultan (Art. XXIV). The interest was set at 5 per cent (Art. III). The loan was to be redeemed within thirty-six years, but the schedule of amortization was fixed and could not be hastened during the first fifteen years (Arts. IV, VII). The loan, guaranteed by the customs duties in all the ports of Morocco, was to have preference and priority over all other loans which might be similarly guaranteed (Art. XI). Sixty per cent of the customs revenue were reserved for the repayment of the obligation. If the necessary amount was not obtained thereby, the Moroccan government was to make up the deficit (Art. XVII). Two million francs were left in the bank at Paris to cover short payments; if withdrawn, this amount was to be re-established immediately by the Sultan's government (Art. XXI). The remainder, after the Sultan's outstanding loans were liquidated, was placed at the ruler's disposal to be drawn upon at will (Arts. XXV, XXXV). By Article XIV the existing customs treaties and arrangements of Morocco with the Powers were guaranteed. Article XXXII prohibited the Sultan from using the customs receipts at his disposal to guarantee any other loan without a previous agreement with the French banks. By Article XXXIII those banks were given the right of preference in contracting new loans, coining money, or buying and selling gold and silver for Morocco, provided the conditions they offered were equal to those offered by others. The collection of the customs was to be supervised by a special group of French officials under the protection of the French legation. Their director should communicate with the Moroccan government through the French Minister at Tangier. Furthermore, if the stipulated funds were not turned over to the supervisors, the agents could appeal to the French Minister; and, with his consent and with due notification to the Sultan, they could collect the sums themselves. Thus, when by the last of July those officials were installed, the control of the customs was practically lost to the Sultan.  

6Anderson, op. cit., p. 130.
The execution of this loan was, of course, a pronounced step forward in the plans of the French Foreign Office. As already stated, the loan had received the blessing of Delcassé, and it was ably assisted by Saint-Aulaire in Fez at the time of its negotiation.

The pacific penetration of France in Morocco in 1904 was to be assisted by other means. On May 18, an American citizen, Ion Perdicaris, and his English son-in-law, Varley, were kidnapped from the home of the American near Tangier. This outrage, committed by the Moroccan bandit, Raisouli, convinced public opinion everywhere that it was high time that reforms were carried out in the realm of the Sultan. The objectives of the bandit were threefold. First, he wanted a large ransom. Second, he demanded the dismissal of certain of the Sultan's officials who were his enemies. And third, he demanded that the Sultan appoint him as pasha for the district around Tangier. Abdul Aziz had to accept the bandit's terms.

On June 24, the two victims were released by Raisouli. The release was brought about by the French government, working through some of its Algerian religious leaders with connections in Morocco. The kidnapping led the foreigners living in Tangier to request protection. Heeding this request, the French government sent two warships to Moroccan waters and secured the appointment of French and Algerian officers over the police of Tangier. French plans in the Sherifian Empire were well under way.
During the summer French plans went steadily forward. Private interests began to move into Morocco and plans were made for the systematic exploitation of resources there. But in the fall the outlook for peaceful penetration began to darken. Border incidents in which French troops became involved were reported with increasing frequency, and the Paris press found it necessary to advocate the establishment of French military posts in Morocco in an effort to "overawe the neighbouring tribes," and "to bring the tribes under some scheme of taxation as has been done in Tunis."^7

In December the Sultan dismissed all foreign employees at Fez and Rabat. On this occasion Monson, British Ambassador at Paris, reported the situation as follows:

The news of the dismissal by the Sultan of Morocco of his foreign advisers and "employés," including the French Military Mission, has attracted, as is natural, great attention in France. It has been hailed by the prophets of evil in respect of the responsibilities undertaken by France in Morocco, under the Anglo-French Understanding of the 8th of April last, as an early confirmation of their warnings. The Government Press however is not yet ready to admit that the policy of "pacific penetration" will have to be abandoned. It agrees with the Opposition newspapers in declaring loudly that the slight put upon the Power which is to be henceforward the predominant one in Morocco must be resented and punished. But it holds that the measures to be taken with this end in view must be such as not to impair the Sultan's authority, which is still to be the main instrument of the French pacific advance into the country. . . . Either the Oujda district may be annexed, or the eight ports

^7 Monson to Lansdowne, October 7, 1904, B. D., III, no. 63, pp. 54-55.
open to foreign commerce may be seized and held pending compliance with the French demands... Meanwhile there is general approval of M. Delcassé's action in withdrawing all the French citizens residing in Fez.8

Events were not shaping up well for the French in Morocco toward the end of 1904. It was apparent through incidents that had occurred up to this time that the Sultan would prove a difficult obstacle to Delcassé's new African venture. He was to discover an even more serious opposition in the near future. Failure to secure the approval of Imperial Germany proved to be the greatest shortcoming of his policy; this weakness proved dangerous for France and disastrous for the Foreign Minister.

As early as September 24, 1903, Germany had decided to intervene in the Moroccan dispute. On that date the government instructed the Ambassador at Madrid as follows:

By virtue of our political international position and especially by virtue of the great significance of our economic interests in Morocco, we must seek to be considered also in a division of the land by obtaining territorial compensation, for example in the region of the Sus, or elsewhere in the colonial world, perhaps by the cession of Fernando Po. Your excellency should weigh thoroughly the means by which we should best reach that goal, whether through direct negotiations with Spain, through breaking the way for participation in the negotiations of the most interested states, or through proposing a conference.9

8Monson to Lansdowne, December 26, 1904, B. D., III, no. 64, p. 55.

9Richthofen to Radowitz, September 24, 1903, quoted in Anderson, op. cit., p. 137.
This diplomatic correspondence was to prove singularly prophetic of the manner in which the German Foreign Office was to deal with the Moroccan question in the years to come.

By the time the period under discussion was reached, Germany had made rapid strides as a commercial nation. Although her trade with the Sherifian Empire was not as great as that of England, France, or Spain, it was of such volume as to make it a matter of serious concern to the German government. Certain elements within Germany were particularly interested in the economic potential of Morocco, notably the Pan-German League. The Chancellor was not especially alarmed by early events during France's pacific penetration in Morocco, but he was gravely disturbed by the prospect of sacrificing the future of German economic interests in Africa. He did not propose to sit idly by while the interests of his nation were being jeopardized.

As early as April 5, 1904, before the Anglo-French understanding was formally signed, the German Minister at Tangier, Baron von Mentzingen, had suggested to Bulow that "as France has not advanced further than at present in extending her influence in Morocco, she would feel less mortified now, supposing we occupied a point on the coast—

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11 Ima G. Barlow, The Agadir Crisis, p. 41.
say, Agadir. 12 In June of the same year Baron von Holstein, in the
German Foreign Office, had raised the issue of the effect of the French
actions on German prestige, and concluded that "in order to protect her
prestige, Germany must protest against France's intention to acquire
Morocco." In his memorandum, the Baron goes on to say:

... The point to be made good is as follows: France's evi-
dent scheme to absorb Morocco finishes the free competition
of foreign countries and involves sensible injury to the inter-
est of third Powers, especially Germany, for now and later.
For long we have clung to the belief that France would seek
an understanding with the Powers interested. This however
has not happened as far as Germany is concerned. There-
fore the German Government finds itself forced to take the
initiative in favour of German interests, which the Em-
peror summed up to the King of Spain as follows: "We de-
mand freedom to trade and do business in Morocco." But
the fact of the French acquisition annuls this programme;
vide Tunis, Tonkin, Madagascar, etc. ... 13

As the German government saw the situation, Delcassé had obtained the
permission of all the Powers with an interest in the Sultan's realm ex-
cept Germany; this was a direct affront to that nation's prestige. If
Germany allowed such a high-handed action to take place in this in-
stance, it might well lead to similar actions at some future date. Fur-
thermore, the plans of France, which the Anglo-French entente seemed
to indicate, were in strict violation of the terms of the agreement re-
ating to Morocco which had been reached at Madrid in 1880 between

12Mentzinger to Bulow, April 5, 1904, Dugdale, op. cit.,
no. 202, pp. 219-220.

13Memorandum by Baron von Holstein, June 3, 1904, ibid.,
no. 207, pp. 220-221.
fourteen nations. By a treaty in 1890 Germany had obtained a guarantee of commercial rights equal to those of the "most favoured nation" as defined by the Madrid Conference. Again, Germany refused to concede that the position of France in Algeria gave her any legitimate rights in Morocco simply because the two African states were neighbors. Too, at this late date in European imperialistic affairs, the areas in which a Power with colonial ambitions might expect to expand were rapidly diminishing. Morocco was one of the last, and the German government was unwilling to see its future possibilities there eliminated without compensation for the losses sustained.

All of these reasons seem valid, in view of the situation in Morocco at the close of 1904, but some have thought that Germany had still another motive for her actions; that is, the idea—given wide acceptance by those contemporary to the period, especially in France and Britain—that the German government used the situation to test the Anglo-French understanding. Eyre Crowe, writing in 1907, said that "the German view on this subject cannot be better stated than was done by Herr von Tschirschky, now Foreign Secretary at Berlin, then Prussian Minister at Hamburg, in speaking on New Year's Day, 1906, to His Majesty's Consul-General at that place." He said:

Germany's policy always had been, and would be, to try to frustrate any coalition between two States which might result in damaging Germany's interests and prestige; and

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14 Moon, op. cit., p. 198.
Germany would, if she thought that such a coalition was being formed, even if its actual results had not yet been carried into practical effect, not hesitate to take such steps as she thought proper to break up the coalition.

In the same memorandum, Crowe continues:

In pursuance of this policy, which, whatever its merits or demerits, is certainly quite intelligible, Germany waited for the opportune moment for taking action, with the view of breaking up, if possible, the Anglo-French entente. When Russia was staggering under the crushing blows inflicted by Japan, and threatened by internal revolution, the German campaign was opened. The object of nipping in the bud the young friendship between France and England was to be attained by using as a stalking-horse those very interests in Morocco which the Imperial Chancellor had, barely a year before, publicly declared to be in no way imperilled. 15

The German decision in the matter most likely resulted from the more practical reasons given. If actions taken to prevent the pre-emption of Morocco by France led to the destruction of that nation's agreement with England, so much the better.

The plan of action decided upon by Bulow and the German Foreign Office was to encourage the Sultan to resist the plans of Delcassé. In the spring of 1905 the German Emperor, William II, took a yachting trip in the Mediterranean. The Chancellor and Holstein decided that this would be an excellent opportunity for him to visit Tangier and try to convince the Moors that in his opinion their ruler was a sovereign, and must be considered as such by all nations. The Emperor was not in favor of the visit, but his advisers, by announcing the forthcoming

15 Memorandum by Eyre Crowe, January 1, 1907, B. D., III, Appendix A, p. 400.
event in the press, placed him in such a position that he had little choice in the matter. Bulow explained to the Emperor as follows:

Your Majesty's visit to Tangier will embarrass M. Del-cassé, traverse his schemes, and further our business interest in Morocco. (The Emperor: "Tant mieux.")

On March 31, William II landed at Tangier and was enthusiastically greeted by the Moors.

Herbert E. White, British Consul at Tangier, reported the Emperor's visit to Morocco as follows:

... I have the honour to report that when the German Emperor landed on the pier he was warmly greeted by Mulai Abdelmalek [the Sultan's representative], who saluted him in the Sultan's name and stated that His Shereefian Majesty's joy at receiving the visit was not only on His Majesty's own account but also on that of his subjects.

The Emperor replied that it gave him great pleasure and satisfaction to salute a near relative of the Sultan, and he requested him to convey to the Sultan his thanks for having sent the special embassy to greet him, and also for the magnificent preparations made for his reception. His Imperial Majesty added that he was deeply interested in the welfare and prosperity of the Moorish Empire. It was to the Sultan as an independent sovereign, that he was paying a visit and he trusted that, under His Shereefian Majesty's sovereignty, Morocco would remain free, and open to the peaceful competition of all nations without monopolies or exclusion.

When later on at the German Legation Mulai Abdelmalek handed to the Emperor the Sultan's letter, his Highness said: "His Shereefian Majesty, recalling the friendship which has always existed between His Majesty's illustrious ancestors and the German Government, is animated by the desire to strengthen and extend that friendship by all means as far as possible. I fulfill the orders I have received in conveying to Your Majesty the message with which I have been charged by the Sultan.

His Shereefian Majesty's friendship with Your Imperial Majesty is already well known to all. I beg Your Majesty to receive this message with gracious clemency in accordance with the bonds of strong friendship."

The Emperor in reply thanked Mulai Abdelmalek more especially for the expressions of sincere friendship contained in the message. He entirely concurred in the Sultan's sentiments. It proved emphatically the omnipotence of the divine wisdom, which, as the Ambassador knew, directed the fate of nations. He personally most sincerely wished the development and the prosperity of the Moorish Empire as much as for the good of His Shereefian Majesty's own subjects as for that of the nations of Europe trading in this country, as he hoped, on a footing of perfect equality.

His Imperial Majesty added that he had visited Tangier resolved to do all that lay in his power to efficiently safeguard German Interests in Morocco. He considered the Sultan an absolutely independent Sovereign and it was with His Majesty that he desired to come to an understanding as to a means of safeguarding those interests.

"I am informed that the foregoing account of the speeches exchanged between Mulai Abdelmalek and the German Emperor was furnished to a Journalist by the German Charge d'Affaires."

Of his visit to Tangier the Imperial tourist was to say at a later date:

"I went to Tangier for the express purpose of telling the French Minister what my views were. I said, "I know nothing of any agreement between France and Morocco. For me, the Sultan is an independent sovereign. I am determined not to have a repetition of what happened in Tunis.""

The Emperor's speech, prepared for him by the Chancellor and the Foreign Office, clearly stated Germany's attitude regarding French plans for pacific penetration in the realm of the Sultan. The British

\[17\text{White to Lansdowne, April 2, 1905, B. D., III, no. 72, p. 63.}

\[18\text{Newton, op. cit., p. 333.} \]
were considerably provoked by the turn of events. The characteristic ebullience with which his nephew was proclaiming German foreign policy was especially exasperating to Edward VII. The always ardent Sir John Fisher, First Sea Lord, at this point was impressed by the "golden opportunity" of a war with Germany, and in writing to Lansdowne on April 22, the Admiral predicted "we could have the German Fleet, the Kiel Canal, and Schleswig-Holstein within a fortnight."\(^1^9\)

The turn of events brought about by the Emperor's visit now forced Delcassé to seek an understanding with Germany in the Moroccan question. He stated publicly that France was ready to correct any misunderstanding on the part of Germany, and denied that any member of the French diplomatic corps had ever told the Sultan that the French had a mandate of Europe for their penetrations into his land. The Foreign Minister contended that freedom of commerce for all nations had been completely safeguarded in the Anglo-French understanding, as well as in the Franco-Spanish agreement. Unfortunately for Delcassé, he did not have the loyal support of his nation in this controversy with Germany. As the quarrel with Germany continued, French opinion, both inside the government and out, became more and more alarmed. Rouvier, the French Prime Minister, came to the assistance of Delcassé, to the extent that he was retained in the Cabinet, but the former assured

\(^{19}\) Ibid., p. 335.
the Chamber that in the future all of the actions of the Foreign Minister would be under his supervision. Delcassé would have resigned at this time had it not been for appeals from President Loubet, Paul Cambon, and Barrère, French Ambassador at Rome. French public opinion feared a war with Germany and was yielding to such a threat. 20

After the visit of William II to Tangier, the German government decided that the best way to handle the Moroccan question would be by holding an international conference. The calling of a conference was justified on the grounds that Germany, along with other Powers, such as the United States and Austria, had not been consulted in the matter at the time it was being considered by France, Italy, Britain, and Spain. Furthermore, since the status quo, or the "open door" policy in Morocco had been established by the Madrid Conference, any change in that policy would have to come, Germany insisted, as the result of another such conference. 21 In addition to the logic of this conclusion, the German Foreign Office was of the opinion that handling the matter in this way would prove to be quite embarrassing to France; this, too, would serve Germany's purpose. The German government immediately set to work to line up support for such a conference.

The French government was at a loss as to just what Germany wanted. They failed to understand how Germany could accept the

20 Anderson, op. cit., p. 201.

Egyptian clauses of the Anglo-French agreement and at the same time protest so vigorously the French penetrations into Morocco. Could it be that Germany merely wanted to get rid of Delcassé or, was Germany using the Moroccan question as a cause for war with France?

For his part, Delcassé did not think that war was likely; rather, he thought that Germany was bluffing. If he were wrong, however, he claimed that France had the unqualified support of Britain at this time, and in case war did come, the assistance of the English Fleet would be invaluable to France. This fact has never been admitted by the British, but the Foreign Minister persisted in contending that France should not yield to the German demand for a conference. Defending his position before the Council of Ministers on June 6, Delcassé said:

Weigh carefully the decision that you are about to make. Today, England boldly espouses our cause. But tomorrow, if she sees us weaken or tremble, . . . she will no longer take any stock in us. And, turning around her batteries, she will negotiate a reconciliation with Berlin at the expense of our Colonial Empire. . . .

To prove his point that France could count on British help, he read from Lansdowne's note of the twenty-fifth to Cambon. This note had been written when it was suspected that Germany would try to obtain a port in Morocco. According to Lansdowne's version, the note read as follows:

22 Anderson, op. cit., p. 203.

23 Porter, op. cit., p. 259.
The French and British Governments should continue to treat one another with the most absolute confidence, that we should keep one another fully informed to everything which came to our knowledge, and so far as possible discuss any contingencies by which we might in the course of events find ourselves confronted. . . .

The French version of the note was considerably more emphatic in its terms than that of the British. According to the French Foreign Office, the note read:

Le Gouvenement de Sa Majesté britannique serait prêt à se joindre au Gouvenement de la République pour s'opposer fortement à une telle proposition, et prie M. Delcassé dans le cas où la question surgirait, de donner au Gouvenement de Sa Majesté britannique toute occasion de concerter avec le Gouvernement français les mesures qui pourraient être prises pour aller à l'encontre de cette demande.

There is a considerable discrepancy in the terms used in the two notes, but as the British version is based on the content of a subsequent note from Lansdowne to Cambon, it may well be that the British Minister's memory was a bit hazy.

These notes seem to constitute the origin of the offensive and defensive alliance between the two Powers and later to the story that,

. . . in 1905 when the German Government first took an aggressive tone about French projects of reform in Morocco, the British Government promised military assistance to France if she were attacked by Germany, including a landing of an expedition of 120,000 men in Schleswig.

24 Lansdowne to Cambon, May 25, 1905, B. D., III, no. 95, p. 77.
Lansdowne categorically denies making such an offer and agrees with Sir T. H. Sanderson, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, who said:

I think I am justified in affirming that no such promise was made—and that we went no farther than warning the German Government that if Germany attacked France in connexion with the Entente we could not undertake to remain indifferent. There were no doubt preparations by our military authorities for defending Belgium in case of an attack by Germany through Belgian territory, and these preparations must have been known to the French military attache in London. There was also a good deal of loose talk in naval circles and in some high quarters of a possible expedition to Schleswig in the possible event of war. I do not believe such a measure was ever seriously entertained, and I looked upon the report as put about for the purpose of a warning.26

Despite this denial, it is interesting to note that Delcassé maintained until his death that Britain had offered him military and naval assistance at this time.

When Delcassé appeared before the Council of Ministers to defend his policy, the issue was clearly drawn. It was either a continuation of French demands for reform by the Sultan as proposed by the Foreign Minister, or the submission to the German proposal for an international conference. The latter proposal had the support of Rouvier at the time. The Sultan had, by this date, rejected the French demands and adopted the German proposal. Rouvier was of the opinion that if he consented to drop Delcassé from the Cabinet, a very critical situation would be

26 Written opinion by Lord Sanderson, August 17, 1922, B. D., III, no. 105, p. 87.
relieved and that Germany would not prove too difficult to deal with at
the time the conference assembled. By unanimous decision, the Cabi-
et voted to support the Prime Minister. On this date, June 6, Delcassé
ended his long term as Foreign Minister and Rouvier succeeded him.27

For seven years the disciple of Gambetta had held the portfolio
of Foreign Minister. During this period he had labored tirelessly to
improve the position of France and carry on the ideal of revanche. He
had become the architect of the Entente Cordiale and had tried to give
a far more potent meaning than that expressed in Article IX of the agree-
ment. Delcassé, on his last day as Foreign Minister, had told the
Council that Britain offered military and naval support to France in case
of war with Germany. In effect, the understanding of April 8, 1904,
had become a military alliance between the two countries on June 6,
1905. The fact that Delcassé was dropped from the Cabinet seems am-
ple proof that he failed to convince the Council that such an alliance was
a reality.

There is no documentary evidence extant which corroborates the
claim made by Delcassé on June 6. There are documents indicating
certain British "guarantees" to France made during the period from
April to October, however. For example, "in the 'Communications to
French Government from Sir F. Bertie' exists one endorsed as follows:

187.
Morocco. H. M. Government promise their support to French Government against possible demand by Germany for a port."

Still another communication was that "le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique trouve que les procédés de l'Allemagne dans la question du Maroc sont des plus déraisonnables." This attitude led to the British desire of concerter with the French in the Moroccan question.28

The terms used are, of course, somewhat vague, as is the case in diplomatic intercourse. It is probable that the meaning of these communications was much more exact to the principals at the time than their meaning would be at a considerably later date.

The substance of the British "guarantees" to France were made known to the French public in two articles written in le Matin by Stéphane Lauzanne. In these accounts of the "guarantees," Lauzanne reported the statements made by Delcassé before the Council of Ministers on June 6.29 These articles, one published on October 6 and a second on the following day, in addition to informing the French public, infuriated certain elements in Germany. The German hostility was now divided between France and England, and considerable effort was necessary to placate this animosity; this was achieved, however, due to the efforts

28Draft by Sir F. Bertie, April 24, 1905, B. D., III, no. 91, pp. 73-74.

of Rouvier and the British Foreign Office, and plans went forward for the conference demanded by Germany.

William II was well pleased with the outcome of the situation. The day following Delcassé's forced resignation the Kaiser rewarded Bulow with the title of Prince. The Emperor thought that the lesson to be learned on this occasion was: "Hurrah! for dry powder and well-sharpened swords."

The Kaiser was mistaken. The outcome of the Algeciras Conference, which convened in January, 1906, revealed that German designs to create an atmosphere of crisis and tension had been a mistake, and that Bulow would have been wise to have halted with the fall of Delcassé. "Instead of effecting a breach in the Entente, the insistence on a Conference welded it."

Balfour resigned office in December, 1905, and the Liberal leader, Henry Campbell-Bannerman, became Prime Minister. A general election was held in the following year in which the Liberals sustained an overwhelming majority. In the new government Edward Grey became Foreign Minister, and lost no time in indicating that he would support the Anglo-French understanding of 1904. "Campbell-Bannerman, in his first official statement after the Liberal victory at the polls,

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30 Nicholas Mansergh, The Coming of the First World War, p. 96.
31 Ibid., p. 97.
emphatically reaffirmed the solidarity of the Entente Cordiale. \(^{32}\) Grey, in conversation with Cambon, stated that in the event of a war between France and Germany, it was his personal opinion that England would be strongly moved in favor of France. \(^{33}\)

The favorable attitude of the new government was to produce the Anglo-French military and naval conversations. The French case, as presented by Cambon, demanded that immediate attention be given to an understanding between the General Staffs of the two nations if British assistance was to be of value in the event of a Franco-German war.

\(^{32}\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 97.}\)

\(^{33}\text{Edward Grey, Twenty-five Years, Vol. I, pp. 133-136.}\)
CHAPTER III

ANGLO-FRENCH MILITARY CONVERSATIONS:
FIRST PHASE

On the day of his fall from power, Théophile Delcassé laid before the French Cabinet certain papers which he contended were evidence that England had promised to come to the assistance of France in case of war with Germany. The evidence was lacking to convince the Cabinet, and the Rouvier government sacrificed its foreign minister to German demands and agreed to the Algeciras conference to settle the Moroccan question. The experience was one of humiliation to the French nation; it was a tragic hour in the career of Delcassé.

In the light of documentary evidence revealed since the First World War it would seem that Delcassé was mistaken in his interpretation of the British offer of assistance in France's hour of need. Apparently, the Foreign Minister had confused the *obiter dicta* of certain high officials in the government of Britain with the official attitude of that government. Delcassé knew what he wanted, and the wish is father to the thought; possibly he wanted an alliance with Britain so strongly that a minimum of encouragement sufficed to convince him that such was actually the case.
With the passing months the name Delcassé took on a new significance. Now it stood not for the man Delcassé but for a policy. Paul Cambon in London at this point became the leading French figure in the perpetuation of the policy which called for the securing of British assistance to France in the event that Germany again tried to oppose her will. From what had taken place in the immediate past, Cambon must have known that a declared alliance with Britain would not be forthcoming. He would have to accept a substitute. He would have to accept the nearest approach to an alliance which he could obtain from the British Foreign Minister and labor in the direction of making the British proposition tantamount to an alliance.

Edward Grey, British Foreign Secretary, and the principal figure with whom Cambon in his machinations was to deal, has been likened by one authority to Louis XVI. "Nature made Louis XVI for a farmhouse. Fate tossed him into a revolution." Likewise, "nature made Lord Grey for a country gentleman. Fate placed him, in a time of unexampled importance, at the head of the Foreign Office." The administration of Grey might have been something entirely different had he not come under the influence of Cambon, whose will was considerably stronger than his own. In this regard, it has been said:

Paul Cambon, the French Ambassador, could not have found a fitter object than Edward Grey for his arts of suggestion.

Very gradually and with the finest of threads, Grey was steadily enmeshed, always believing that it all really amounted to nothing, committed him to nothing, and was the most natural and most harmless thing in the world.²

Cambon, realizing the possibilities of the situation, set to work to improve the position of France. Lansdowne, Grey's predecessor, had given the French vague assurances that under certain circumstances, in the event of a Franco-German war, England would come to the aid of her Entente partner. England would "concert" with France. Since this sort of assistance had proven ineffective in June of 1905, Cambon now thought that he must secure a more concrete agreement from the British. France did not want sympathy; she wanted action, in the event of a situation which presented dangerous aspects.³

France must know the attitude of the new British Foreign Minister on the subject. To ask the question point-blank would, no doubt, result in an evasive answer, as Grey was hardly in a position to commit the new government to a military alliance at this point. Perhaps for this reason the French Ambassador appears to have gone about getting the desired information by rather devious means.

In December, 1905, Cambon was aware that there was an element in England which favored a military alliance with France as a means of halting the ever-increasing hegemony of Germany in European

affairs. This group saw in Germany a threat to the future well-being of the British Empire. Its leading spokesman was Colonel Repington, military correspondent of the London Times, who at this time believed that Germany was prepared to take advantage of the international situation, in which France's ally, Russia, was in "temporary eclipse" because of the Russo-Japanese War. As Repington saw the situation, "Germany showed an evident disposition to pick a quarrel with France." He also regretted the fact that "we [England] had done nothing whatever to prepare joint military action and to gain close touch with French military circles." The Colonel had even gone so far as to warn Germany, in the Times, "that she would endanger her vital interest if she staked upon a doubtful hazard the results achieved by the great founders of German unity." The article was concluded with the statement "that a war might unchain animosities in unexpected quarters." 4

Here was a golden opportunity for France and it was not overlooked by the industrious Major Huguet, French Military Attaché at London. Huguet had been appointed to his position in December, 1904, and immediately on his arrival in England he had begun a careful appraisal of the British army in terms of effectiveness in continental warfare. 5


Itienne, French Minister of War, on the probable length of time which would be required for mobilization and the number of troops Britain would be able to land on the continent. One month later he was able to report to his superior that he had checked his figures with Major-General J. M. Grierson, Director of Military Operations, British War Office, who had agreed in substance with Huguet's earlier report. In this latter conversation Grierson had told the Major, "non à titre officiel, mais simplement à titre privé, de camarade à camarade," that the co-operation of the English army with the French had been seriously studied by the War Office. Furthermore, the General thought that if war came, public opinion in favor of English co-operation would be so strong that the government, whether Liberal or Conservative, would not be able to "escape it." He went on to say that this fact must be known to the German Emperor, and that it would be sheer folly on his part to undertake a war against France in which English participation was certain with all her forces.

Huguet immediately reported this interview to Cambon. The Ambassador was "very struck" by the actions and sentiments of the British War Office; he conveyed this news to the French Prime Minister and obtained official permission to begin conversations with the British

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government on the subject of a definite military understanding between the two Powers. 8

This ground-work which had been carried on by the Attaché had its beginning, of course, in the routine duties of Major Huguet. As the military representative of the French government he was obliged to make a careful appraisal of the British army. The knowledge that the British General Staff was studying means of aiding France in the event of war with Germany was something else, however. Here was another opportunity for Cambon. Now he had two possibilities which might serve to secure an alliance between France and Britain. First, there was the sentiment of the group favoring joint military action between the two governments, whose spokesman was Colonel Repington. Second, was the same sentiment now found to exist within the General Staff as expressed by General Grierson. It was clearly the duty of the Ambassador to convert these sentiments into official British policy. Military conversations between the two General Staffs, with the permission of the two governments, could be the opening wedge which would lead to an alliance. The French representatives immediately set to work to obtain this permission.

On December 28, 1905, Huguet dined with his close friend of long standing, Colonel Repington. They soon found that they were in agreement on the subject of Anglo-French military co-operation, but the

8Huguet, op. cit., p. 15.
French Attache expressed concern because Grey, who had just taken over the Foreign Office, had not renewed the assurances given by Lord Lansdowne. Repington asked why the Councillor of the Embassy did not go to the Foreign Office at once "to clear the air." Major Huguet replied that the Ambassador was out of town and in his absence a matter of such grave consequences could not be handled by a subordinate, but that if Grey would broach the subject at the next diplomatic reception, the French Embassy would be much relieved. The French were afraid that the Germans might attack suddenly, and probably through Belgium. According to the Attache, France wanted the British to stiffen the Belgians if war came.

Repington "communicated the purport of the conversation on the morning of the 29th by express letter to Sir Edward Grey." The Foreign Secretary was away from London at the time because of the General Election, which was in full swing, but the letter was forwarded to him at Northumberland. On the following day Repington saw the First Naval Lord, Admiral Sir John Fisher, at the Admiralty, and was told by him that he, Fisher, was "prepared, on his own responsibility, to order our fleets to go wherever they might be required." Fisher said that he had seen on paper Lord Lansdowne's assurances to Cambon, and that they were "quite distinct in their tenor." He had shown them to Grey, and declared that they were part of the engagements taken over from the last Government, and would hold good until denounced.
On January 1, 1906, Repington received Grey's reply from Fallo-don, dated December 30. Grey said:

I am interested to hear of your conversation with the French Military Attaché. I can only say that I have not receded from anything which Lord Lansdowne said to the French, and have no hesitation in affirming it.9

Repington was of the opinion that at this time, due to the elections, there was a wide separation between "responsibility and the executive." But, as the situation was acute, he thought it imperative that action be taken immediately in the direction of military co-operation between the two nations. Now that he knew Grey's position, he assumed the initiative in bringing a measure of co-operation into being. To begin with, the Colonel, acting as a "free lance," submitted eleven questions to the French government through Major Huguet. These questions were of a general nature and the French reply was of a nature calculated to meet with the approval of the British. On January 17 Major Huguet informed Repington that General Grierson had opened relations with him that morning. Believing that this constituted official action in the matter, the Colonel withdrew from the negotiations.10

After this beginning was made, Cambon, who had returned to London from Paris, approached Grey directly. This interview took place on January 10, and the Ambassador, acting on instructions from Paris,

9Repington, op. cit., pp. 3-4.
10Ibid., pp. 6-11.
wanted to know just what Britain would do to assist France in the event of a rupture between France and Germany which might result from the conference at Algeciras. The Foreign Secretary reported the interview as follows:

... M. Gambon said that he did not believe that the German Emperor desired war, but that His Majesty was pursuing a very dangerous policy. He had succeeded in inciting public opinion and military opinion in Germany, and there was a risk that matters might be brought to a point in which a pacific issue would be difficult. During the previous discussions on the subject of Morocco, Lord Lansdowne had expressed his opinion that the British and French Governments should frankly discuss any eventualities that might seem possible, and by his instructions your Excellency had communicated a Memorandum to M. Delcassé to the same effect. It had not been considered necessary at the time to discuss the eventuality of war, but it now seemed desirable that this eventuality should also be considered.

M. Gambon said that he had spoken to this effect to M. Rouvier, who agreed in his view. It was not necessary, nor, indeed, expedient that there should be any formal alliance; but it was of great importance that the French Government should know beforehand whether, in the event of aggression against France by Germany, Great Britain would be prepared to render France armed assistance.

I replied that at the present moment the Prime Minister was out of town, and that the Cabinet were all dispersed seeing after the elections; that we were not as yet aware of the sentiments of the country as they would be expressed at the polls; and that it was impossible therefore for me, in the circumstances, to give a reply to his Excellency's question. I could only state as my personal opinion that, if France were to be attacked by Germany in consequence of a question arising out of the Agreement which our predecessors had recently concluded with the French Government, public opinion in England would be strongly moved in favour of France.

M. Gambon said that he understood this, and that he would repeat his question after the elections.

I said that what Great Britain earnestly desired was that the Conference should have a pacific issue favourable to France.
His Excellency replied that nothing would have a more pacific influence on the Emperor of Germany than the conviction that, if Germany attacked France, she would find England allied against her.

I said that, as far as a definite promise went, I was not in a position to pledge the country to more than neutrality—a benevolent neutrality, if such a thing existed. M. Cambon said that a promise of neutrality did not, of course, satisfy him, and repeated that he would bring the question to me again at the conclusion of the elections.

In the meantime he thought it advisable that unofficial communications between our Admiralty and War Office and the French Naval and Military Attachés should take place as to what action might advantageously be taken in case the two countries found themselves in alliance in such a war. Some communications had, he believed, already passed, and might, he thought, be continued. They did not pledge either Government.

I did not dissent from this view. . . . 11

This interview is a clear demonstration of the influence of Cambon upon Grey. On the day before, January 9, Grey had written to Campbell-Bannerman as follows:

It is unfortunate that the Election clashes with the approach and meeting of the Morocco Conference, for I should like to have been in more frequent communication with you. But this cannot be helped. All that has passed has been sent to you, but I may sum it up as follows:

With the French matters stand as Lord Lansdowne left them. I have promised diplomatic support in accordance with Article IX, and have let it be known that we shall give this. I have not said a word of anything more, and the French have asked no inconvenient questions. 12


12 Spender, op. cit., II, p. 249.
On the following day, when the Ambassador thought that conversations should take place between the Admiralties and the War Offices of the two countries, Grey reported that he "did not dissent from this view."

By the middle of January, 1906, in view of what had taken place during the past month, the French had apparently decided that the best substitute possible for an alliance with Britain would be a military agreement between the two governments. Delcassé had said several years before that when two friendly nations understood one another, a formal alliance was not necessary. Now we find Cambon telling Grey that "it was not necessary, nor, indeed, expedient that there should be any formal alliance." All France wanted was assurance that Britain would be prepared to "render to France armed assistance in the event of aggression against France by Germany." Such an agreement would obviously be a fair substitute for an alliance, if it could be had. Cambon now set to work to get the agreement.

At this point the British Foreign Office raised the issue of whether or not the conversations which had taken place had official sanction. When questioned in the matter, General Grierson had been forced to admit that his actions in entering into a discussion with Major Huguet had not been authorized. 13 Consequently, the next move on the part of Gambon was in the direction of getting a more definite commitment from

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13 Minute by Lord Sanderson, January 11, 1906, B. D., III, pp. 171-172.
Grey. The Foreign Secretary had maintained an evasive attitude thus far in the proceedings, awaiting the outcome of the elections. He maintained that under the circumstances it would have been difficult for him to get the consent of his fellow Cabinet members because of their wide dispersal in seeing to their own re-election. But one of his colleagues has since criticized this excuse by saying:

There was no difficulty whatever in summoning the Cabinet during the Election to consider so grave a matter. A good many members of the Cabinet were in London or within an hour of it, while those whom he consulted [Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Lord Haldane, who was then Secretary of State for War, and Mr. Asquith, who was then Chancellor of the Exchequer] were at a distance, and there are railways and post offices in Great Britain.  

Grey was in something of a quandary. He believed that no Cabinet would undertake any obligation to go to war, but, at the same time, the Anglo-French Entente was quite popular in Britain. Therefore, it was necessary that Britain "be free to go to the help of France as well as free to stand aside." Without a military understanding beforehand, Britain would be unable to help France in time, regardless of how strongly public opinion might desire it.  

General Grierson, after admitting that he was without authority to discuss possible joint military actions with Huguet, had written to Sanderson, in the Foreign Office, giving his views on the necessity of

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14 The Earl Loreburn, How the War Came, p. 80.
15 Grey, op. cit., p. 73.
such conversations. Two days later, on January 13, the urgency of the matter was given impetus from Paris. On this occasion the French Foreign Office had again raised the issue that "il ne parait pas impossible que le Gouvernement Allemand fasse la demande d'un port sur la côte du Maroc." This possibility was duly reported by Bertie in a memorandum to Grey. The French were well aware that this issue served to stimulate action in Britain as nothing else did. Consequently, on January 15, Sanderson instructed General Grierson as follows:

I showed your letter of the 11th to Sir E. Grey, and he has spoken to Mr. Haldane on the subject. They agree to your entering into communications with the French Military Attaché here for the purpose of obtaining such information as you require as to the methods in which military assistance could in case of need be best afforded by us to France and vice versa. Such communications must be solely provisional and non-committal.

On this same date, Grey reported his action to Bertie as follows:

I told M. Cambon today that I had communicated to the Prime Minister my account of his conversation with me on the 10th instant. I had heard from the Prime Minister that he could not be in London before the 25th of January, and it would therefore not be possible for me to discuss things with him before then, and the members of the Government would not assemble in London before the 29th. I could therefore give no further answer today on the question he had addressed to me. He had spoken to me on the 10th of communications passing between the French Naval Attaché and the Admiralty. I understood that these communications

16Grierson to Sanderson, January 11, 1906, B. D., III, no. 211, pp. 172-173.

17Bertie to Grey, January 13, 1906, B. D., III, no. 213, pp. 174-175.

had been with Sir John Fisher. If that was so, it was not necessary for me to do any more; but, with regard to the communications between the French Military Attaché and the War Office, I understood from him that these had taken place through an intermediary. I had therefore taken the opportunity of speaking to Mr. Haldane, the Secretary of State for War, who had been taking part in my election contest in Northumberland on Friday, and he had authorised me to say that these communications might proceed between the French Military Attaché and General Grierson direct; but it must be understood that these communications did not commit either Government. M. Cambon said that the intermediary in question had been a retired Colonel, the Military Correspondent of the "Times," who, he understood, had been sent from the War Office. 19

Cambon was making headway. Thanks to the impulsive Fisher, who had needed no greater authority than the vague statements of Lansdowne, conversations were taking place between the British and French Admiralties. Now Grey had given permission for military conversations on an official basis. Furthermore, the Foreign Minister had secured authorization from the War Office, and at least the acquiescence of the Prime Minister. In giving his permission, Grey had qualified it with the statement, "... but it must be understood that these communications did not commit either Government." This qualification was to be used repeatedly throughout the years that followed; on each occasion when the Foreign Minister was called upon to comment on the military conversations he was to preface or append his remarks with this clause. In the years that followed the war, when the policies

of the Foreign Minister were criticized as having contributed to its outbreak, the "country gentleman" of Fallodon was to defend his policies by saying, in effect, that the actions of the British Foreign Office did not involve the British government. Unfortunately for Grey, history has been far more realistic than was he. The horse thief does not escape punishment by calling the purloined animal a hare.

Grey's thinking on the subject, as reflected in his memoirs, is interesting when considered in the light of his thoughts at the time the military conversations had their beginnings. His ideas are reflected in a private letter written to Bertie on the same date as the letter in which he first gave permission for the conversations:

You will have seen from the official despatch that Cambon has put the great question to me. Diplomatic support we are pledged to give and are giving. A promise in advance committing this country to take part in a Continental war is another matter and a very serious one; it is very difficult for any British Government to give an engagement of that kind. It changes the entente into an alliance and alliances, especially continental alliances, are not in accord- ance with our traditions. My opinion is that if France is let in for a war with Germany arising out of our agreement with her about Morocco, we cannot stand aside, but must take part with France. But a deliberate engagement pledging this country in advance before the actual cause of the war is known or apparent, given in cold blood, goes far beyond anything that the late Government said or as far as I know contemplated.

If we give any promise of armed assistance it must be conditional. Should the Morocco Conference break up without result we must be held free to suggest to the French possible modifications of the Morocco declarations, or even concessions, which might lead to an agreement with Germany. And France must not take independent action in Morocco,
which might lead to war with Germany without keeping us informed and hearing what we have to say. I think too we should have some quid pro quo such as a promise that, if we get into war with Germany over any question of our own France will at least remain neutral if she cannot support us, and keep other European Powers neutral.

Meanwhile I should like to have your views of the answer which should be given: my own are still in solution and I haven't yet determined what proposal I shall make to the Prime Minister.

P. S. — As to taking precautions beforehand in case war should come, it appears that Fisher has long ago taken the French Naval attaché in hand and no doubt has all naval plans prepared. I have now got Haldane's consent to General Grierson being in direct communication with the French Military Attaché. But I am told that 80,000 men with good guns is all we can put into the field in Europe to meet first-class troops; that won't save France unless she can save herself. . . .

All this however is sheer precaution. I detest the idea of another war now and so does the whole of this country. . . .

The most significant fact contained in this letter is the statement that "My opinion is that if France is let in for a war with Germany arising out of our agreement with her about Morocco, we cannot stand aside, but must take part with France." Grey's every action seems to indicate that this was his opinion in 1906. First, he firmly believed that Britain owed France her full diplomatic support, because of the Anglo-French Entente. Second, he was in sympathy with Lansdowne's assurances to the French as expressed in April, 1905. And third, he had finally agreed to the military conversations. In later years Grey,

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when defending his position in the matter, was to make the following ob-
servation concerning this opinion:

My own opinion—perhaps it would be more accurate to
call it an instinctive feeling rather than considered opinion—
was, that if Germany forced war on France in order to destroy
the Anglo-French Agreement, we ought to go to the help of
France.21

Perhaps it is a little difficult to imagine a British Foreign Secretary
conducting affairs of state on instinct, but such was the man who held
the portfolio in 1906. Small wonder that such a consummate diplomatist
as Paul Cambon was able to lead the French designs along paths which
led to an acceptable substitute for an Anglo-French alliance.

Grey's election was declared on January 25, 1906; on January 31,
Cambon, true to his promise, again approached him to ask whether
France would be able to count upon the assistance of England in the
event of an attack upon her by Germany. The Foreign Secretary's re-
ply was evasive; as reported to Bertie, he said, in part:

. . . I said that an assurance of that kind could be noth-
ing short of a solemn undertaking. It was one which I could
not give without submitting it to the Cabinet and getting their
authority, and that were I to submit the question to the Cabi-
et I was sure that they would say that this was too serious a
matter to be dealt with by a verbal engagement but must be
put in writing. . . . I did think there would be difficulties
in putting such an understanding in writing. It could not be
given unconditionally, and it would be difficult to describe the
conditions. It amounted, in fact to this; that, if any change
was made, it must be to change the "Entente" into a defensive
alliance. That was a great and formal change, and I again
submitted to Monsieur Cambon as to whether the force of cir-
cumstances bringing England and France together was not

21Grey, op. cit., p. 75.
stronger than any assurance in words which could be given at this moment. I said that it might be that the pressure of circumstances—the activity of Germany, for instance—might eventually transform the "Entente" into a defensive alliance between ourselves and France, but I did not think that the pressure of circumstances was so great as to demonstrate the necessity of such a change yet.

... I asked Monsieur Cambon, however, to bear in mind that, if the French Government desired it, it would be possible at any time to re-open the conversation. Events might change, but, as things were at present, I did not think it was necessary to press the question of a defensive alliance.

Monsieur Cambon said the question was very grave and serious, because the German Emperor had given the French Government to understand that they could not rely upon us, and it was very important to them to feel that they could. 22

In other words, a formal defensive alliance between France and Britain would be superfluous. Circumstances which brought the two nations together were stronger than any alliance could possibly be. If Germany threatened France, the Entente might well be turned into a defensive alliance. Cambon's parting thrust was not without significance; it must have struck a responsive chord, for the one sensitive spot in the British national character at this moment was the international reputation of "Perfidious Albion."

There is one noticeable difference between the conversation as reported above and Cambon's report to Rouvier. In his report of the same date, the Ambassador says, "Ainsi l'amirauté anglaise a l'intention dans le cas d'un conflit avec l'Allemagne de barrer la Manche aux

escadres germaniques." On February 2, Grey had this to say of Cambon's version: "I think the purport of M. Cambon's note is accurate."

There can be no doubt that by the end of January, 1906, Grey had gone a long way toward obligating the British government in case of war between France and Germany. He had told the French Ambassador that in the event of an aggression by Germany, British public opinion would demand that military and naval assistance be given to France. Furthermore, he had not objected to the discussions which Fisher was carrying on with the French Naval Attache, and he had consented to military conversations between Grierson and Huguet. Both of these actions could only serve to convince the French that if war came with Germany, the British were at least under moral obligation to render aid. The question arises, who in the British government knew of these commitments on the part of the Foreign Secretary? Documents reveal that the Prime Minister knew of Grey's actions, for in writing to the latter on January 21, in regard to Cambon's request for military aid, Campbell-Bannerman had said, "When would you like a Cabinet? Would 30th, 31st, or 1st do? Would you like the answer for the French to be confirmed by a Cabinet before it is given?"


asked for a Cabinet. As he had told Cambon on January 31:

... Should such a defensive alliance be formed, it was too serious a matter to be kept secret from Parliament. The Government could conclude it without the assent of Parliament, but it would have to be published afterwards. No British Government could commit the country to such a serious thing and keep the engagement secret.\(^\text{26}\)

Did this statement mean that the Foreign Minister wanted the matter kept secret? Apparently he did. But in addition to the Prime Minister, he had consulted Haldane and Asquith. Grey, in later years, was to say that he did not consult the Cabinet because the crisis passed and the thing ceased to be of importance—but later on it was brought to the attention of the Cabinet. He does not say when.\(^\text{27}\) Also, in his memoirs Grey contends that the conversations "must have been familiar to several members of the Cabinet in discussion at the Imperial Committee of Defense."\(^\text{28}\)

In 1927 this statement was challenged by Lord Sydenham, who says:

... I think that Lord Grey is mistaken in saying in "Twenty Five Years" that all the regular members of the Committee of Imperial Defence had all the information. This was not so. In my time the question never came to me officially and I only heard quite informally what was going on.

Whether different arrangements, enabling the Committee of Imperial Defence to be cognisant of the negotiations,


\(^{27}\)Loreburn, op. cit., p. 80.

\(^{28}\)Grey, op. cit., p. 93.
were made after the end of September [1907] when I left for India I do not know.

However, documents from the archives of the Admiralty seem to indicate that Sydenham was only partially correct. One such document, written by Admiral C. L. Ottley to the First Sea Lord on January 13, 1906, reports:

Another informal meeting was held in the offices of the Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence yesterday afternoon: Lord Esher, General Sir John French, Sir George Clark, General Grierson and myself being present.

The proper conclusion, from what has been said, would seem to be that some members of the Cabinet knew of Grey's commitments and that he had obtained permission from at least a part of his colleagues to act as he did. On the other hand, he had not taken the matter up with the Cabinet and had tried to maintain a degree of secrecy in regard to the military conversations. Perhaps he believed that by acting individually in the matter, the obligation on the part of his government would be minimized. Thus, he would placate the insistent French Ambassador by making decisions of the Foreign Office separate and distinct from the British Government.

As early as January 13, 1906, the discussions between the military and naval authorities of the two nations had led to detailed plans

\[29\] Written statement by Lord Sydenham, July 19, 1927, B. D., III, no. 221, p. 185.

\[30\] Ottley to First Sea Lord, January 13, 1906, B. D., III, p. 186.
of joint operations in the event of war. The Boer War had convinced the Powers that the British military was in need of reorganization, and in no quarter was this more acutely felt than in the British War Office. French opinion, as expressed by Major Huguet on his arrival in England in 1904, was that if Britain was to be of assistance to his country on land, many changes would have to be made in the British army. The army would have to be reorganized along lines which would make it effective in Continental warfare. Haldane, Secretary of State for War, entered wholeheartedly into the British effort. He states that during the general election of January, 1906, he

. . . At once went to London, summoned the heads of the British General Staff, and saw the French Military Attaché, Colonel Huguet, a man of sense and ability. I became aware at once that there was a new army problem. It was how to mobilize and concentrate at a place of assembly to be opposite the Belgian frontier, a force calculated as adequate (with the assistance of Russian pressure in the East) to make up for the inadequacy of the French armies for their great task of defending the entire French frontier from Dunkirk down to Belfort, or even farther south, if Italy should join the Triple Alliance in an attack. 31

Haldane thought that Britain could not put more than 80,000 men in the field, and that this would require at least two months. The French thought that this would be altogether too slow to be of help to them; thinking in terms of the Franco-Prussian War, they were afraid they would be destroyed before British help arrived. The War Secretary

31R. B. Haldane, Before the War, p. 30.
set to work to make "a complete revolution in the organization of the British Army." By the end of 1910 he stated the following as possible:

England was able rapidly to mobilize, not only 100,000, but 160,000 men; to transport them, with the aid of the navy, to a place of concentration which had been settled between the Staffs of France and Britain; and to have them at their appointed place within twelve days. 32

In addition to conversations with the French General Staff, the British were carrying on talks with the Belgians. On this subject Hardinge, British Minister at Brussels, reported as follows on January 31, 1907:

At the beginning of the year the possibility of a European war as the result of the Morocco complications caused a good deal of anxiety in Belgium, involving as it did the prospect of hostilities between France and Germany, and perhaps a violation of Belgian territory by a German invading force, aiming at turning the flank of France's eastern defences. A frank and confidential exchange of views between the British and Belgian military authorities determined to their mutual satisfaction the action to be adopted by both Governments in such an eventuality. . . . 33

These conversations were carried on between Lieutenant-Colonel N. W. Barnardiston, British Military Attaché at Brussels, and General Ducarne, Chief of the Belgian General Staff.

One reason given by Grey for his authorization of the conversations between the French and British was his confirmed belief that public opinion in England would be sympathetic to France in case of

32 Ibid., p. 32.

aggression by Germany. The public knew that diplomatic friction, in
the years 1906, 1907, and 1908, had revived the fear and hostility be-
tween the French and German people. The maritime rivalry between
Germany and Britain had produced formidable danger of war, for the
British people were convinced that the German Fleet was designed to
measure itself against the Royal Navy; in Germany the knowledge that
this suspicion existed led to counter-suspicion, and to the belief that
British diplomacy was busy intriguing to encircle Germany with a
coalition of hostile states. It was thought that if France and Germany
went to war, one or the other would in all probability win a crushing
victory in the first month's fighting, as in 1870. If Germany were the
conqueror, she would certainly use her victory to secure maritime
ascendancy as well as Continental possessions. If France conquered
without the help of England or, worse still, if France were defeated
in a duel with Germany without aid from a British army, even if the
British Fleet swept the seas, the relations between the English and
the French would become embittered. In the case of a French victory
unaided, the two countries would inevitably drift into opposite camps
in the subsequent grouping of European Powers; in the last case, it
was more likely than not that France would be forced to make terms for
herself with the invader by helping him in his next enterprise. By the
year 1909, British journalists were speculating on the best course for
that nation to follow. One of the conclusions reached was that if British assistance was to be worthwhile, the British Army would have to be considerably improved. Again, it was reasoned that there could be no delay in landing an army in France. If the first-line army of France were defeated as decisively as the Russians were beaten at Mukden, the war might be lost by that one struggle; everything seemed to demand an advanced understanding between the two nations.

Opposed to this segment of the public were those who were of the opinion that the despatch of British troops to the Continent would be a mistake. This group argued that the assistance which England would be able to give would be unequal to the task, and that the decisive battle of the war would be fought before British troops could reach the scene of battle. 34

Grey, being a French sympathizer himself, was more attentive to British public opinion which favored assistance to France than he was to the opposing group.

What of Gambon throughout this period? Apparently the Ambassador knew when he asked Grey for a defensive alliance that it would not be forthcoming; what he had really wanted was a continuation of the military and naval conversations, and on a General Staff level—not

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through an intermediary. After this was done, Cambon appeared satisfied. 35

The one factor which possibly contributed more to the "satisfaction" of Cambon during this period than anything else was the proceedings of the Algeciras Conference. The prospects of German aggression became less menacing, and the request for more than diplomatic support was not pressed again for some time.

To the French government, no doubt, came the awareness that nothing produced a spirit of co-operation in England quite like a German threat to occupy a Moroccan port on the Atlantic coast. Twice had this threat motivated British action; it was to play a part in Anglo-French relations on yet a third occasion.

35 Grey, op. cit., p. 85.
CHAPTER IV

THE AGADIR CRISIS

The conference to settle difficulties which had arisen between France and Germany over the status of Morocco met at Algeciras on January 16, 1906. One hundred and fifty persons representing the United States and twelve leading European Powers, as well as Morocco, were present. The principles for which Germany fought—the territorial integrity of Morocco and equal rights for all nations there—were nominally accepted. Yet the eventual partition of the Sherifian Empire was only delayed. A Moroccan police force under French and Spanish instructions, and headed by a Swiss Inspector-General, was established. Freedom of trade and settlement in the Sultanate was guaranteed to foreigners, and an international bank, financed chiefly by French and English capital, was created.¹

With the conclusion of the Algeciras Conference the first Moroccan crisis was at an end; the crisis had been successfully passed without involving Europe in war. Unfortunately, the solution of the problem did not endure—the conference had settled nothing; Morocco remained

the sore spot on the international scene. Events seemed to bear out a very sagacious prediction made by Bismarck during the latter years of his life. While surveying the possible causes for war which might arise in the world, the spot which he selected was a country little known at the time and which had not then been in any way a source of dispute. The country mentioned in the Iron Chancellor's prophecy was Morocco, Bernhard von Bulow, boasting of his achievements after the downfall of Delcassé, and while the Algeciras Conference was assembling, had said that he had "bolted the door against the attempts of France to compass the 'Tunification of Morocco.'" Also, he "provided a bell we could ring at any time should France show any similar tendencies again." Germany was to ring this bell on July 1, 1911. When Germany realized that France intended to colonize Morocco, she determined to secure a portion of the spoils for herself, or, if that were not possible, to prevent her rival from having it.

The seriousness of the crisis which had resulted in the Act of Algeciras undoubtedly tended for a time to restrain the French government in its forward policy. This hesitation was not due to the restrictions in the Act itself so much as to the marked anti-colonial feelings

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2W. S. Davis, The Roots of the War, p. 402.
3Quoted in Herbert H. Asquith, The Genesis of the War, p. 143.
4E. Ashmead-Bartlett, The Passing of the Shereefian Empire, p. 3.
in France. In 1906, public opinion led by Jean Jaurès, the Socialist orator, and the French government dominated by Georges Clemenceau, opposed colonial projects and insisted on the strict enforcement of the Algeciras Act. To be sure, there was a difference of opinion as to the limitations which this Act imposed upon France.

Sir Gerard Lowther, British Minister at Tangier, writing to Grey on December 4, 1907, speaks of "the apparent long-suffering attitude displayed by France." While certain circles in France interested in French expansion complained of the utter inertia of the French government from 1906 to 1909, and of German exaggeration of her rights, others were of opposite opinion. Barlow, quoting from George Hardy, "Le Maroc," in Gabriel Hannotaux' Histoire des colonies françaises et de l'expansion de la France dans le monde, says:

... France tried scrupulously to carry out the provisions of the Algeciras Act, while Germany played her cards less frankly. She [Germany] sent to Morocco a diplomat already known for his anti-French sentiments and his spirit of chicanery, Dr. Rosen, who immediately posed as the champion of the independence of Morocco and succeeded in giving many discreet strains to the Act of Algeciras to the profit of Germany; nomination of German engineers in Morocco, concessions of public works to German enterprises... 6

Every time the situation seemed to settle down, minor incidents arose to harass the nationals of both countries and to try the patience

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5 Lowther to Grey, December 4, 1907, B. D., VII, no. 87, pp. 72-74.

6 Barlow, op. cit., p. 47.
of their foreign offices. Each action on the part of France served to increase the suspicion of Germany, and the latter country's constant efforts to improve her economic position earned for her the resentment of the former.

In 1906 a Frenchman was assassinated at Tangier. France secured the promise of satisfaction only after sending ships of war. In the same year the bandit, Raisouli, became caid of the outskirts of Tangier and inflicted numerous vexations and trials on the Europeans, which led to a French and Spanish naval demonstration. In 1907, Dr. Mauchamp, in charge of the French dispensary at Marrakech, was assassinated. French troops then moved from Algeria and occupied the village of Oudja, in order to force the Sultan to maintain order. Consequently, when in 1907 there occurred the bombardment of Casablanca, Germans began to express opposition to French policy—a policy which inevitably led to greater political control over Morocco.

Casablanca was the most prosperous of the Moroccan ports; its trade was large and increasing; its inhabitants numbered 30,000; and its future was bright. The appalling suddenness of the disaster caused by the bombardment will be realized when it is remembered that on July 30, 1907, the inhabitants of the town were leading their usual peaceful existence, and on August 5 nothing but a heap of smoking ruins remained, and the survivors were desperately holding their own against a horde of bloodthirsty, fanatical Arabs.
Dreams of a commercially great city had stimulated much interest in the harbor improvements at Casablanca, for which a French company had secured the concession in February, 1907. To expedite the project, the company had built a railroad from the seafront to a short distance beyond the town. Objections arose, especially among the Arabs, because the railroad skirted the old Moorish cemetery. Discontent at the weakness of Abdul Aziz had been growing since the French loan of 1904, and increased with the organization of the customs under French officials. The construction work at Casablanca, and particularly that of the railroad, was, consequently, interpreted by the discontented elements as proof that Abdul Aziz had sold their country to the foreigners. Disturbed conditions had existed in and around Casablanca for several days but seemed to be controlled by the local officials until, on July 30, a mob attacked a group of workers and killed nine Europeans. The French believed that they must take some action to punish the offenders.

Although the consul advised delay until the cruiser, Du Chayla, arrived from Tangier, the commander of the French ship Galilée, which appeared in the harbor on August 1, permitted the pressure of events to force him to premature action. Efforts of the caid in charge of the Chaouya, in cooperation with Europeans in the city, were going forward in such a manner as to indicate that the situation would be brought
under control and the guilty punished. They insisted that the commander of the Galilée proceed with caution, and not try to land a party. Nevertheless, he authorized the landing of a small party, and when a struggle broke out between the landing party and a group of natives at the gates, the ship bombarded the town. Many natives were killed and the city was heavily damaged. Additional French forces arrived, and on the seventh, General Drude began the work of pacification of the district.  

Criticism of French action in the incident was widespread; that of Germany being particularly sinister, in that one section of the German press accused France of creating the incident as an excuse for further penetrations into Morocco. England, on the other hand, officially would seem to have been in agreement with French plans to send warships to Casablanca, since on July 31, 1907, the following message was sent to Grey by Lowther:

Serious disturbances yesterday at Dar-al-Baida [Arabian name for Casablanca].

Neighbouring tribes objecting to French port works and control of Customs. British Consul says he is of opinion that a ship of war or ships of war should be immediately sent. A French ship of war is leaving here today for Dar-al-Baida. British Colony consists of 140.

The British Foreign Office added the following "minutes":

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8 Barlow, op. cit., p. 50.
Question Admiralty and say that Secretary of State is of opinion that a ship of war should be despatched to Dar-al-Baida at once for the protection of British subjects there. Request Sir F. Bertie to inform French Government that a ship will be sent.  

Then, on August 7, Grey informed Bertie that

M. Cambon handed me today the statement of which a copy is sent herewith, as to the action taken at Casablanca.

I said the French Government evidently had no choice except to act as they had done, and it was probably better that they should have been forced to take strong measures than half-measures.  

The French government upheld the action of the commander of the Galilée on the grounds that disorders which surrounded the city necessitated drastic action if her subjects were to carry out their work within the district. Concessionaires could not operate if they were constantly endangered by threats of fanatical riots. Protection of nationals is held by every nation as a fundamental principle of foreign policy, but France added to that principle the power granted her by the Act of Algeciras to direct the police force in certain open ports. Casablanca was one of the ports allotted to the co-operative work of France and Spain, and Spain soon joined in the work of pacifying the city.

Affairs resumed a normal tempo in Morocco, but again Germany had the feeling that France would use the incident to extend her control in the Sultanate. Germans living in Casablanca and elsewhere in

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9 Lowther to Grey, July 31, 1907, B. D., VII, no. 63, p. 52.
10 Grey to Bertie, August 7, 1907, B. D., VII, no. 68, p. 55.
Morocco, both business men and official representatives, were full of complaints. They did not stop with criticizing France for bombarding the city but charged her with conscious efforts to destroy German interests. On August 30, 1907, Tattenbach, German Chargé d'affaires in Lisbon, wrote to Tschirschky, Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, saying:

... German interests in Casablanca are really very great and with calm development of things would have had a yet greater future. ... Through the advance of the French, the commercial people in Casablanca have suffered not only serious loss ... but must renounce any further future. ¹¹

In addition to this viewpoint, there were those who remembered that after the murder of Dr. Mauchamp, the French occupied Oudja, and warned the public that the death of nine Europeans, three of whom were French, would surely be followed by further territorial occupation. This could only mean that Germany's aspirations in Morocco would suffer; another frustration of her territorial and economic desires; another occasion on which France did not think it necessary to consult her before taking action—anther blow to German pride.

At no time had Abdul Aziz proved himself to be a strong ruler, and his continued subservience to France served to weaken him even more among his subjects. On August 16, soon after the disastrous Casablanca bombardment, Mulay Hafid, his elder half-brother, was

¹¹Barlow, op. cit., p. 51.
proclaimed Sultan at Marrakech. Mulay Hafid, as governor of the Marrakech district, gave promise of being a strong ruler, and to many of the Moroccans, seemed to be their one hope of saving their country from foreign domination. His revolt against his brother and lawful sovereign spread rapidly over the entire south. Rumors of his savagery kept the Europeans in the coastal cities in a constant state of alarm; but the rumor that Mulay Hafid had proclaimed a Holy War, a rumor that he consistently denied, excited terror among them. As the strength of the pretender increased, that of the old Sultan waned, and the latter left his capital at Fez and moved to Rabat. After this move, charges that he had sold out to the French gained such prominence that he found himself master only of Rabat and the Chaouya district. Early in January of 1908 Mulay Hafid was proclaimed Sultan at Fez, and he began his triumphant march to the northern capital, entering that city in June.

The play of international politics soon entered the question. The charge was made that when Abdul Aziz entered Rabat he had done so to obtain French protection. These charges were accentuated when Regnault, French Minister at Tangier, became his closest adviser. France maintained that as Abdul Aziz was the legally recognized Sultan, her actions did not exceed recognized diplomatic procedure and that her maintenance of order in the Chaouya district was a result of
the Casablanca affair and not of the struggle for the throne. Charges that France was aiding Abdul Aziz were denied by the French Foreign Minister, Pichon. He insisted, however, that Mulay Hafid must prove his power before being recognized. In the eyes of the Moroccans, Abdul Aziz was the claimant supported by France; and when, lacking French support, he was forced to abdicate, French prestige suffered.

Jules Delafosse, a member, speaking in the Chamber of Deputies January 15, 1909, was bitingly critical of Pichon's policy in Morocco. He said that the success of Mulay Hafid was a defeat for France. The realistic Delafosse made the statement that "the truth is that the Moroccan question is a rivalry of influence between France and Germany; it is even only this, and if it were not this, it would not exist."1

In this controversy, Germany had trouble deciding which side to support. Her natural inclination was to support Mulay Hafid—being suspicious of the French support being given to his rival. While at the same time, there was danger that German economic interests would suffer if a prolonged contention developed between the Sultan and the pretender.

In May, 1908, the French notified Germany that they were willing to recognize Mulay Hafid, but such recognition should come only after an agreement of the Powers signatory to the Act of Algeciras. This

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1 Ibid., p. 55.
proposal followed an appeal by Abdul Aziz to the German Minister at Tangier, asking for the intervention of Germany to prevent France from violating the Treaty of Algeciras.  

On August 31, Germany took a forward step in recognizing Mulay Hafid; on that date the British Minister at Tangier notified Grey as follows:

I am informed that Dr. Vassel has left for Fez today, to resume his duties as German Consul there. His departure was kept secret by the German Legation. Preparations for journey have been made very secretly. 

France, now thinking that she had best clarify her position, issued the following communique which appeared in Le Temps on September 3, under the heading, "La France, l'Allemagne et le Maroc":

La note de la Gazette de l'Allemagne du nord, complétée par les commentaires des journaux allemands que nous avons donnés plus haut, semble indiquer que si l'Allemagne insiste pour la prompte reconnaissance (rasche Anerkennung) de Moulai Hafid, c'est que la France se serait dérobée à cette reconnaissance, en manœuvrant avec une lenteur calculée pour maintenir une situation équivoque. En présence de cette insinuation, nous avons cru devoir préciser nettement l'attitude de la France depuis que la question s'est posée. Voici, à ce sujet, les renseignements qui nous ont été fournis.

There follow four principles which the French government believed should be considered before the Powers should recognize Mulay Hafid:

12 Grey to Bertie, January 27, 1908, B. D., VII, no. 89, p. 75.  
13 White to Grey, August 31, 1908, B. D., VII, no. 95, p. 82.
1. Il est nécessaire que les puissances étudient d'abord les garanties à obtenir pour les intérêts européens.

2. L'entente des puissances sur ces garanties est aussi nécessaire que ces garanties elles-mêmes.

3. Il y a encore trop d'inconnu dans la situation intérieur du Maroc pour qu'une décision puisse être prise avant complète information.

4. Sous ces réserves, la France n'a montré à aucun moment le parti pris de ne pas reconnaître Moulai Hafid. Elle entend seulement que sa situation de fait soit précisée. 14

France advised caution in extending recognition to the pretender, but Germany, having reached her decision, was acting accordingly. On the same day as the French communiqué, the German Chargé d'Affaires at Rome suggested to the Italian Government the desirability of recognition of Mulay Hafid. 15

England disapproved of Germany's action; the Foreign Office spoke of it as "a piece of sharp practice on the part of Germany." 16 Spain, while officially supporting France, was somewhat sympathetic to the German program. On the other hand, Germany's action excited the disapproval of her allies, and ultimately created an atmosphere of tension that darkened her friendship with Austria.

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14 Enclosure in no. 96, September 2, 1908, B. D., VII, no. 96, p. 83.

15 Wyndham to Grey, September 3, 1908, B. D., VII, no. 97, p. 84.

16 White to Grey, August 31, 1908, B. D., VII, no. 95, p. 82.
Despite these disagreements, a plan of recognition was worked out and submitted to the signatory Powers on September 14, 1908. According to this plan, Mulay Hafid was to accept the Act of Algeciras and all the laws of application resulting from it, accept all other treaties and engagements concluded by his predecessors, assume the debts of Abdul Aziz, grant to France and Spain the right to supervise contraband trade, submit the questions of damages due from the Casablanca incident to an international commission, and agree to maintain order. Moreover, each Power reserved the right to negotiate separately with the new Sultan on matters that touched their interests exclusively. This last provision left open to France and Spain the right to secure reimbursement for their expenses in the military actions undertaken around Casablanca. All the signatory Powers, Germany included, accepted the note by November 12, 1908. This did not mean, however, that Franco-German tension over Morocco was now over. On the contrary, since September their relations had been strained to the breaking point by the Casablanca deserters' affair which, though settled at approximately the same time as the Mulay Hafid case, had aroused such popular excitement that repercussions continued for some time.

Of the Casablanca deserters' affair it has been said:

Usually historians list the Kaiser's visit to Tangier as the first Moroccan crisis and the Panther's stay at Agadir as the second Moroccan crisis; but some would call the latter
the third and number the Casablanca deserters' affair as the second crisis. 17

This crisis resulted from the attempted escape of six deserters from the French Foreign Legion. The six, assisted by the German Consul, Luderitz, and his aide, were attempting to reach a German vessel anchored in the harbor and thereby make their escape from Morocco. The French officials were told of the venture in time to appear at the docks before the men could make good their escape. In this, the French were assisted by the elements, in that the boat carrying the six to the German ship capsized in the harbor due to the rough water, and the deserters were forced to return to the shore. When the German Consul attempted to protect the deserters, a French officer threatened him with a pistol. Though the German officials formally demanded the release of the prisoners, the French military authorities retained them in custody.

Diplomatic channels were immediately thrown into turmoil by the incident. The incident had occurred on September 25, and three days later Pichon expressed his regret and the hope that the matter would be solved satisfactorily. Naturally, divergence quickly appeared between the French and German viewpoints. According to the German version, the fact that a subject of the German Empire had taken service in a foreign army did not deprive him of his German nationality, and

17 Barlow, op. cit., pp. 61-62.
consequently the German Consul was within his rights in protecting him. This argument was weakened by the fact that only three of the deserters were Germans, one being an Austrian, one a Swiss, and one a Russian Pole. Germany argued further that for a French officer to threaten a German official with a pistol was intolerable. Desertions had been going on for some time, and France should have first discussed the matter instead of taking the law into her own hands. France maintained that in international right German jurisdiction did not cover German subjects in a foreign army, and that desertion was always considered as a crime punishable by the proper military authorities. The French case was weakened by the action of her agent in threatening the German official.  

The incident, although filled with danger, had from the beginning seemed likely to yield to peaceful settlement, since both France and Germany seemed anxious to settle the matter. But, before final settlement could be reached, many proposals and counter-proposals had to be made. It was a case in which the two participants were both highly conscious of their national honor; as Germany insisted on her demands and France refused to yield, a situation of extreme tension resulted. Schoen was frankly worried and feared that "we must now perhaps bring up the heavy artillery and with disturbance in the diplomatic relations perhaps even threaten with sending of ships to Casablanca."  

18Ibid., p. 63.  
19Ibid., p. 65.
action of the other Powers unquestionably had a great deal to do with
the settlement of the incident. England unhesitatingly supported France,
as was to be expected.\textsuperscript{20} And again, as in the question of the recogni-
tion of Mulay Hafid, Austria was more in sympathy with France than
with Germany. The air began to clear on November 7, and by November 10 Bulow was to telegraph the Emperor that the formula for an
agreement had been reached.\textsuperscript{21}

After approximately two years of almost constant controversy
since the Algeciras Conference, France was in possession of the vil-
lage of Oudja, in the east, and Casablanca and the Chaouya, in the west.
But the German-supported claimant to the throne ruled in Fez. The
events of these years had taught German and French diplomats that the
interests of both had suffered from the sequence of crises. It was ob-
vious that some mutual agreement must be reached if affairs in Morocco
were to prove profitable to either German or French nationals.

Events up to and including the "deserters' affair" had shown that
France could never be able to swallow up Morocco without first con-
ciliating Germany. Since Germany's intervention in Morocco had been
based, formally, upon her commercial interests there, it was in this
matter that France sought an understanding. Certain articles included

\textsuperscript{20} Grey to McKenna, November 5, 1908, \textit{B. D.}, VII, no. 132, pp. 119-120.

\textsuperscript{21} Bulow to Jenisch, November 10, 1908, quoted in Barlow, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 66.
in the Act of Algeciras had sought to secure equal and free competition among the Powers in the Sherifian Empire. A re-examination of these provisions now seemed in order to facilitate the prosperity of both nations in their separate ventures. As a result, the following agreement was signed between the two Powers in February, 1909:

The Government of the French Republic and the Imperial German Government, being equally anxious to facilitate the execution of the Algeciras Act, have agreed to define the meaning which they attach to the articles of that Act with a view to avoid in the future all sources of misunderstanding between them.

Therefore,
The Government of the French Republic, firmly attached to the maintenance of the independence and integrity of the Sherifian Empire, being resolved to safeguard the principle of economic equality, and, consequently, not to obstruct German commercial and industrial interest in that country;

And the Imperial German Government, pursuing only economic interests in Morocco, recognizing on the other hand that the special political interests of France in that country are closely bound up with the consolidation of order and international peace, and being resolved not to impede those interests;

Declare that they do not pursue nor encourage any measure of a nature to create, in their favor or in that of any power, an economic privilege, and that they will endeavor to associate their nationals in affairs for which the latter may obtain a concession.

This agreement more or less eliminated all but the two signatories but, in spite of this, the British government seemed to have welcomed the agreement and the détente which, presumably, would follow. In

22 Dickinson, op. cit., p. 186.
the diplomatic exchanges which followed—most of which were laudatory of the agreement—Gray sounded an ominous note: He did not believe that the Franco-German understanding was a very profound one, and for this reason it would probably remain a facade agreement. Britain was willing to go along with the agreement, however, as long as the "open door" was maintained in Morocco. Gray proved to be a true prophet, for whatever may have been the intentions of the parties, the course of events showed that it was impossible to put the treaty into effective operation.

There were three important departments to which the treaty might apply: (1) mines, (2) railways, and (3) other public works. In all of these the arrangements projected broke down. In discussing the breakdown of the accord of 1909, it is as well to take up the mines first.

European captains of industry were attracted by the fabulous accounts of iron, gold, copper, antimony, silver, lead, and sulphur that presumably lay hidden in the subsoil of Morocco; and saw therein a rich field from which the deficiency in minerals in their respective countries could be repaired. There was little interest in phosphates or in the potential oil wealth of the country. The Riff, the Atlas, and the Sous, with their elusive but glamorous offers of iron and gold, were the coveted regions.

The French, English, and Spanish iron-masters were no less anxious to secure concessions, but the Germans attracted more attention due to the aggressive action of the Mannesmann brothers, of whom there were many, "all pushing."\(^\text{24}\) In 1906 Reinhard Mannesmann, on a wedding trip, visited the coast of Morocco, where the natives showed him specimens of iron ore. From this time on the interest of the Mannesmanns in Morocco was intense. They were an aggressive lot—able in the short span of thirty years to become one of the leading industrial firms of Germany, and this same spirit was evident throughout their dealings in Morocco.

The Mannesmanns in Morocco were not in virgin territory, for already, as early as 1907, an international society, the Union of Mines, had been formed in which France had 50 per cent and Germany 20 per cent of the capital, the remaining Powers being thus in a very small minority. Conflict soon arose between these two interests. In the negotiations which followed the German nationalists took the Mannesmann brothers under their patronage; of this fact the firm made every possible use. They employed publicists to present their cause, which they represented as being the true cause of greater Germany, to the public, and they succeeded in making a political issue of their Moroccan efforts in the Reichstag. However, it must be said that the German government

\(^{24}\text{Wolff, op. cit., p. 34.}\)
was never in wholehearted accord with the ambitions of the Mannes-
manns. Negotiations dragged on, and the brothers were still trying to
obtain a satisfactory mining law at the time of the crisis in 1911, due
in part to the fact that their claims were so excessive. 25

The construction of railways was delayed by the French claims
that certain lines were strategic. The German attitude was that such
lines should be built—provided they were open to trade on equal terms
for all. Disagreements arose over who was to build the railroads, and
which lines were to be built first. At this point the Ministry fell and
French policy changed. Gruppi now became Foreign Minister. An
agreement had not been reached in the matter of Moroccan railroads
when the episode of the Panther occurred. 25

The Act of Algeciras had recognized the independence and terri-
torial integrity of the Sherifian Empire, had internationalized some of
the administrative functions, and had guaranteed the open door and eco-
nomic equality to all nations. The Accord of 1909 recognized the po-
litical pre-eminence of France in Morocco, and created an economic
order in which France and Germany were to receive a privileged, if
not a monopolistic, position. The two cannot be harmonized. The cry
that the Act of Algeciras had been violated should have been raised in
1909 and not left quiescent until 1911. The effort to make the two

treaties operative at the same time could result only in failure. England demanded that concessions of public works be open to public bidding as guaranteed by the Act of Algeciras. As it was, France and Germany could not guarantee that any specific concessions would fall to any particular syndicate. A system of private contract must supersede the system of adjudication if the Accord of 1909 were to function. In case that should happen, the rights of nationals of other Powers would depend upon the good will of France and Germany and not upon the Act of Algeciras. France, in her effort to hold to both agreements, failed to make either effective. Mutual distrust was the predominant feature of the accord between France and Germany; no agreement could be expected to work successfully under such conditions. 26

These disagreements between France and Germany did nothing to strengthen the position of the Sultan. Consequently, Mulay Hafid in 1911, unable to subdue the revolt of his subjects and to free the Europeans from the besieged city of Fez, was forced to call upon France for aid. Could France rely upon her own interpretation of the Accord of 1909 and answer his call? Would France and Germany agree any more closely in their interpretation of the political clauses of the Accord than they had on its economic clauses? France by her march to Fez forced an answer to these questions. Meanwhile, the collaboration

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26Barlow, op. cit., pp. 150-152.
of France and Morocco was no more successful than that of France and Germany.

In 1910, rebellion broke out among the tribes around Fez. Due to the mismanagement of military affairs by Mulay Hafid, there were no troops to suppress the rebels. As the trouble continued, the French began to speak of the necessity of organizing and sending a Moroccan force for the relief of the city. Germany failed to see the necessity of such an expedition. France then decided to send a force to Rabat—with the understanding that she would respect the spirit of Algeciras and the sovereignty of the Sultan. Still Germany opposed the move. But on April 19 Gruppi announced that, in view of the danger to Europeans, France had listened to the Sultan's appeal for aid in organizing a Moroccan force for the relief of Fez. A French column would also be available if required to succor the capital. German opinion was that if the French went to Fez they would stay there. In addition, the Chancellor warned that he must insist upon the importance of observing the Act of Algeciras, saying that difficulties would begin directly after French troops entered Fez. At this juncture pan-German excitement became intense, and the press began to assert German demands—a port at Agadir, while at the same time declaring that France was violating the Act of Algeciras.

In France opinion was divided on the question. The Temps argued that the Act of Algeciras would not be violated by the sending of a force
to the relief of Fez. Others were of the opinion that the whole idea was a fraud, as neither the Sultan nor the Europeans were in danger.

The proposed expedition stirred Spanish ambition, and despite French protests Spain landed troops at Larache and occupied El-Kasr. It was Spain's fear, as expressed by the Premier Canalejas, that France was securing military and financial administration of the whole country and that Spain would have nothing left. 27

England advised caution in the matter; she reminded France of the likely German reaction to the proposed expedition. But Grey told the German Ambassador that England had been informed of France's proposed actions and was in full agreement with them—that England approved of the proposed French plan to send succor to the Europeans in Fez. 28

On May 14, 1911, Gruppi informed the nations of Europe that France had ordered an advance to Fez without delay, but that they would hold the city no longer than was necessary. Moreover, he took the precaution to declare again that the aim of the action of the French forces rested always on assuring the sovereignty of the Sultan, the integrity of territory, and the liberty of commercial transactions. The French forces arrived before Fez on May 21, and reported all Europeans


to be safe for the time being, despite the admitted gravity of the situation. 29

In the face of French assurances, however, Germany was of another opinion. As seen by the latter nation, France had occupied a town not specified in the Algeciras Act; she had penetrated far into the interior of the country; she would not leave Fez soon; and if she did leave, she would soon be back. In the eyes of Germany, France had indicated that she was now ready to establish a protectorate in Morocco. She had violated the Act of Algeciras. In the interest of her self-respect, Germany must now demand compensation for this high-handed action on the part of France. If such compensation were not forthcoming, she must participate in the division of the Sherifian Empire. The first step in this plan would be the sending of a warship to Agadir, said to be the best harbor in southern Morocco, and she would act under the necessity of protecting her nationals in Agadir—just as France had acted in going to Fez. 30

The domestic situation in Germany made a protest unavoidable. For two years Bethmann-Hollweg's liberal policies had antagonized many persons. Such organizations as the Pan-German League and the Navy League were attacking him for his naval negotiations, and the Colonial Society plagued him with an ambitious program for a great

29 Barlow, op. cit., pp. 198-199.

30 Erich Brandenburg, From Bismarck to the World War, p. 371.
colonial empire in Africa. As general elections to the Reichstag were to be held in January, 1912, the Chancellor believed that something would have to be done to placate the extreme chauvinists or a Reichstag would be chosen with which he could not work.

At this point Kiderlen-Wachter, ambitious German Foreign Secretary, presented Germany's claims to a part of Morocco to Jules Cambon, now French Ambassador to Germany, at Kissingen, the Ambassador having been sent there by the Chancellor. It was to be a discussion of all the outstanding differences between the two nations, with the exception of the Alsace-Lorraine question. After a general discussion, which was leading nowhere, the French Ambassador asserted that French public opinion would not stand for a partitioning of Morocco, but that Germany could look elsewhere. The meeting ended and Cambon promised to report the discussion to his government and report back to Kiderlen. As Cambon was leaving, Kiderlen told him to bring something back from Paris for Germany. At this point the Monis Cabinet fell, but before the French government had time to consider the proposition, Germany took a step which shook Europe to its foundations. 31

A contemporary journalist asked a leading question of his day in the following words:

A small German cruiser has been rolling her bilge-keel clear on the Atlantic swell in front of a mud-hole on the Moroccan coast, and the whole of Europe is agog! What does it all mean? \(^{32}\)

The small German cruiser was the gunboat Panther which had dropped anchor on July 1, 1911, in front of a mud-hole that was the port of Agadir. Britain's worst fears had been realized, and Germany had taken the step most likely to make possible the conclusion of Paul Gambon's design to gain a military alliance with Britain.

At the time of the "Panther's Spring" the French Ministry was in an unsteady position. The Monis Cabinet, which had authorized the march to Fez, had just fallen and Caillaux, the new Prime Minister, had made De Selves, a complete novice at diplomacy, his Foreign Minister. Three days after the establishment of the Ministry, news arrived of the German boat's arrival at Agadir. De Selves had no idea what to do. Fortunately, he did not heed the advice of some of his aggressively and irresponsibly chauvinistic associates, who had suggested that a French warship be sent to Agadir. Caillaux sought a peaceful settlement of the crisis. He was willing to pay for a French protectorate over Morocco with concessions elsewhere—exactly what Kiderlen wanted. Caillaux's chief difficulty lay in his own Foreign Minister, who, apparently out of patriotism, was unwilling to make

Germany an attractive offer. Consequently, no offer was made by France. At this point Germany demanded the French Congo in its entirety; France refused to consider such a demand, and for a moment war seemed imminent. Nevertheless, the French were willing to negotiate further.  

Downing Street was shocked at the news of Germany's action—even more than was the Quai d'Orsay. The British were, of course, vigorously opposed to Germany's obtaining a naval base in Morocco, and protested the latter's action on the ground that it was in violation of the Act of Algeciras. The British, under the circumstances, were able to convince themselves that, whereas the expedition to Fez did not constitute a violation of the Act, the arrival of the Panther at Agadir did. Grey, in conversation with the German Ambassador, made the statement that England must remember her treaty obligations to France.  

On July 9 Kiderlen-Wachter and Jules Cambon began the conversations which were to last for four months. The German Foreign Minister declared himself ready to renounce territorial claims in Morocco, and asked for compensation in the Congo. It would be impossible, he said, to admit a third party to the negotiations without inviting all the signatories to the Treaty of Algeciras. The Ambassador was agreeable.

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33 Swain, op. cit., p. 305.

34 Grey to de Salis, July 4, 1911, B. D., VII, no. 356, p. 334.
to this, but remarked that France must keep her friends and allies in-
formed. Kiderlen then said that it was his desire to resume the con-
versations of Kissingen; he remained willing to give up Morocco but, to
get the acceptance of German public opinion, he must secure compen-
sation. The German Secretary brought up the old argument that France
had bought her liberty from Spain, England, and even Italy in Morocco,
and should have negotiated with his government before going to Fez.

On July 21 Grey asked the German Ambassador to see him, and
informed him that British silence, in the absence of communications
from Germany, was not to be taken as meaning that his government had
lost interest in the affair. The Ambassador immediately reported this
conversation to his home government. The next day Berlin sent a re-
assuring message to Downing Street.

However, a few hours after the interview between Grey and the
German Ambassador, Lloyd George made a public declaration of Brit-
ish policy and introduced a new element of danger into a delicate situ-
tion. Oddly enough, this speech declaring Britain's policy was deliv-
ered by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on July 22 at the Mansion
House, without reference to the Cabinet. A Cabinet meeting had taken
place on July 21, but the content of the Mansion House speech had not
been discussed. Later in the day Lloyd George had consulted both As-
quith, the Prime Minister, and Grey, since he did not feel that he had
the right to meddle in foreign affairs without their consent; both had
agreed to the content of the speech, which said, in part:

... But I am also bound to say this—that I believe it is essential in the highest interest, not merely of this country, but of the world, that Britain should at all hazards maintain her place and prestige among the Great Powers of the world. Her potent influence has many a time been in the past, and may yet be in the future, invaluable to the cause of human liberty. It has more than once in the past redeemed Continental nations, who are sometimes too apt to forget that service, from overwhelming disaster, and even from national extinction. I would make a great sacrifice to preserve peace. I conceive that nothing would justify a disturbance of international good-will except questions of the gravest national moment. But if a situation were to be forced upon us in which peace could only be preserved by the surrender of the great and beneficent position Britain has won by centuries of heroism and achievement, by allowing Britain to be treated, where her interests were vitally affected, as if she were of no account in the Cabinet of nations, then I say emphatically that peace at that price would be a humiliation intolerable for a great country like ours to endure. National honor is no party question. The security of our great international trade is no party question; the peace of the world is much more likely to be secured if all nations realize fairly what the conditions of peace must be. ... 35

The German people were astounded. They saw France and Germany engaged in discussing the Moroccan question, and no French statesman had raised the alarm. Suddenly a contingent declaration of war seemed to be flung across the North Sea. The German Foreign Office assured Britain that they were being unjustly accused; they had landed no men at Agadir, nor had they ever thought of establishing a

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35 Extract from speech of Lloyd George on July 21, 1911, at the Mansion House, B. D., VII, no. 412, pp. 391-392.
naval base there. Germany contended that apparently the British were trying to complicate affairs and that the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer had gone far toward accomplishing that purpose. The British press took the position that war was inevitable.

The speech of Lloyd George and internal affairs persuaded the Germans to be a little quicker in negotiating. Kiderlen gave up his idea of bullying the French in order to drive a good bargain, and notified them that he would be willing to accept much less than the whole Congo. After months of negotiating, France ceded a portion of the Congo territory to Germany, connecting the Kameruns with the Congo River; in return she received a tract near Lake Chad, and the recognition of her right to establish a protectorate over Morocco, provided all nations were granted equality regarding tariffs, transportation charges, and mining privileges. 36

The Agadir crisis was but another occasion on which German diplomacy served to strengthen the friendship between France and Britain. Cambon was quick to seize the opportunity of advancing the understanding between the two Powers by using the crisis as a stimulus for greater military and naval co-operation between them. Conversations, which had been going on between the two General Staffs since 1906, were given renewed impetus by the crisis.

36 Swain, op. cit., p. 308.
Again a Moroccan crisis had served to draw the British into the web so carefully woven by Paul Cambon—a web designed by Delcassé. The former Foreign Minister, who in 1905, it will be remembered, had been forced from office, was now back in the Cabinet again. To be sure, he was Minister of Marine, and the Prime Minister, Monis, had assured Germany that Delcassé would not meddle in foreign policy, but such assurances were naive indeed to those who viewed the situation realistically. It was a matter of common knowledge that the new Minister of Marine was having a hand in French foreign policy. 37 That this policy had continued to be that of Delcassé is vouched for by Caillaux, who became Prime Minister in June, 1911, and who declared: "Our problem was nothing less than to regain all the ground lost since 1905, and to repair the consequences of the serious diplomatic check which we had suffered."38

During the months following his fall, it became apparent that the policy of Delcassé had not been materially affected by his resignation. The following explanation has been offered for this fact:

. . . He [Delcassé] had pursued a double end during 1904 and 1905. His basic aim had been to consolidate his great system of ententes. Then, because his diplomatic position seemed so powerful, he had attempted to exclude Germany from Morocco and thus to make a diplomatic triumph at Germany's expense. The system of ententes was


38Fay, op. cit., p. 280.
sound to the core and rested upon the common interests of the Entente Powers, but the effort to exclude Germany from all discussions concerning the Sherifian Empire was something of an adventure, and an unnecessary one at that. France repudiated this last as a useless departure from Delcassé's basic program, but retained the other features of his policy. Then, too, Germany got rid of Delcassé but did not succeed in getting rid of the permanent staff of the Quai d'Orsay. For instance, Paléologue, who was a sincere admirer of Delcassé's diplomacy, remained in charge of his old functions. Similarly, Bulow did not succeed in removing the career diplomats who had shared Delcassé's ideas on the subject of foreign affairs. M. Barrère said to his British colleague in Rome, June 13, 1905: "... that the leaders of French diplomacy, the two Gambons, Jusserand [French Ambassador at Washington] and himself, were firmly united in sympathy for the policy of their late Chief and considered that there was no cause for alarm; the French position was a sound one in harmony with England and others.39

German policy overreached itself in sending the Panther to Agadir; the French accepted the challenge with a vengeance—the second phase of the military and naval conversations between France and England leave no doubt of that!

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39 Porter, op. cit., p. 269.
CHAPTER V

ANGLO-FRENCH MILITARY AND NAVAL CONVERSATIONS: SECOND PHASE

Kiderlen-Wachter, German Minister of Foreign Affairs, had rung Bulow's bell of July 1, 1911, by sending the Panther to Agadir; "all the alarm bells throughout Europe began immediately to quiver."1 In no nation was the alarm more resounding than in Britain, for at this point the possibility of a German naval base on the Atlantic coast of Africa was fast becoming a reality. England, true to her Entente agreement with France, had given her diplomatic support to the French program in Morocco. This assistance had sufficed, blessed by the outspoken Mansion House speech of Lloyd George, to bring Germany to terms in the territorial settlement which followed the coup d'Agadir. But, Germany had clearly demonstrated the ease with which the delicate balance between peace and war in Europe might be upset. Viewed in this light, the situation seemed to demand further exploration of British military and naval assistance to France; exploration to provide for immediate aid, in case a sudden turn of events precipitated a war between France and Germany. To France the situation suggested the need of a defensive alliance, but the British Foreign Office, in accordance

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with precedent, was reluctant to enter into a Continental alliance. Faced with this impasse, France resorted to the strategy of 1905 and 1906—military and naval conversations to obtain the moral obligation of Great Britain to come to the assistance of France in case of German aggressions.

The conversations of 1906 had led to an understanding on such subjects as the size of the expeditionary force which Britain would send to the Continent, information regarding the ports of embarkation and railway transport thereto, transport by sea across the Channel, the ports of disembarkation, and railway transport therefrom to the assumed area of operations. The tentative plan agreed upon between Generals Grierson and Huguet had been approved by the Admiralty.

In October, 1906, General Ewart succeeded General Grierson as Director of Military Operations. Ewart was of the opinion that certain changes were necessary in the original scheme due to changes which had taken place in the English army, as well as changes in the French plans of mobilization and concentration. A revised scheme was prepared and submitted to General Huguet, after first getting the approval of Grey in the Foreign Office. Admiralty approval of the revised plan was obtained from Lord Fisher, First Sea Lord.

The scheme was further elaborated, during December, 1908, and laid before a sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence appointed by the Prime Minister to consider the military needs of the
Empire. At a meeting of this Committee on March 23, 1909, the question of rendering military assistance was further discussed; the following conclusion was unanimously approved as a result of the conference:

(a) In the event of an attack on France by Germany, the expediency of sending a military force abroad, or of relying on naval means only, is a matter of policy which can only be determined, when the occasion arises, by the Government of the day.

(b) In view, however, of the possibility of a decision by the Cabinet to use military force, the Committee have examined the plans of the General Staff and are of opinion that in the initial stages of a war between France and Germany, in which the British Government decided to assist France, the plan to which preference is given by the General Staff is a valuable one, and the General Staff should accordingly work out all the necessary details.2

The sub-committee reported its conclusion to the Committee of Imperial Defence, and mentioned the possibility of increasing the size of the British expeditionary force within the next few months. Greater emphasis was placed upon this possibility of increased numbers during the discussions taking place in April of 1911. Throughout this time care was taken by the General Staff to treat the plans as being secret, hypothetical, and non-committal.

Britain was always careful to stipulate that the communications were devoid of any official significance, and in no way binding on the British and French governments. France, however, was beginning to look upon the situation somewhat differently. The French were grateful

for Lloyd George's speech, and for the indications that England would supplement her diplomatic support, promised in the 1904 agreement, with the military support contemplated in the conversations that had taken place between the two General Staffs. 3

In the fall of 1911 there was a pronounced change in the attitude of France toward a war with Germany. Whereas, in 1905, the suggestion of a possibility of war with Germany had been sufficiently alarming to cause France to sacrifice her foreign minister in appeasing Germany, the French government now asserted that they were not going to stand for any more nonsense from Germany, no manque de politesse. The Minister of War in the Caillaux Cabinet, Messimy, stated the policy of his government as follows:

. . . That Germany was always going behind agreements and wanting something more, but that France this time had made up her mind what she was ready to concede, and would go no further. She, France, must have a free hand in Morocco.

. . . When France got her warning, four years before, she had begun to prepare [for war], and had been preparing ever since. . . . during the last two months the work of preparation had been most "intensive." 4

Messimy had not been prepared to say that he thought that there would be war, but he thought if war came, France would win. The attitude of the French public and the press during this period was one of calm.

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3 Memorandum of meeting held on July 20, 1911, between General Dubail and General Wilson, August 21, 1911, B. D., VII, no. 640, pp. 629-632; also Fay, op. cit., p. 291.

4 Fairholme to Bertie, September 1, 1911, B. D., VII, no. 643, p. 635.
confidence—quite different from the tenseness and uncertainty that had existed earlier.  

This change on the part of the French public was due in part to the influence of the new Minister of Marine, Théophile Delcassé. Delcassé had been aware of the weakness of the French army in 1905 and of the deplorable condition of the navy; "... thanks to Camille Pelletan, we no longer have a fleet," he had said in 1904. In the years following his fall, the former Foreign Minister had concluded that his resignation had been forced as the result of a foreign policy which had completely outdistanced the force to carry it through. Consequently, on his return to power, Delcassé immediately set to work to give France a navy of such character as to be of service in carrying out the foreign policy of his country. While carrying on his duties in the office of Minister of Marine, Delcassé used all of his influence to strengthen the military might of France; he had been especially influential in the passage of a bill restoring the provision of the army laws which stipulated that every able-bodied man in the nation should render three years' compulsory military service to his country.

By the close of 1911 France had made considerable internal progress in strengthening her military position; the next logical move

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5 Enclosure in no. 644, September 7, 1911, B. D., VII, no. 644, pp. 635-636.

6 Porter, op. cit., p. 322.
must be in the direction of securing a firm pledge of assistance from Britain. This next step would be the work of Cambon in London; that he had been busy may be assumed from the following statement made by Grey: "But the military conversations must naturally have been active." The Foreign Secretary was right; the conversations were so active that in September, 1911, the Prime Minister wrote to him as follows:

Conversations such as that between Gen. Joffre and Col. Fairholme [Military Attaché at Paris] seem to me rather dangerous; especially the part which refers to possible British assistance. The French ought not to be encouraged, in present circumstances, to make their plans on any assumptions of this kind.  

To this Grey replied:

It would create consternation if we forbade our military experts to converse with the French. No doubt these conversations and our speeches have given an expectation of support. I do not see how that can be helped. . . .

In his letter, Grey mentions that Cambon had just been to see him, which may well account for his position in the matter. In later years Grey was to explain that it was not a general expectation on the part of France that military assistance would be given by Britain, but an expectation that support would be given only in the Agadir Crisis; this opinion was given by Grey in defending his policies as having contributed

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7 Grey, op. cit., p. 92.
8 Ibid., p. 93.
to the outbreak of war in 1914 and was entirely illusory. It is interesting to note, in this regard, that Grey tried to shift some of the responsibility by adding that this expectation was "founded partly on the speeches we [Lloyd George?] had made in public with reference to that [the Agadir] crisis."\(^9\)

The Agadir affair had brought the military conversations into such prominence in England that in November, 1912, Grey decided that the matter should be discussed in the Cabinet. A difficulty arose immediately; those Ministers who now heard of the conversations for the first time suspected that there was something to hide. If Grey had not committed the government, why had the matter not been brought before the Cabinet earlier? To dispel this suspicion, the Foreign Secretary hit upon the idea of writing to Cambon, stating his views as to just how the matter stood and asking for confirmation. The letter was drafted in the Cabinet; the Ambassador's reply is a classic of evasion. The British letter was as follows:

> From time to time in recent years the French and British naval and military experts have consulted together. It has always been understood that such consultations do not restrict the freedom of either Government to decide at any future time whether or not to assist the other by armed force. We have agreed that consultation between experts is not, and ought not to be, regarded as an engagement that commits either Government to action in a contingency that has not arisen and may never arise. The disposition, for instance, of the French and British fleets respectively at the present moment is not based upon an engagement to cooperate in war.

\(^9\)Ibid.
You have, however, pointed out that if either Government had grave reason to expect an unprovoked attack by a third Power it might become essential to know whether it could in that event, depend upon the armed assistance of the other.

I agree that, if either Government had grave reason to expect an unprovoked attack by a third Power, or something that threatened the general peace, it should immediately discuss with the other whether both Governments should act together to prevent aggression and to preserve peace, and, if so, what measures they would be prepared to take in common. If these matters involved action, the plans of the general staffs would at once be taken into consideration, and the Governments would then decide what effect should be given to them.  

The following is Cambon's reply to Grey's letter:

You reminded me in your letter of yesterday, November 22, that during the last few years the military and naval authorities of France and Great Britain had consulted with each other from time to time; that it had always been understood that these consultations should not restrict the liberty of either Government to decide in the future whether they should lend each other the support of their armed forces; that, on either side, these consultations between experts were not, and should not be, considered as engagements binding our Governments to take action in certain eventualities; that, however, I had remarked to you that, if one or other of the two Governments had grave reason to fear an unprovoked attack on the part of a third Power, it would become essential to know whether it could count on the armed support of the other.

Your letter answers that point, and I am authorized to state that, in the event of one of our two Governments having grave reason to fear either an act of aggression from a third Power, or some event threatening the general peace, that Government would immediately examine with the other the question whether both Governments should act together in order to prevent the act of aggression or preserve peace. If so, the two Governments would deliberate as to the measures which they would be prepared to take in common; if those

10Grey to Cambon, November 22, 1912, Grey, op. cit., p. 94.
measures involved action, the two Governments would take into immediate consideration the plans of their General Staffs and would then decide as to the effect to be given to those plans. 11

Now, for the first time, France had a written agreement committing the British Government to discuss with France the joint measures to be taken in case of French fears of "an unprovoked attack" or "something that threatened the general peace." Cambon was making progress; as Lutz says: "The simple agreement concerning Morocco, engaging Britain to give merely diplomatic support, had now been developed into an Entente, covering everything 'that threatened the general peace' and thus no longer restricted to a German attack on France." This same writer raises the following issue in regard to the Grey-Cambon letters of the autumn of 1912:

One is compelled to ask, especially in view of the resignation of several members of the Cabinet in August, 1914, was the Cabinet placed in autumn 1912 in full possession of information, was it frankly told of the scope of the military "conversations," which had grown into a real military convention; was it, especially, made aware of the naval agreement already existing with France, dealing with the naval strength of the two Powers in the Mediterranean and on the northern coast of France, the agreement which, as early as August 2, 1914, was already forcing Great Britain to come into the war? 12

The question is well put: how it would have been possible, in view of the Mediterranean agreements of 1912, for members of the British

11 Cambon to Grey, November 23, 1912, ibid., pp. 95-96.
Cabinet to engage, along with Grey, in such naive correspondence with the French Ambassador as that of November 22, assuming full knowledge of all that had taken place, is beyond comprehension. A look at the naval agreements between the two Powers is now in order.

The British attitude as expressed by Lloyd George in his Mansion House speech produced its inevitable results beyond the Rhine. Tirpitz immediately asserted that Germany had suffered a diplomatic check, and must remedy the situation by a Supplementary Naval Bill; this idea had the full support of the Kaiser, who instructed the Chancellor to work the Supplementary Bill into the budget of 1912. Fortunately for world peace, however, while Tirpitz was engaged in his efforts, wiser heads resolved to renew their efforts toward avoiding a conflict. A Memorandum was drawn up by Lloyd George and Winston S. Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, which provided that Germany was to recognize British superiority at sea, not to increase her naval program, and possibly to reduce it. Great Britain, for her part, was not to interfere with German colonial expansion. When the Memorandum was presented to the Kaiser, he indicated a willingness to discuss the matter and suggested a direct exchange of views between the governments, and an early visit from Edward Grey was proposed. Grey indicated that he would be pleased to go to Berlin, if an agreement appeared assured; but meanwhile Haldane would be sent there on a private
mission. Arrangements were completed and the War Secretary arrived in Berlin on February 8th.13

After the arrival of Haldane in Berlin, the Kaiser announced to the Reichstag that the proposed increase of the army and navy would be introduced at a later date. This immediately drew from Churchill, speaking in Glasgow, the comment that "the British Navy is to us a necessity and, from some points of view, the German Navy is to them more in the nature of a luxury." Churchill went on to add that Britain would take such steps as were necessary to prevent any other Power from overcoming the British naval superiority.

Discussions between Haldane, Tirpitz, and the Kaiser, although friendly, soon revealed that a naval agreement between the two Powers would be difficult, and it was thought best to try for a political agreement. On February 10, in a long final interview, Bethmann-Hollweg, German Chancellor, proposed the following formula for an agreement:

I. The High Contracting Powers assure each other mutually of their desire for peace and friendship.

II. They will not, either of them, make any combination, or join in any combination, which is directed against the other. They expressly declare that they are not bound by any such combination.

III. If either of the High Contracting Parties becomes entangled in a war with one or more other Powers, the other of the High Contracting Parties will at least observe toward

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the Power so entangled a benevolent neutrality, and use its utmost endeavor for the localisation of the conflict.

IV. The duty of neutrality which arises from the preceding Article has no application in so far as it may not be reconcilable with existing agreements which the High Contracting Powers have already made. The making of new agreements which make it impossible for either of the Contracting Parties to observe neutrality toward the other beyond what is provided by the preceding limitation is excluded in conformity with the provision contained in Article II. 14

Haldane could not accept Article III; it would prohibit England from coming to the assistance of France, in case Germany directed an attack toward the Channel ports. British security demanded that these ports remain in the hands of her friend, France. Also, Haldane believed that England could not remain neutral if Germany fell upon France in any direction. Again, England had existing treaty obligations to Belgium, Portugal, and Japan, which precluded such an agreement with Germany. Haldane therefore proposed the following modifications to Articles II and III:

II. They will not either of them make or prepare to make any unprovoked attack upon the other, or join in any combination or design against the other for purposes of aggression, or become party to any plan or naval or military enterprise alone or in combination with any other power directed to such an end.

III. If either of the High Contracting Parties becomes entangled in a war with one or more other powers, in which it cannot be said to be the aggressor, the other of the High Contracting Parties will at least observe toward the power so entangled a benevolent neutrality and use its utmost endeavor for the localisation of the conflict. 15

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14 Haldane, op. cit., p. 64.  
Haldane's proposals would seem to indicate that he was opposed to making any agreement with Germany which might be contrary to a defensive alliance between England and France. There seems to be little doubt but that the War Secretary considered earlier agreements between his country and France, such as the military conversations and the understanding of 1904, constituted such an alliance.

Germany argued that the terms of Haldane's proposal were too vague, and that neutrality would depend upon the uncertainty of interpretation, which would rob the agreement of all its value. Haldane countered with the argument that a simple postponement of German naval construction, as proposed by the Kaiser and the Chancellor, would not meet with the approval of the British Cabinet. A tentative agreement was reached on the colonial questions without difficulty, and Haldane returned to England carrying a draft of the proposed German Navy Law.

The German proposal to expand her navy proved too much for Britain. A memorandum in opposition to the expansion was forwarded to Berlin and this made a bad impression on the Kaiser. Next, Grey began to vacillate in his opinions regarding the tentative colonial settlements; in fact, British attention began to draw away from all phases of the negotiations except the Navy Law. On March 18 the British Navy Estimates laid before Parliament provided that two keels would
be laid down by England for every additional German one. On March 29 Grey informed Metternich that the Cabinet had decided definitely against the original German neutrality formula.

The Haldane mission had failed in its purpose: England was unwilling to enter into any restrictive agreement which might interfere with her plans to furnish assistance to France; and Germany was unwilling to make any reductions in her naval expansion.  

The possibility of an Anglo-German rapprochement, brought about by the Haldane mission, had been a source of considerable alarm in Paris. Raymond Poincaré, now Prime Minister, had advised the French Ambassador at London to approach Grey with a suggestion of the dangers involved in a neutrality agreement with Germany. Coincidentally, the day on which Cambon discussed the matter with Grey, March 29, was the day on which the latter informed the German Ambassador that England had decided definitely against the German neutrality formulae.  

At an earlier date, March 18, Churchill had made a statement that encouraged the French when he said:

... In order to meet the new German squadron, we are contemplating bringing home the Mediterranean battleships. This means relying on France in the Mediterranean. ...  

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16 Ibid., pp. 309-311.  

17 Ibid., p. 317.  

18 Churchill, op. cit., p. 98.
This led to agitation in the French and British press for a regular defensive alliance to replace the Anglo-French Entente. At this point, Cambon spoke to Arthur Nicolson, in the British Foreign Office, of the need of strengthening the Entente Cordiale through a written agreement. Acting on instructions from Poincaré, the Ambassador said:

“You see there is a cause of weakness in M. Poincaré's situation. More than anyone else, he is a partisan of the Entente with England, but to the important politicians, to his colleagues in the Cabinet, to the leaders of French public opinion who question him, he cannot give them to understand that there exist between us other bonds than those of sympathy. This is not enough between two Governments sure of their reciprocal intentions. It is not enough for public opinion. The enemies of England in France (they are few but they exist) proclaim that our relations with you offer no security. I have, therefore, asked myself if we could not find together a formula which would permit us to reassure uneasy and doubting spirits. I know that the British Government does not have the right to bind itself without the authorization of Parliament, but there is no need of an agreement in duplicate, of a treaty drawn up and signed; we could content ourselves with an exchange of declarations. This is what we would have done, in 1905, with Lord Lansdowne, if the resignation of M. Delcassé had not cut our conversation short.¹⁹

This interview is a classic example of the Cambon technique—the subtle suggestion; nothing much is wanted; it is really of no importance; and always the suggestion of precedent, the reference to Lansdowne and Delcassé. In this case Cambon was dealing with Nicolson; he could only practice his "art of suggestion" on Grey for a limited time

¹⁹Cambon to Poincaré, April 18, 1912, quoted, Fay, op. cit., p. 319.
without its losing its effectiveness, then he must turn to someone else—preferably an associate, someone who was sure to convey the suggestion to the Foreign Minister. At this time Cambon's efforts were without success; the Under-secretary was convinced, but his superior did not feel like taking such a momentous step.

In 1912, British fear of Germany's naval expansion had its inevitable consequences. In 1904, another period such as that which now existed, Fisher had concentrated units of the Royal Navy in the North Sea; he had recalled ships from various parts of the world to meet the German threat. Now, in 1912, England saw herself compelled to withdraw the battleships from the Mediterranean. This, of course, brought up the question of the defense of the Mediterranean area, and a meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence, to be held at Malta during Whit-suntide, 1912, was proposed. This development immediately suggested an opportunity to Cambon; he proposed to the Foreign Office that conversations be resumed in the direction of Franco-British naval cooperation to the end that the French fleet would have the responsibility of protecting British interests in the Mediterranean, and in return, Britain would protect the northern coast of France and look after the Channel. Asquith replied that no such arrangement as this could be made without Cabinet approval, but Churchill was of the opinion that

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the time was approaching when such conversations would have to be
resumed and that he would have to ask for the necessary authority after
Whitsuntide. To some it appeared that it would be a much less ex-
pensive plan for England to enter into an agreement with France for
the protection of her interests in the Mediterranean than for her to at-
ttempt to build sufficient ships to create another fleet for that area.

Eyre Crow, in a memorandum, expressed the opinion that the British
withdrawal from the Mediterranean would have a disastrous effect on
the international situation unless the place of the British Mediterranean
squadron were effectively taken by a powerful French fleet.

In July, 1912, Churchill reported that the Comte de Saint Seine
had called at the Admiralty and stated that the French had decided to
move their six remaining battleships from Brest into the Mediterranean
to form a third squadron there, leaving the northern and Atlantic coasts
solely to the protection of their torpedo flotillas. Five days later
Grey told Cambon that conversations could be resumed between the

21 Minutes by Churchill, May 10, 1912, B. D., X, pt. 2, no. 383,
pp. 582-583.

22 Nicolson to Bertie, May 6, 1912, B. D., X, pt. 2, no. 384,
pp. 583-584.

23 Memorandum on the effect of British evacuation of the Mediter-
ranean on questions of foreign policy, May 8, 1912, B. D., X, pt. 2,
no. 386, pp. 585-589.

24 Memorandum by Churchill, July 17, 1912, B. D., X, pt. 2,
no. 399, pp. 600-601.
French Naval Attaché and the Admiralty. In this interview, as always, the Foreign Secretary reiterated the provision that nothing that passed between the naval experts was to be taken as "prejudicing the freedom of decision of the Government so as to commit either Government to come to the assistance of the other in time of war." A little later on in the discussion Grey said:

I remarked that of course there was no formal "Entente" between the two Governments.

It is interesting to note Gambon's reply:

M. Gambon replied that there was nothing but a moral "Entente," which might however be transformed into a formal "Entente" if the two Governments desired, when an occasion arose. 25

The Ambassador had indicated that despite Grey's continual protests that nothing which took place between the two nations was to be regarded as binding their governments, there could be such a thing as a moral obligation. It is a tribute to the Foreign Secretary's weird sense of parliamentary government that only the legislative branch could obligate the government. Members of the executive branch could take any action and by simply stating that such actions did not prejudice the government, all responsibility was ended.

On the following day, July 23, an interesting agreement was drawn up between the French Naval Attaché and the British Admiralty.

Its text read, in part, as follows:

1. The following agreement relates solely to a contingency in which Great Britain and France were to be allies in a war, and does not affect the political freedom of either Government as to embarking on such a war.

2. It is understood that France has almost the whole of her battle fleet in the Mediterranean, leaving her Atlantic sea board to the care of Flotillas.

Great Britain on the other hand has concentrated her battle fleets in home waters, leaving in the Mediterranean a strong containing force of battle and armoured cruisers and torpedo craft. These dispositions have been made independently because they are the best which the separate interests of each country suggest, having regard to all the circumstances and probabilities; and they do not arise from any naval agreement or convention.

3. In the event of a war in which the Governments are allies the following arrangements are agreed upon between the respective Admiralties.

Mediterranean

General Principles.

British objectives.

Protection of Anglo-French interests in Western Basin of the Mediterranean, i.e. west of Malta.

Combined action if possible for the purposes of general engagement. . . . 26

This draft agreement was handed to Cambon by his Naval Attaché and on the following day the Ambassador had this to say to Grey:

. . . In short the engagement to be taken was really unilateral—France was to move practically all her naval force to the Mediterranean and leave her other coasts unprotected,

and England was free to aid France or not as she liked, and
be under no obligation to do so—M. Cambon said that it was
possible these objections might occur to M. Poincaré [the
Channel and the Atlantic would be practically abandoned by
France, and would expose her to an attack by Germany with-
out any guarantee at all that the British fleet would come to
her aid], and that the French Admiralty before concurring
in the proposed disposition of the French naval forces would
require that they should have some assurances that British
naval aid would be forthcoming for the Channel and Atlantic
Coasts. . . .

After due consideration the incredible British Foreign Secretary added
the following comment to his report of the conversation:

The French may not raise the point: if they do raise
it we shall have to consider how it can be met without alter-
ing the first article of the Draft Naval Agreement referred
to in this minute. 27

On July 26 Cambon raised the following issue in discussing the
naval agreement with Grey:

. . . As long ago as 1907 there were verbal communica-
tions with Sir John Fisher in which the French had said that
they could assure only the western part of the Mediterranean,
and we [England] had said that we could undertake the eastern
part. Eventually, the French had said that they would look
after the whole of the Mediterranean, and Sir John Fisher had
said that we [England] would look after the North Sea and
Channel. It was in consequence of these conversations that
France had concentrated her fleet in the Mediterranean. . . .
M. Cambon suggested that private Notes might be exchanged
to this effect. . . . 28

Grey was not prepared to go quite this far at the time, but agreed to
reflect upon the matter further.

27 Minute by Sir A. Nicholson, July 24, 1912, B. D., X, pt. 2,
no. 401, p. 603.

28 Grey to Carnegie, July 26, 1912, B. D., X, pt. 2, no. 402,
p. 604.
French comment on the proposal next came from Poincaré in Paris. After Cambon's suggestions, the thinking of the French Prime Minister seems more to the point, who, as reported by Bertie, said:

... The decision of the French Government was quite spontaneous but it would not have been taken if they could suppose that in the event of Germany making a descent on the Channel or Atlantic ports of France, England would not come to the assistance of France. If such was to be the case the conversations between the Naval Experts would be useless and the French Government must have their best ships to face Germany in the Channel. 29

... To begin a Military or Naval Convention by saying that it means nothing so far as the Governments are concerned is superfluous and quite out of place in such a Convention. ... If the Entente does not mean that England will come to the aid of France in the event of Germany attacking the French ports its value to France is not great. ... 30

After making these comments, Poincaré proposed that the matter should be allowed to rest as it stood until September.

The most significant development which came with the resumption of discussions of the matter in September was the exchange of letters between Grey and Cambon already mentioned as having been written in November of 1912. In his letter the Foreign Secretary maintains with consistent purpose that the British government is in no way obligated to France. Other minds held other opinions; Churchill held that


30Bertie to Grey, July 30, 1912, B. D., X, pt. 2, no. 405, pp. 606-607.
It is true to say that our Entente with France, and the military and naval conversations that had taken place since 1906, had led us into a position where we had the obligations of an alliance without its advantages. . . . We were morally bound to come to the aid of France. 31

As early as December, 1914, the Spectator wrote:

If Germany had tried to invade France by the direct route instead of by way of Belgium, we should still have been under a profound obligation to help France and Russia. It is useless to tell us that we were free to act as we pleased. . . . All our dealings with France—our sanction of her line of policy, our military conversations with her staff, our definite association with her acts abroad—had committed us to her cause as plainly as though we had entered into a binding alliance with her. . . . 32

There was no further change in the relations between the French and British, so far as written agreements were concerned, from the date of the Grey-Cambron letters. As far as the wording of the letters went, Grey was justified in maintaining the illusion that his government was in no way obligated to act in behalf of France in the event of a Franco-German war. But actions taken by the two governments in the shifting of their naval forces are incompatible with the Foreign Minister's illusion. When Britain transferred her battleships from the Mediterranean to the North Sea, and France, abandoning the defense of her northern and western shores, sent all of her capital ships into the Mediterranean, a situation came into existence entirely contrary to the terms of Grey's letter. It is inconceivable that the French could move their

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32Lutz, op. cit., p. 95.
battleships from their Atlantic bases without some assurance that their ports in this area would be protected by the British navy. As the French saw the situation, England was forced to move her Mediterranean fleet into home waters as a safeguard against the threat of the German navy; then, to safeguard British interests in the Mediterranean, the Admiralty had suggested to France that the French fleet, most of which was in the Mediterranean, act to protect Anglo-French interests in that area. In return for this protection, Britain would defend the northern and western coasts of France. The action in either case would be contingent upon the fact that the two governments had decided upon joint action in the face of some threat or aggression on the part of a third Power; if the governments decided otherwise, then each would have to look to its own protection. Now in the case of England this last proviso was quite acceptable; the anticipated threat would come from Germany and the British navy was based strategically to intervene. The French situation was something else; the threat was the German navy; the avenue of approach would be the North Sea and the Channel, but the French navy was in the Mediterranean. How utterly ridiculous it would have been for France to enter into such an agreement as this!

The French were willing to disperse their fleet and leave their Atlantic coast defended only after the following understanding:

... Le Gouvernement de la République et le Gouvernement de S. M. britannique, prévoyant le cas où l'un d'eux aurait un motif grave d'appréhender, soit l'agression d'une tierce
Puissance, soit quelque événement menaçant pour la paix général, conviennent qu'ils délibéreront immédiatement sur les moyens d'agir en commun à l'effet de prévenir l'agression et de sauvegarder la paix. 33

The British Foreign Office had given Cambon assurance that such an agreement would be acceptable to them; Grey had gone so far as to assure Cambon that such an understanding "ne modifiait en rien l'état de fait actuel." 34 As the French saw the situation, there would be no more fitting means for preventing an aggression by the German navy on the French coast than for the British navy to intercede in behalf of France. Cambon, in September, 1912, had reported to Poincaré that the British had agreed to do just that.

The British interpretation of the Mediterranean Agreement of 1912 had left that nation morally obligated to protect the French coast; the French interpretation held that Britain was formally bound to discuss the question of the better means to be employed in preventing an aggression against France, and only one solution was practical—the Grey-Cambon letters notwithstanding. France and Britain were friends, and between friends written alliances are superfluous. Cambon had again asked for an alliance; he had secured a naval agreement which left Britain with but one course to follow in case of war between France and Germany.


During the second phase of the Anglo-French military and naval conversations discussions had continued between the two General Staffs, but emphasis centered on the discussions of the two Admiralties. Why was this? During this period the French Minister of Marine was Théophile Delcassé.
The period between 1912 and the outbreak of war in 1914 was one of continually growing international tension in Europe; the atmosphere was charged with electricity, needing only a spark to provide a world-shaking explosion. The murder of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his wife at Serajevo on June 28, 1914, provided the necessary spark and the existing system of alliances and ententes guaranteed that the reverberations would be felt throughout Europe. Austria declared war on Serbia; Russia began mobilizing, and continued despite German protests; Germany declared war on Russia, and asked France what she proposed to do; the Dual Alliance provided the French answer—Germany declared war against France on August 3, 1914.

The question of paramount importance throughout July of the fatal year was, what would Britain do? Germany tried desperately for British neutrality, but France was striving with equal intensity to involve her on the side of the Dual Alliance. The final outcome in this contest to determine the actions of Great Britain was never in doubt, for the spade-work done by Delcassé and Cambon in the two decades preceding the outbreak of war had been so thorough that any thought of British
neutrality at this stage of events was entirely out of the question. The British Foreign Minister, nevertheless—true to his illusion—continued to maintain the fiction that his nation was not politically obligated to render anything more than diplomatic support to France in her hour of need.

Grey, as late as the eve of that fateful day which saw the beginning of a state of war between England and Germany, appeared before the House of Commons to announce to that body that Britain's hands were free. In this speech, on the afternoon of August 3, the Foreign Secretary gave definition to the Triple Entente: "[It] was not an Alliance—it was a diplomatic group." He was willing to concede, however, that on the previous day the Foreign Office may have gone beyond a promise of diplomatic assistance, but in general Britain had promised nothing. ¹ The reference to the promise of "yesterday," handled so casually by the Minister, seems worthy of more comment than was given by Grey.

The promise of August 2, 1914, was the result of further effort on the part of the French Ambassador. As the shadows of war had begun to lengthen during July, Cambon had naturally approached the British Foreign Secretary to ascertain the prospects of British intervention on behalf of France. The Ambassador was well aware of German overtures to secure a declaration of British neutrality and was quite

concerned by the absence of a forthright declaration of policy on the part of Grey. On July 29 Cambon called at the Foreign Office and received the following answer, as reported by Grey:

After telling M. Cambon today how grave the situation seemed to be, I told him that I meant to tell the German Ambassador today that he must not be misled by the friendly tone of our conversations into any sense of false security that we should stand aside if all the efforts to preserve the peace, which we were now making in common with Germany, failed. But I went on to say to M. Cambon that I thought it necessary to tell him also that public opinion here approached the present difficulty from a quite different point of view from that taken during the difficulty as to Morocco a few years ago. In the case of Morocco the dispute was one in which France was primarily interested and in which it appeared that Germany, in an attempt to crush France, was fastening a quarrel on France on a question that was the subject of a special agreement between France and us. In the present case the dispute between Austria and Servia was not one in which we felt called to take a hand. Even if the question became one between Austria and Russia we should not feel called upon to take a hand in it. It would then be a question of the supremacy of Teuton or Slav—a struggle for supremacy in the Balkans; and our idea had always been to avoid being drawn into a war over a Balkan question. If Germany became involved and France became involved, we had not made up our minds what we should do; it was a case that we should have to consider. . . . We were free from engagements, and we should have to decide what British interests required us to do. . . .

Needless to say, this line of thinking on the part of the Foreign Secretary was thought of as being somewhat unrealistic by Cambon. In a moment of exasperation the Ambassador roundly criticized Grey's procrastinating; he reported the conversation as follows:

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On the morning of Saturday, August 1st, there had been another Cabinet meeting. Afterwards, I saw Grey, who told me that their Government had not been able to decide upon intervention in the war. He spoke very gravely. I replied that I could not and would not tell my Government that. "After all that has passed between our two countries," I exclaimed, "after the withdrawal of our forces ten kilometres within our frontier . . .; after the agreement between your naval authorities and ours by which all our naval strength has been concentrated in the Mediterranean so as to release your fleet for concentration in the North Sea, so that if the German Fleet sweeps down the Channel and destroys Calais, Boulogne, and Cherbourg, there can be no resistance, you tell me that your Government cannot decide upon intervention? How am I to send such a message? It would fill France with rage and indignation. My people would say you have betrayed us. It is not possible. I cannot send such a message. It is true the agreements between your military and naval authorities and ours have not been ratified by our Government, but there is a moral obligation not to leave us unprotected." 3

Cambon was of the opinion that it might be necessary to strike the word "honor" out of the English vocabulary.

The French Ambassador was undoubtedly relieved on the next day, August 2, when he received the following aide-mémoire from the British Foreign Secretary:

I am authorised to give an assurance that if the German fleet comes into the Channel or through the North Sea to undertake hostile operations against French coasts or shipping the British fleet will give all the protection in its power. This assurance is of course subject to the policy of His Majesty's Government receiving the support of Parliament and must not be taken as binding His Majesty's Government to take any action until the above contingency of action by the German fleet takes place. 4


This was the promise of August 2 referred to in Grey's speech on the following day, and as the Secretary admitted, it went somewhat beyond diplomatic support. Again Cambon had enmeshed Grey in an obligation to France and this time with Cabinet approval. The Ambassador had been forced to speak rather bluntly to the Foreign Secretary, but he had obtained quick results; the results were so satisfactory that Cambon took this occasion to ask that two divisions of British troops be sent to French soil immediately. Grey demurred.

In his speech of August 3 before Commons the Foreign Secretary went into considerable historical detail in developing the relations between France and Great Britain since the signing of the Entente Cordiale in 1904. He told of the military and naval conversations of 1906 which grew out of the first Moroccan crisis; at this point he took care to emphasize the fact that he had "given no promise." As always, Grey stressed the fact that he could not secure Cabinet approval of his actions because of the General Election that was taking place at the time. Some of his fellow Cabinet members have since declared that this argument was invalid, but the Foreign Secretary told Commons that he could not consult the Cabinet because "Ministers were scattered over the country, and I [was] spending three days a week in my constituency and three days at the Foreign Office. . . ." From this

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5 Loreburn, op. cit., p. 80.

statement it would seem that Grey had considered his election to be of greater importance than his conduct of the Foreign Office.

Next, the Foreign Secretary took up the Agadir crisis, and reasoned that nothing which had happened at that time in any way obligated the government because of his letter to Cambon of November 22, 1912. The naval agreement with France was of no consequence from the standpoint of involving the British government. As Grey represented the situation to the House of Commons:

That [November 22, 1912] is the starting point for the Government with regard to the present crisis. . . . As regards our freedom to decide in a crisis what our line should be, whether we should intervene or whether we should abstain, the Government remains perfectly free, and, a fortiori, the House of Commons remains perfectly free. . . .

This statement was made even after the promise of naval assistance to the extent of using the British fleet to protect the French coast! At least the head of the British Foreign Office was consistent; if his actions throughout the years since 1906 had not obligated his government, then certainly the promise given on August 2 did not. But in the next breath Grey admitted that there might be other opinions in the matter. After mentioning the friendship which had grown up between the two nations, he said:

. . . But how far that friendship entails obligation—it has been a friendship between the nations and ratified by the nations—how far that entails an obligation let every man

7Ibid., p. 312.
look into his own heart, and his own feelings, and construe the extent of the obligation for himself. I construe it myself as I feel it, but I do not wish to urge upon anyone else more than their feelings dictate as to what they should feel about the obligation. The House, individually and collectively, may judge for itself. I speak my personal view, and I have given the House my own feeling in the matter.  

After expressing his views on the subject of obligations, the Foreign Minister next gave a brief review of the deployment of the French navy. The reason given for the French navy's being in the Mediterranean was because "of the feeling of confidence and friendship which has existed between the two countries." At this point Grey's feelings took on a different meaning, as he stated:

... My own feeling is that if a foreign fleet engaged in a war which France had not sought, and which she had not been the aggressor, came down the English Channel and bombarded and battered the undefended coast of France, we could not stand aside and see this going on practically within sight of our eyes, with our arms folded, looking on dispassionately, doing nothing! I believe that this would be the feeling of this country.  

The speaker next stated that the British Mediterranean fleet had not been kept up to its usual strength—he did not say why—but added that lest France should see fit to return her fleet to the Atlantic for the protection of her Channel ports, and thereby weaken her position in the Mediterranean, Britain had agreed on the previous day to defend the French coast. Grey then mentioned that the Germans had proposed not to attack the northern coast of France, if Britain would pledge

8Ibid., p. 314. 9Ibid., p. 315.
herself to neutrality; this offer he dismissed as being "far too narrow an engagement for us." 10

With this comment on the German offer, the Foreign Minister concluded his discussion of the obligation of Britain to France; he next turned his attention to the matter of the neutrality of Belgium, which he considered to be of greater importance than the relationship between his government and France.

The governing factor in Britain's relations to Belgian neutrality was the treaty of 1839. As a guarantor of Belgian neutrality, according to the terms of the treaty, Britain had the right and the obligation of defending it. Moreover, the defense of the Low Countries against the encroachments of contiguous great Powers was a tradition deeply rooted in the national interest of Britain. In his speech of August 3, Grey asked Parliamentary approval for making the violation of Belgian neutrality a casus belli; in this matter the House was strong in its support of the Foreign Secretary. 11 On the following day Commons was informed that Germany had invaded Belgium and that the Prime Minister had renewed his demand for assurances that Belgian neutrality would be respected, and had attached a time-limit expiring at midnight. At 11 p. m. (midnight in Berlin) the time-limit expired and Britain was at war with Germany.

10Ibid., p. 317. 11Ensor, op. cit., p. 494.
Grey, in his appearance before Commons, maintained that the Entente had never been an alliance; read the letters exchanged between himself and Cambon in 1912; and claimed that Parliament was, as he had always promised that it should be when the time arrived, free to make any decision which it saw fit. He was, of course, technically correct in what he had said. But he had failed, deliberately or otherwise, to provide a true picture of the circumstances surrounding his actions in dealing with the French. For instance, he failed to mention the fact that British actions at the time of the Moroccan crises, which had provided a measure of assurance to France, were not entirely benevolent in their conception, but rather were motivated by the fear of Germany's attempt to establish a naval base on the Atlantic Coast of Africa. Again, in discussing the naval understanding of 1912, he failed to mention that German naval expansion had necessitated the withdrawal of units of the British fleet from the Mediterranean Sea, and that England had profited by the transfer of the French fleet from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean. The Foreign Secretary, as he spoke before Parliament, explained his past actions on the basis of present facts only, never intimating that France, considering their relations with Britain in the light of circumstances which had dictated their actions at the time, would likely interpret events in an entirely different fashion. He read his letter to Cambon of November 22, 1912, but he did not read the Ambassador's reply; he did not mention that it was
understood that if either one of the two governments had reason to fear an act of aggression from a third Power, or some event threatening the general peace, that government would immediately examine with the other the question of whether or not both governments should act together to prevent the act of aggression or to preserve peace. Grey assured his listeners that they were free to make any decision which they saw fit; then he proceeded to show them that because of the naval agreement of 1912, they had no choice but to defend the French coast, and then informed them that he had promised the French Ambassador to do just that. Yet, he insisted that there was no alliance between England and France and that neither government was pledged to support the other.

The one outstanding characteristic of the speech was its inconsistency, but inconsistency was the keynote of the career of the Foreign Secretary. After all, "nature had made Lord Grey for a country gentleman, fate placed him at the head of the Foreign Office." Sir Roger Casement gave the following explanation of Grey's career:

At bottom a peace-loving, homely, quiet man, he came to an office for which he was entirely unsuited, and mainly for this reason. The powers that guided the destiny of the State had no use for an able man. . . . I should not regard him as the stage villain of the piece; as he once said of himself, he is "a fly on the wheel of state," the victim rather than the defender of the aims of British Imperialism. These aims were already fixed and the driver of the coach of State was already at his post when . . .
Sir Edward Grey mounted the coach. Instead of driving it himself, he was taken up as a passenger.12 Whether or not these comments on the Foreign Secretary's career be justified, the inescapable fact remains that his conduct of the office which he held during the troublesome years immediately before World War I placed his country in a position which guaranteed participation in a Franco-German war. Fortunately for Grey, the question of Belgian neutrality intervened as the *casus belli* for Britain in 1914.

Throughout his career Grey had been obliged to deal with Paul Cambon, agent provocateur of Théophile Delcassé, and these two protagonists of an Anglo-French alliance were in the driver's seat of the French coach of state; they had the advantage of knowing what they wanted—Cambon knew how to get it. The high-water mark in the career of Cambon was reached on August 2, 1914, when Grey notified him that the British navy would protect the Atlantic coast of France; at that time a *de facto* alliance came into being between Britain and France.

Cambon achieved his goal through the military and naval conversations between the two governments. From an inconsequential beginning on a semi-official basis late in the year 1905, he had raised these conversations to the level of an alliance in August of 1914. The record of his progress is a monument to the diplomatic skill of Cambon,

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12 Quoted in Lutz, *op. cit.*, p. 72.
and the bellicosity of France was commensurate with the progress of her Ambassador at London. This is borne out by the fact that in 1905 Delcassé had been forced to resign to appease Germany, but six years later—six years of unremitting effort on the part of Cambon—on the occasion of the Agadir crisis, the French government said that they were not going to stand for any more nonsense on the part of Germany.

As for Delcassé, since his life work had been of such supreme importance to France, it was natural that his countrymen should desire to honor him and that they should restore to him his beloved post at the Quai d'Orsay. Indeed he was, in any case, the man best fitted for that position inasmuch as he had been the principal organizer of the coalition against Germany. Accordingly, on August 27, 1914, he was named Minister of Foreign Affairs in Vivani's Ministry of National Defense.
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