

FIRST MOROCCAN CRISIS 1905

ALGECIRAS CONFERENCE 1906

MOROCCO CRISIS 1905: When talking about the Moroccan crisis of 1905 it's important to first establish the following:

- Morocco was officially *an independent state* under Sultan Abdul Aziz
- At the *Madrid Congress in 1880* a large number of countries had (USA, Germany, France, UK, Spain, Austria-Hungary, Italy, Morocco, Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark and Sweden-Norway) signed a document that assured Moroccan independence + and the countries confirmed that they would contact each other in case of any changes in Africa
- Sultan Abdul Aziz appears to be a weaker ruler than his predecessor. Morocco was shaken by a *Civil War* where Berber (original inhabitants of North Africa) had taken over the southern parts of Morocco and for a time (1903) they threatened the city of Fez
- **France** had colonized the neighboring countries of *Algeria* (1847) and *Tunisia* (1881)
- 1899 France began (foreign minister Delcassé) negotiate with various European nations about a possible French takeover of Morocco. This led to the following:
 1. The French Foreign Minister Delcassé makes a secret deal with **Italy** about Morocco
 2. Delcassé then try to make an agreement with **Spain** who first refuses to conclude a deal. They also require that all negotiations should be public
 3. Delcassé contacts the **UK** who first rejects the French. In 1904 they change their mind (*Entente Cordiale*). France commits itself to not have any demands about Egypt (and the Suez Canal) and the UK accept France's demands for Morocco
 4. Delcassé contact **Spain** again who now accepts an agreement that gives them part of Southwestern Morocco

GERMANY AND THE MOROCCON CRISIS: Delcassé had not reached any agreement with Germany. Kaiser Wilhelm II had clearly declared that *Germany was only interested in equal treatment when it came to economic exchanges with Morocco* but the German Chancellor von Bülow and his advisors who were stronger proponents of "*Weltpolitik*" had other plans. The German government asked the US for advice. President Theodore Roosevelt gave a neutral response that could be interpreted in several different ways. Von Bülow chose to interpret it as a support for Germany's plan to step in and support the Sultan against a possible French takeover...

Wilhelm II was on vacation with his yacht in the Mediterranean when von Bülow contacted the German newspapers and said that the Emperor was preparing a state visit to Morocco. Wilhelm II was not fond of this plan but accepted it "*for Germany's behalf*". In late March the imperial yacht entered Tangier and Wilhelm II said the following in an official speech:

- *Sultan Abdul Aziz is Morocco's rightful leader*
- *Morocco is and shall remain independent*
- *Germany expects all countries to respect the Moroccan independency*
- *Germany knows best how to look after her own interests when it comes to the relationship between Germany and Morocco*
- *Germany expects that all other countries also respects the German interests instead of trying to threaten them*

Why did the German Emperor speak in this way?

- Von Bülow and the German Foreign Ministry wanted to try to weaken the cooperation between the UK and France. They thought this would be a way to sow discord between them

- Germany did not wish France to grow stronger and therefore they calculated that an international diplomatic defeat would weaken France and its reputation
- It was part of Germany's new foreign policy - "*Weltpolitik*"

REACTION - MOROCCAN CRISIS 1905:

- The press in France reacted very strongly against Germany! They believed that the colonization of Morocco was merely a formality ... Foreign Delcasse openly criticized Germany's state visit and Emperor Wilhelm II 's speech
- Britain also reacted negatively. They let Germany know that they would not accept a " German port " in Morocco since such could quickly turn into a naval base that could threaten Gibraltar. Britain declared openly his support for France

RESULTS - MOROCCO CRISIS 1905: Germany convinced the Sultan about the necessity of an international conference where Morocco's natural right to self-government would be supported. In May 1905 various states agreed that an international conference should be held. Delcassé resigned in protest that it was now Germany who set the tone in this matter. He believed that France would lose its support when it came to the colonization of Morocco, and that Germany would gain influence over an area that had never been part of their sphere of influence

Germany and Emperor Wilhelm II saw Delcassés resignation as a victory, and a gain of German prestige. They now went to the conference with confidence. However, there were some other indications that this conference would not become a German triumph

1. President Roosevelt (USA), declared that he would not sign anything that went against France
2. Italy declared exactly the same thing - they would not support the alliance with Germany if France did not accept the proposals. Italy had increasingly begun to approach France ...
3. The British Foreign Office went further and warned the German Ambassador in London - United Kingdom could not guarantee how she would react if Germany attacked France
4. Germany was forced to cooperate with France at the meeting and they were forced to accept that France had "*legitimate interests*" in Morocco.
5. When the meeting started it became clear that France had used its contacts with Britain, Italy and Spain. They had already divided the Moroccan cities that would be controlled by European states (Germany was excluded!). The German delegation had no idea about these plans before the conference...

ALGECIRAS CONFERENCE – 1906: The international conference about Morocco came to take place in Algeciras (Spain) in early 1906 (between January 16th and April 7th). Wilhelm II had been congratulated by President Roosevelt for Germany's initiative to bring about a conference. This made Wilhelm II confident and he now took charge of the German policies during the conference. German Chancellor von Bülow feared the outcome of this conference.

Wilhelm II and his advisers had the following tactics at the meeting – **Germany would now be very cooperative when it came to the French proposals at the conference.** They started out by approving the proposal that France would be mandated to send police officers to Morocco after 3-4 years. So why did the German diplomacy change so radically at this conference?

Wilhelm II wanted to try to create an alliance that included France. If Germany were able to conclude an alliance with France Wilhelm II speculated that they could also conclude an alliance with Russia. This was a total turn-around compared to the German anti-Russian policy of 1890... So why would Russia go along with this suggestion? There were *three* reasons, according to the German advisors:

1. *France and Russia had an alliance*
2. *Russia had just lost a war against Japan (1904-05)*
3. *Russia had just lived through a major revolt (revolution) – 1905*

The main idea of this foreign policy was **to isolate Britain** - Germany's biggest rival, economically and militarily in Europe!

According to historian DC Watt (Donald Cameron Watt, Professor of International History, University of London) Morocco and its future now became a less important issue. **The alliances and the alliance politics became the main issue.** If Germany had succeeded Britain would have been isolated. However, there were two main weaknesses of this plan:

1. France had absolutely no confidence in Germany! The German diplomatic turn-around at the Conference of Algeiras came as a big shock...
2. Britain got a new Liberal government in January 1906. The State Department led by Sir Edward Grey had several years of experience from this ministry. He contacted the French ambassador in London (Jules Cambon) and informed him that France could not expect any future assistance from the United Kingdom if the conference failed. France would be on her own if Germany threatens the country. He did not promise any military assistance but he referred to the secret talks that went on between the countries' highest military when it came to possible military cooperation. Cambon told the French government in Paris that France could expect Britain's full support – if they stood by Britain

In February 1906 it was already clear to Chancellor von Bülow that the conference would be a failure for Germany. He therefore aimed to make the failure as mild as possible. Their only support at the conference, Austria-Hungary, suggested in late March that France and Spain would be allowed to send police forces to the Moroccan port cities. These police forces in turn would be guarded by a Swiss inspector who would report directly to the Sultan. Germany accepted this plan.

So what became the lasting result of the First Morocco Crisis?

- France saw the end result as a success. They had succeeded in stopping the German plans and they had also managed to get support for their own plans
- Britain realized that they now need to break their isolation and build partnerships with various European countries
- Britain and France's cooperation was strengthened during the crisis and the subsequent conference
- Germany became the crisis and the subsequent conference big loser. They did not manage to create any new alliance. The German people's trust in Chancellor von Bülow became low. The German military started to intervene more seriously in politics and they insisted that this diplomatic defeat would never be repeated. Germany would forcefully, military if necessary, assert its place as one of Europe's leading states. It was also emphasized that Germany now was surrounded by hostile states which led to the further development of a German military attack plan – the Schlieffen Plan!