

## Unnegotiable Interests – The Moroccan Crisis of 1905-6

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« *One can negotiate about interests – not about dignity.* »<sup>1</sup>  
(Chancellor Bernhard v. Bülow, 1905)

Like British and French decision makers in 1905, students of international crisis in their majority do not regard motives like dignity, prestige, and morality as real interests in international conflicts. Seen as instrumental rather than intrinsic interests, those symbolic variables are not in themselves accorded real explanatory worth. At best they are presented under the topic of *reputation* as strategic assets; at worst they are understood as words without any authentic content, used to camouflage selfish material interests. Underlying this conceptual treatment is the idea that humans are rational, and not rational in any sense but rational in a quite specific sense. Although rational actor conceptualizations pretend to treat human behaviour in a more objective and scientific way, they implicitly hold quite « narrow » ideas (Elster, 2009 ; Kahler 1998) about what represents an actors' self-interest in international relations. Most draw heavily either on the *homo economicus* or the *homo politicus* model in explaining interstate behaviour. For the former, it is the universal selfish human need for individual profit and power that drives decision makers to cause crises. They are seen as the result of national struggles for power, governments' attempts to divert from internal problems (Levy, 1988 ; Doyle 1997), or the will to conquer resources or markets. For the latter, and particularly neorealists, anarchy makes private interest disappear because the anarchical environment compels actors to make relative or absolute power their primary aim. International crises here are the result of security dilemmas (Herz, 1951), the attempt to attain hegemony (Copeland, 2000 ; Mearsheimer, 2001) or the fear to have to fight a potential war under less advantageous circumstances in the future (Jervis, 1978 ; Van Evera, 1999) While these theories are surely valuable, one can doubt however that they are « sufficient » (Bially Mattern, 2005) in the sense that they are unable to explain why the same material structures often lead to quite different results. If material costs are what ultimately matters, how

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<sup>1</sup> GP, vol. 20/2, no. 6594, Bülow à Monts, 3 avril 1905.

can one explain crises escalation in cases where the material costs largely outweigh material benefits and where leaders are conscious of this fact?

This analysis assumes that variations in international crises can only be understood if we take into account the symbolic nature of human actors and international politics. Decision makers do not perceive their international environment objectively, but through subjective filters of security. What represents a threat ultimately depends not only on the underlying social structure (Wendt, 1992), but also on actors' self-images. Actors are not only motivated by military and material security, but also by symbolic security. For the *homo symbolicus* (Henderson, 1971), on which we base our analysis, the recognition of its identity represents an interest in itself. The confirmation of one's identity is essential since it is linked to important human basic needs. Without confirmative feedback, the actor can neither play the role he has imaged for himself, nor can he feel ontologically or emotionally safe. (Burton, 1990 ; Honneth, 1992 ; Giddens, 1991 ; Mitzen, 2006). This is not different for decision makers who depend on the recognition of the identity they award to themselves and their state (Lebow, 2008 ; Lindemann and Ringmar 2012 ; Wolf, 2008 ; Wendt, 2004).<sup>2</sup> If the gap between desired image and projected image is too wide, i.e. identity is denied, a statesman might be more interested in saving his and his nations self-image than saving their state physically. We all know the awkward feeling triggered by being misrepresented by others and in front of others. Emotions might range from anger to shame or even fear. However, the fact that not everybody resorts to violence is linked basically to two factors: time and repetition of experiences of these kinds of humiliation and the importance we accord to others projection of our self-images. While people with low self-esteem show a tendency to withdraw when being negatively (e)valuated, people holding idealized or hubristic identities easily become confrontational. As the gap between self-images and projected images are particularly wide in these cases and the desired treatment is hard to obtain, they are particularly sensitive to symbolic threats to identity. Here emotional costs may largely outweigh material costs. At the interstate level, this means that the stronger decision makers are motivated by symbolic rather than material vulnerability, the less sensitive they are to military threats. On the contrary, threats alone might be understood as another depreciation and, instead of appeasing actors, like rational deterrence theorists conceive of it (Schelling, 1960 ; Powell, 1990 ; Zagare et Kilgour, 2000), only further incite actors. Our hypotheses concerning origins or international crisis and crisis outcome may therefore be summarized in the following way: If actors are motivated by symbolic rather than material vulnerability, escalation and de-escalation of crises increase or decrease in accordance with symbolic threat.

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<sup>2</sup> The author is aware of the potential problems this kind of anthropomorphization can cause. For a good presentation of the argument of Wendt 2004 and Wolf in Lindemann et Ringmar 2012.

In order to test our assumptions concerning origin and development of international crises, we are going to analyse in the following the Moroccan crisis of 1905/06 between Germany, France and Britain. As Germany can be identified as the crisis triggering power, we will concentrate primarily on its crisis behaviour. If our target actor is primarily concerned with the defense of its identity he should escalate or deescalate the crisis due to the degree of symbolic recognition he finds during the interaction. If our target actor however is primarily concerned with economic or financial costs he should be sensitive to politics that increase or diminish these costs. On the other hand, if our target actor primarily motivated by power balance considerations increase and decrease of military costs should guide his crisis behaviour. But first, we are going to analyse our target actors' general properties.

### **The Tangiers Crisis – a struggle for material or symbolic security?**

The Moroccan crisis of 1905/6 was an interstate conflict opposing primarily Germany and France, but later as well Germany and Britain. German decision-makers triggered the crisis in reaction to an agreement concluded between France and Britain<sup>3</sup> on April 8 1904, in which the latter two powers came to terms with their colonial points of contention in Africa, Asia and the Pacific. Amongst other things, Britain accorded France free hand in Morocco while France accorded Britain free hand in Egypt. On the basis of its new gained rights, the French government pushed the Sultan of Morocco to certain reforms, but the German government protested against this move. Questioning the legality of the clauses of the Anglo-French agreement which conferred France the right to reform Morocco, the German government send by the End of March 1905 Emperor Wilhelm II to Tangiers in order support the Sultan. He claimed that the Anglo-French agreement infringed upon the final act of the Madrid Convention of 1880, in which the sovereign government of Morocco had granted to all signatory powers the right of the most favourite nation, to say equal economic access for all signatory powers to Morocco while the cherifien government remained sovereign. Since any change in these provisions could only be decided unanimously by all signatory powers, as stipulated in the accord, the Anglo-French exchange of rights of the preceding year were illegal. After long hesitation France proposed the German government to find a bilateral agreement, the latter however declined asking for the summoning of an international conference with all signatory powers in order to decide collectively upon the destiny of Morocco. After long and conflictual deliberations concerning the calling of the conference, and, later, the nature of the reforms to impose upon Morocco, the crisis finished April 7, 1906 according great prerogatives over Morocco to France.

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<sup>3</sup>Later Spain, after separate negotiations, adhered to the declaration.

Since 1905 many motives have been imputed to the German government's decision to trigger the Moroccan crisis. Decision-makers of the time as contemporary scholars alike have hinted that the subject of Morocco would have been a pure pretext for other deeper more instrumental and material interests that the German government harbored in 1905. Therefore, the Moroccan crisis classically has been presented in terms which fall either into the liberal or the realist paradigm of interstate relations.

Those who defend the *Imperatif of the Innenpolitik* (Kehr, 1977 ; Wehler, 1973 ; Geiss, 1987) traditionally underline German decision makers' will to distract from internal national problems. Foreign policy here becomes the result of the changing social structure and the need of the traditional and political elites to find a valve or distraction from these problems. Whereas some underline that the German decision-makers' reason to trigger international crisis was influenced by the will to unite the masses under the national flag in order to avert the danger of social democracy, others name the unwillingness of the conservative aristocratic elite to accommodate the rising bourgeoisie as the reason for the flight to international adventurism. As different in detail these analyses may be, they all present the First Moroccan crisis as a scapegoat, as a distraction.

For those, on the other hand, who defend the *Imperatif of the Außenpolitik* (Hillgruber, 1983 ; Mommsen, 1995), Germany's foreign policy at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was primarily motivated either by the need to break the strangling international encirclement which it had to bear as a middle power, or by the will to accelerate its international ascendancy by war. Either or, the dominant explanation of the Moroccan crisis of 1905/6 for realists of all kinds of colors has been and still is that German decision-makers wanted to destroy the newly conceived Anglo-French Entente cordiale of 1904. In 1905/6 the military balance according to these scholars, was simply advantageous, or (according to other scholars) even mandatory, and thereby compelling German decision-makers act and trigger international crisis.

Notwithstanding the internal conclusiveness of these different explanatory crisis narratives, certain elements hint at the insufficiency of purely materialistic explanations. In fact, realist explanations of the first Moroccan crisis focalizing on power structures and capabilities tend to caricaturize German international policy choices. In fact, Germany's alliance policy by the end of 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is not conclusive with regards to an objectively existing security interest. On the one hand, it is highly questionable if Wilhelm II's non-renewal of the Russian-German reinsurance treaty and the German governments incapacity to decide on respectively French and British rapprochement propositions was determined by pure balance of power/traditional realist strategic considerations. On the other hand, German decision makers did not interpret these changes in the alliance system immediately as security threats. Even in

1904 (and as it will be show, even after the first Moroccan crisis) most of Germany's decision makers were convinced that relations could still be improved. Finally, it is also debatable whether the years 1905/6 were really strategically well chosen by Germany to risk escalation and war. The German fleet was still widely inferior to the British fleet and in 1905 nobody doubted that in the event of war it would be destroyed; the German army was restructuring its armaments; its allies Austria and Hungary were not interested in getting involved into an armed conflict and, finally, the risk of escalation of any conflict into a continental was perceived by decision makers as too high a price to pay. Moreover, Germany heavily depended on imports from other European countries what made war a potentially self-destructive adventure. In a more liberal vein, one can ask as well if the German government really could have had an interest in manipulating the domestic opinion in a radicalizing way: actually, the government tried hard to keep foreign policy as their prerogative. Moreover, they were well aware of the influence of pan-German circles' paroles had on the national and international environment – and even the Kaiser wished he could silence them. Would it have been wise to add fuel to the fire? Finally, from a more Marxist perspective it can even be asked if the country Morocco and its resources were really worth the trouble.

Disregarding the internal conclusiveness of liberal and realist approaches, one can also criticize the existing explanations of the Moroccan crisis more generally on conceptual grounds. Is the will for electoral or economic gain or to maintain the balance of power sufficient as explanation for international conflict? Or does it need a stronger investigation into the variables that make people perceive these factors as useful means and tools. Finally, what constitutes a menace or a desirable object and the ways perceived as legitimate or acceptable to obtain them are highly variable between actors. In the end those motives and strategies depend on one's identity. Our hypothesis, which is going to be confronted in this contribution with the aforementioned traditional explanations, maintains that German decision-makers provoked the Moroccan crisis not for purely material, but for symbolic reasons. By challenging France in the Moroccan affair German decision-makers tried to defend their identity, which they felt denied by the fact that France, determined to turn Morocco into a French protectorate, indemnified other countries holding rights in Morocco while consciously ignoring those of Germany. On the one hand, France's treatment of Germany was inconsistent with international standards of dignity and what was conventionally perceived as respectful treatment of a sovereign power. On the other hand, France's treatment of Germany infringed upon country's decision-makers self-images in which Germany was identified as belonging to the exclusive club of great world powers whose members were supposed to be treated with particular respect. As German decision makers were primarily motivated by symbolic rather than military vulnerability, insensitivity to Germany's identity

further escalated the crisis. Finally, French and British threats, instead of deterring Germany, were perceived as additional symbolic threats and only did reinforce German determination to resist to what was perceived as unjust and illegitimate.

## **The evolution of the crisis**

The First Moroccan crisis can be divided up into four main sequences. The first sequence is starting directly right after the announcement of the Anglo-French Agreement on April 8, 1904, and is lasting until February 1905. While there is a first perception of risk, and feeling to need to act spreads among certain decision-makers of the German government, and which makes them request the military information, crisis does not break out openly. German decision-makers take a wait and see attitude and remain passive. Between January and March 1905, however, important changes follow within German decision-makers policy and they openly protest against the French Moroccan policy with the disembarkation of the Emperor in Tangiers. Tensions heighten parallel to the French government's unwillingness to agree to an international conference on Morocco and ebbs at the moment the idea of the international conference is accepted. The third phase starts with the preliminary discussion of the conference and is marked by stronger British interference into the crisis. This sequence lasts until the reunion of the conference. The fourth and final sequence starts with the meeting of the conference and continues until the end of the deliberations.

## **The characteristics of the crisis initiating power – Wilhelmian Germany**

In order to determine what kind of identity threats could potentially irritate the German government we are first going to establish a rough picture of Wilhelmian culture and state. First we will describe its political system in order to evaluate what kind of legitimacy the government was based on. Second we will concentrate on the mentality of its political leaders. As it is not possible to elaborate on all central persons of the German government who were responsible for the decision-making during the First Moroccan crisis we will concentrate on Emperor Wilhelm II.

### *The political regime*

The foundation of the German nation state in 1871 was perceived by many contemporaries, in comparison to its neighbor states, like France or Great Britain, as 'belated'. Described as 'revolution from the top'<sup>4</sup> this nation state was the result of a compromise between different political currents. On the one side was the liberal middle-class which saw in the creation of a self-

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<sup>4</sup> The state of 1871 was primarily created by the elites.

contained constitutional nation state the safeguard for the development its social and economic influence as well as for the strengthening of Germanys position within the international system. On the other hand were the traditional elites trying to conserve the aristocratic system, and regional governments trying to preserve their independence vis-à-vis the central state (Mommsen, 1990 : 45-47).The constitutional result was what Mommsen calls an « *authoritär verfasstes monarchisches System konstitutioneller Spielart* » (idem. : 47).

The constitutional monarchy that was established, on the one hand, granted the legislative branch important competences, on the other hand the parliamentary control over the executive body was still limited. The members of the Reichstag were elected for five years through a relatively democratic universal men's suffrage<sup>5</sup>, but received no salary.<sup>6</sup> The assembly received important rights, like the constitutional right of parliament to decide over the budget, right to debate and solicit the government, and their sessions were held in public. Both houses, lower and upper, had the right to initiate legislation – but no law could have been passed against the will of the upper house, to say the representatives of the regional governments of the federal state. Moreover, the military budget was adopted for seven years and the lower house had no influence on the enactment of indirect taxes. The diet had no right to assembly autonomously and the parliament had no right to appoint or dismiss the chancellor, which was only responsible towards the Emperor. Finally the diet could be dissolved by the upper house of the parliament, the Bundesrat. Still smaller was the Reichstag's influence on Germany's foreign policy. Except for customs, trade and transport the representatives had no right to participate in matters of foreign policy, as it was the preserve of the executive, and in particular the Emperor.

The executive was given sufficient power as to be able to « insulate itself from the diet » (Mommsen, 1990:50). It was composed by the Emperor, the chancellor and the secretaries of state which were dependent on the instructions of the former. Disposing of the « three pillars of the absolutist state: army, bureaucracy and diplomacy », as Hans-Ulrich Wehler subsumed, the powers of the Emperor were extensive. As Mommsen explains : « Ein 'persönliches Regiment' des Monarchen sah die Verfassung zwar nicht vor, beließ aber doch den Freiraum für die Entwicklung eines solchen. »<sup>7</sup> Emperor Wilhelm II, in fact, felt only responsible towards God and depreciated strongly the new democratic institutions, which he called disdainfully « Quasselbude », « Reichsaffenstall ». <sup>8</sup> Whereas the Emperor was sovereign in the conduct of the country's foreign policy and held the right to declare war<sup>9</sup> and peace, contract alliances and

<sup>5</sup>All men having attained their 25<sup>th</sup> year of life were accorded the right to vote. Compared to other regimes of the time, where some kind of census suffrage was common, this universal suffrage was quite extraordinary.

<sup>6</sup> An insufficient *allowancy* was only introduced in 1906.

<sup>7</sup>'Although the constitution did not intend a 'person regiment', it left sufficient space for the development of such.' Mommsen, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>8</sup>Could be roughly translated as 'babbling hut' and 'monkey stall'.

<sup>9</sup> Though, he needed the approval of the upper house .

commanded the army, he was less independent in domestic affairs of the state. Although he possessed the right to summon and close the two houses and even dissolve the diet with accord of the Bundesrat, the parliamentary competences limited decisively his freedom of action. As the chancellor was appointed and dismissed by the Emperor, he and his secretaries were completely dependent on the order and will of the Emperor. Presiding over the upper house and signing the acts of government, he was the nodal point between all institutional branches. The upper house, the Bundesrat, was constituted by representatives not elected, but appointed by the regional governments and deliberated in secret. All decisions of the Reichstag needed to pass the Bundesrat and without their consent no law could be passed. As Prussia was proportionally strongly represented, and the Emperor happened to be the King of Prussia which appointed the representatives, and as the chancellor presiding over the upper house happened to be nominated by the Emperor, Wilhelm II indirectly still had great influence on internal affairs. In a sense the upper house can be seen as a safeguard of the conservative structures of the country.

All in all we can state that the political Wilhelminian system, as a mixed but rather authoritarian system (2), was based on strong charismatic and traditional legitimacy of its leader (2-3), which gives the person Wilhelm II and his government particular importance.

### *The decision-makers self-presentation*

Given the central place the political constitution accorded to the Emperor, we will concentrate on Wilhelm II's self-presentation in order to be able to evaluate foreign policy decision making of the German government in the analysis of the Moroccan crisis. The man whose name marked a whole époque in history is probably the best example of interaction between structure and agent. He marked his time just as much as his time marked him. He was the child of a society going through radical social and technical change opening up new worlds in which everything seemed possible. The rapid economic, industrial and scientific upturn was the pride of a nation that was perceived as having only belatedly found their stately shape. Wilhelm II cultivated this image of an old nation that by the force of its kings could have been finally united. He invested not only enormous amounts of time in reminding this story but also enormous amounts of money in materializing this national idea: The number of Emperor Wilhelm I statues is almost uncountable. His enthusiasm for the architectural historicist movement mixing new with old architectural styles is representative of this will to artificially create linearity and historicity for a nation lacking both (Dauss, 2007). In this narrative of an old nation mounting to new prestige, Wilhelm II liked to present himself as a guiding figure, that, similar to a father watching over his children, was looking after his nation. He thought himself Emperor by the grace of God and the parliament



was nothing more than disturbing.<sup>10</sup> Most notably his aim to lead national and especially international politics could not have been better shown by his dismissal of Bismarck. Wilhelm II wanted a chancellor that obeyed and followed his orders.

His self-image was of utmost importance to him, he took care of his presentation like an actor on the scene and was badly injured if he was confronted with his own mistakes or personally criticized. He was probably the first head of state that was continually followed by photographers always ready to shoot and postcards with his picture were printed en masse. In contrast to his predecessors he loved to hold speeches and to show himself in public. There was no event, where he would not hold a speech, whether at the inauguration of one of the many Wilhelm I monuments, or at an official dinner, or at the launch of a ship, a seminar discussing education policy, a chanting competition or even an art exhibition... When he spoke he used strong and picturesque language, was very generous in using superlatives and presented himself as virile as possible.<sup>11</sup> As such the armed forces were particularly important to him as they represented not only virility, but also might. Since childhood he developed a particular enthusiasm for army and navy. He changed uniform up to six times a day and in general liked to be surrounded by military personnel.<sup>12</sup> During the annual military exercise he insisted to lead 'his' army, even if, as Moltke complained, he was more disturbing than helpful as the whole maneuver became rather a *mise en scène* of the might of the Emperor than a valuable training exercise (Mombauer, 2001). The navy nevertheless was his favourite object as it symbolized global reach and global power (Murray, 2010). Although military and war were principally positively valorised, Wilhelm II nevertheless framed his international role as pacifier (1).

The only thing that Germany was lacking in order to equal the other great powers was a colonial empire, and more importantly, the international recognition to be an equal global player. In the eyes of the members of the great power club of the time Germany was a parvenu, and was not treated according to the same standards as the other great powers. And Wilhelm II felt badly insulted, when he was not invited to official occasions where other great powers were present. The Kaiser himself, however, saw Germany as a young and mounting nation that would soon surpass the others.<sup>13</sup>

To conclude, we can say that Emperor Wilhelm II cultivated a virile self-image that can be seen as hubristic (3). The greater the self-image the stronger he felt critique and failure. He was very keen on creating the image of a state that was at least equal to the other great powers at that time. He tried to create historicity similar to that of France and Britain. He tried to create international prestige with the creation of a fleet that would be able to intervene everywhere in the world, just

<sup>10</sup> According to Robert Saitschick there were between 500 and 600 trials per year for *lèse-majesté* (quoted in Ernst Johann, 1966)

<sup>11</sup> Cp., for example Johann, 1966; Obst, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Most of 'his' chancellors had a military background.

<sup>13</sup> Cp. for example: « Festmahl des Brandenburgischen Provinziallandtages, 24. Februar 1892 », in Johann, 1966: 57.

like Great Britain. Nevertheless, he was lacking the international recognition of the image and status he was demanding. However, in 1905/6 he was still convinced that the other powers would finally come to see that he well belonged to the club of great powers. Enemy images were existent but not irrevocable before the outbreak of the Moroccan crisis (1.75).

## **Symbolic, power and economic politics**

We are now going to see in detail which kind of politics were used during the Moroccan crisis, how they were interpreted by German decision makers, and how they reacted towards them.

### *Sequence 1 – ‘Wait-and-See’ (April 8, 1904 – January/February 1905)*

As German risk perceptions grew with the conception of the entente cordiale we are now going to develop in what way the Anglo-French declaration of April 1904 generated German fears. Was it the economic implications of the agreement concerning Morocco that made decision-makers investigate? Or was it on the contrary the rapprochement between Britain and France and the fear of their possible alliance that made decision-makers move? In a more idealistic vein, the German decision-makers interest could as well have been instigated by the symbolic threat the Entente meant for German decision-makers, as they were neither included nor formally and officially informed about an agreement that touched upon its rights.

The Anglo-French agreement was concluded on April 8, 1904 but the Moroccan affair only entered the open crisis stage in March 1905 with the voyage of the Emperor to Tangiers. Between April 1904 and January 1905 the German government is primarily occupied with interpreting the meaning of the Anglo-French Entente.

#### *The Entente cordiale as a strategic threat hypothesis*

Most analysts of the first Moroccan crisis, as well as foreign politicians in office at the time of the crisis, believed that German decision-makers triggered the crisis in order to readjust the military balance of power turned over by the newly conceived entente cordiale. While some argue that Germany wanted to trigger a preventive war, others underline that Germany merely wanted to show France that it cannot rely on its new gained British friend when the latter's own interests are not directly concerned. Which are the concrete facts that support this realist-based analysis of the Moroccan crisis?

For the contracting parties France and Britain the accord of 8 April 1904 on which the Entente was based, represented the formal end to six years of intense rivalry and dispute in colonial affairs. Since the Fashoda crisis in 1898 tensions between Britain and France over the authority in Egypt had attained a dangerous level, close to the brink of war. The Entente cordiale on no

account represented an alliance treaty, but primarily an agreement over colonial matters in different parts of the world. The primary idea was to trade France's and Britain's colonial spheres of interest in order to homogenize and separate these and thereby reduce friction.<sup>14</sup> While the agreement targeted primarily extra-European entitlements, the rapprochement between the two rival great powers represented nevertheless a clear change in the German estimations of the development of the strategic environment. Since the French-Anglo antagonism was perceived as strong, an Anglo-French rapprochement was longtime considered by German decision-makers impossible. The German government, who by the end of the 19th century always refused France's or Britain's alliance proposals in order to keep its freedom of action, found itself suddenly confronted with an altered strategic environment restricting its finally freedom of action.

Nevertheless, one has to ask whether the change in the military balance was perceived by German decision makers as imminent security threat that would endanger its strategic position. While it might be a plausible argument for those acquainted with power balancing theories that German decision-makers only logic reaction would be to engage in some kind of offensive or defensive counter-balancing acts, one needs to establish a direct connection between the changes in the military strategic environment, the nature of the perceived security threat and the need to take military measures.

Indeed, although the German government speculated about the military strategic worth of the Entente, this track rapidly faded into the background. While some decision-makers in Germany suspected that the Anglo-French agreement might indeed contain a secret clause granting military support to France to regain Alsace-Lorraine, others suspected Britain aimed with the Anglo-French rapprochement to prevent a future French-Russia-German alliance. Nevertheless, the military threat perception was relatively low among German decision makers. Its international environment was still seen as malleable.

#### *The Anglo-French agreement as economic threat hypothesis*

As the first reaction of the Kaiser directly after the conclusion was to ask chancellor Bülow if Germany's «considerable» economic interests in Morocco were not infringed upon by the April 8 agreement, the economic motive needs to be taken seriously. In fact, most of the German deliberations and official documents contained the fear to see its commercial rights in Morocco endangered by France.

The Anglo-French *Entente* that was reached contained one official part and one secret section. The first part of the agreement stated that France would not try to alter the political status of

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<sup>14</sup> In fact, Théophile Delcassé, the French secretary of foreign affairs and father of the Entente cordiale indeed hoped that the agreement would enable an alliance, cp., Andrew, 1968.

Egypt, which would thereby stay the dominion of the British state whereas Britain, for its part, declared not to intend to alter the political status of Morocco (art. 1 and 2). Moreover, however, the latter recognizes « that it appertains to France, more particularly as to Powers whose dominions are conterminous for a great distance with those of Morocco, to preserve order in that country, and to provide assistance for the purpose of all administrative, economic, financial and military reforms which it may require s », « provided that such actions shall leave intact the rights which Great Britain, in virtue of treaties, conventions, and usage, enjoys in Morocco (...) » (art. 2). Moreover, the two governments agreed to support each other in these tasks (art.9). The secret articles of the agreement touch still more delicate questions and concern constitutional changes of Morocco. First, it is stipulate that both countries would respectively support the other in the case the legislative system of either Morocco/ Egypt should be assimilated to a system that is « in force in other civilised Countries » (art.2). Second, Britain and France defined the part of Morocco that should be accorded to France in case of a possible demise of the sultanate. The German governments was nevertheless unconscious of these articles at the time and therefore they are of no importance for our analysis.

Taken by its letters, the official part of the declaration of April 1904 does not discriminate directly against the economic rights accorded by the convention of Madrid 1880 but concerns rather political rights. Both countries, Britain and France pledge to honor to the rules established by previous declarations and agreements. This includes automatically the 1880 Convention of Morocco, which fixed the unrestrained equal economic competition and the *open door* to Morocco for all signatory powers. Moreover both countries promised to « countenance any inequality either in the imposition of customs duties or other taxes, or of railway transport charges » (art. 4), though this article was given a restricted delay of thirty years. While the latter clause can be seen as suspicious it does not stipulate whatsoever that France was going to impose its dominance over the economy. However, taking into consideration the nature of the already existing French protectorates in Africa, it would be conceivable that the German government was indeed alarmed about its economic access to Morocco.

But what was effectively the economic worth of Morocco for Germany? Was the economic value of Morocco high enough to risk war? In fact, taken in numbers, the material worth of Morocco has to be seen as insignificant – it did barely represent 0.1% of Germany foreign trade (Moritz, 1974 : 42).The wealth in mineral resources of Morocco was equally questionable. In contrast to the Mannesmann brothers, not everybody amongst the experts was convinces about the existence of an abundance of minerals in Morocco. Bankers turned a deaf ear when the German government tried to incite them to finance investments in Morocco (Guillen, 1967 : 869). Last but not least, the investments in infrastructure, transport and the like necessary for a profitable

exploitation of Morocco's resources were widely higher than the expected gains. One can therefore doubt the Morocco economically speaking was worth the risk of war.

*The Anglo-French Agreement as symbolic threat hypothesis*

In our first part of the analysis we have analysed German decision-makers self-images on the national as well as on the international scene. In order to find out in what was the Anglo-French agreement of 1904 could have represented a symbolic threat to Germany we confront its symbolic and relational meaning with decision-makers self-images. The central question is to find out in what way they converge or in what way they diverge. What feedback did the Anglo-French negotiations over Morocco send to Germany? On the one side the Anglo-French agreement can be seen as a denial of equal dignity, on the other side it represents more specifically for German decision-makers a denial of a particular identity, a denial of prestige.

*Denial of equal dignity.* In fact, the Anglo-French agreement was not the first occasion France negotiated internationally about its influence in Morocco. It has to be mentioned that in the forerun of the Entente cordiale, as it had bought Italy's interest in Morocco. So, while French decision-makers and particularly Théophile Delcassé, the minister of foreign affairs, thought it was necessary to enter negotiations with Britain, Italy and Spain, he did not feel the need to negotiate with Germany. One can deduce a symbolic meaning that Germany in contrast to other powers was not worth to be asked. Not conferring to German decision-makers the same right of being consulted and to be indemnified for the enlargement of France's influence over Morocco can be seen as representing clearly a denial of equal dignity.

*Denial of a particular identity.* Nevertheless, it is indeed interesting to observe that Germany amongst the many other signatory powers of the Madrid Convention of 1880<sup>15</sup> was the only power that strongly protested. Spain, in fact, only intervened to defend more demandingly its interests in Morocco after having been encouraged by Germany decision-makers to do so. The non-integration of Germany into the talks over Morocco, therefore, is likely to have had a special symbolic meaning for Germany, which went beyond a denial of equal dignity. One can say that it impinged on the political leaders self-images in which Germany represented not only a great power, but even a world power. As such it should have been consulted and compensated, like Great Britain, for the integration of Morocco into the French colonial empire that was on the horizon. Not acting would have signified for German decision-makers accepting the inferior position that the French action symbolically accorded to them.

The dignity and honor motive is constantly reappearing in the diplomatic documents. In the leaders' analysis of the significance of the 1904 Anglo-French agreement the words *honor, dignity*

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<sup>15</sup>In fact, sixteen powers signed the Madrid Accord of 1880.

and *prestige* are omnipresent. Not to be included into the talks was dishonorable for a great power that Germany was. The need to act was perceived by the majority of the decision-makers. Not acting would invite to further ignorance and infringements upon Germany's rights. Nevertheless, the German government refused to be the first to mention the subject Morocco to the French government as this was esteemed a disgrace. Ambassador Radolin in Paris was even instructed to avoid any occasion where the topic could have been brought up. The German government waited for the French government to propose to Germany something similar to its agreement with Spain. In vain.

### **Evaluation:**

Recognition policy: 0

Economic incitement policy: 0

Deterrence policy: 1

Reassurance policy: 0

### *Sequence 2 – Open conflict (January 1905 – July 1, 1905)*

Between January and March 1905 the German government decided to go public with its protests triggering thereby open international tensions and fears. Since December 1904 France had tried to introduce administrative reforms in Morocco, which, however, did not find favour with the cherifien government. January 5 the French foreign minister Delcassé sends a delegation to Fez in order to convince the Sultan to accept a number of reforms. While doing this, the envoy, Saint-René Taillandier, claimed to be acting on behalf of all European states and that he had their mandate. By the end of February the foreign minister Delcassé went even further and demands from the Sultan to hand over to France the control of the Moroccan army, the police and customs. Chancellor Bülow, having expressed towards the Sultan his sympathies for his rejection of these demands, felt the need to act and convinces the reluctant Kaiser<sup>16</sup> to voyage to Tangiers in order to point out publicly the illegality of the reforms that France tried to impose of the Makhzen. Chancellor Bülow called for the summoning of an international conference, as changes in Morocco's status according to the Madrid Declaration of 1880 could only be taken with the consent of all signatory powers. The international reactions are divergent. While the French parliament accuses foreign minister Delcassé of having gravely neglected to integrate Germany into prior talks, the international press aggressively attacks the German government. While the French press accuses Germany of harbouring territorial self-interests and that the legality argumentation would be purely instrumental, the British press reproaches to the German government to have instigated the Moroccan conflict with the only aim of destroying the Entente cordiale. London warns the German government that if France were attacked Britain would

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<sup>16</sup> Emperor Wilhelm II was reluctant to go to Tangiers because he feared that his appearance might be too provocative.

intervene on the French side. On May 16, the German government demands from the French premier Rouvier the dismissal of Delcassé. One week later, on May 28 the Sultan of Morocco invites the signatory powers to an international conference which Germany accepts on June 5. Finally, after the official dismissal of Delcassé on June 6 and France's acceptance of the international conference tensions alleviate.

Two questions need to be asked here. First, why did German decision-makers decide to go public with its complaints? Second, which factors were responsible for first escalating and finally deescalating the crisis within this sequence? If we analyse the mounting and easing of tensions within this part of the crisis we have three different variables to confront with each other: the British military threats which were issued in order to deter Germany; economic incitement by France proposing indirectly the possibility of a bilateral agreement and finally the acceptance of the international conference; and finally symbolic policies sensitive or insensitive to the recognition of equal dignity and prestige.

As already established in the first part of our analysis, German decision-maker felt the need to act, but were waiting for a French overture sensitive to Germany's interests in Morocco that it possessed due to the Madrid Declaration of 1880. The point of time decision-makers chose finally to act follows directly the French attempt to apply it contractually confirmed special right to reform unilaterally Morocco. By the end of 1904 it had indeed become apparent to German decision-makers that France of its own accord would not propose any kind of compensation to Germany. Moreover, French attempts to impose reforms on the cherifian government<sup>17</sup> convinced German decision-makers that France was effectively trying to turn Morocco into a French protectorate. A look in the historical documents shows in fact that when planning the spectacular landing in Morocco and demanding an international conference, German decision-makers thought to have the other signatory powers on its side. It even though that Britain, in order to defend its commercial interests in Morocco, would be supportive of the German move! It was not that the German motive was to demonstrate to France the unreliability of its new partner Britain. It was simply that German decision makers were convinced that other governments would feel the same indignation in the face of French high-handed acting in Morocco. Moreover, the German decision-makers were convinced that in proposing the summoning of an international conference on the grounds of the provision of the Madrid final act of 1880 in order to decide collectively on the reforms to be undertaken in Morocco, France could not refuse without losing publicly its face. They were convinced that the legal provisions of Madrid were naturally perceived by the other powers as legitimate and therefore would indeed be a non-conflictual way to realize their aims.

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<sup>17</sup> For more detailed information see Andrew 1968.

*Policies promising economic reward*

When Delcassé came under fire in France for his careless Morocco policies and was pushed by the French parliament to open talks with Germany in order to settle the dispute with a bilateral agreement, German decision-makers felt too insulted as to accept those hesitantly and indirectly proposed rewards. Moreover having proclaimed publicly to defend German interests in Morocco on the basis of the equality and unanimity principle fixed by the Madrid final act, decision-makers perceived an acceptance of a bilateral preferential treatment as morally and legally unacceptable. Economic incitement had no effect at that moment of time as moral considerations were dominating financial interests.

*Policies of military threat*

Military threats as well did not intimidate German decision-makers and did not make them back down. Quite the contrary, they hardened German leaders will to insist. Nevertheless, military threats at that moment of the crisis were not answered by counter threats. First, because Bülow tried meticulously not to confirm the image of an aggressive Germany that was communicated by the British press; second, decision-makers suspected Britain of planning to set France and Germany against each other in order to play tertius gaudens. In any way, military threats and the risk of war could not be given in, even if it was clear for Germany that it could not win a military confrontation against an Anglo-French alliance. Moreover, decision-makers in Germany agreed that to concede to British threats would only show other powers that German's rights and interests could be spurned and ignored at will as Germany would comply anyway.

*Policies sensitive to symbolic threats*

What made however eased tensions was the dismissal of Minister Delcassé and the French acceptance of the international conference in Morocco.

The French foreign minister had become for German decision-makers like red rag to a bull. Delcassé dismissal came as a relief for German leaders as he was seen as the primary instigator of the exclusive French policy in Morocco and the Kaiser went as far as to make Bülow prince for this achievement. His policy was perceived as disposing of rights that he did not possess any authority about. Even after he was advised by the French Prime Minister to open talks with Germany he only did so reluctantly and without enthusiasm. In fact, he explained that German protests must have been the result of a misunderstanding, as he called it, and that any bilateral or international negotiation was not necessary. He finally ordered other minor representative to make German decision-makers bring up the topic of Morocco by their own in order to discuss the subject; however, this was perceived by German decision makers as contempt. Therefore, his



dismissal was seen as a first step to publicly recognize the French wrong-doing in Morocco and towards Germany, and the acceptance by the French government of the international conference was seen as a further step to recognize the legitimacy of German complaints. The German decision makers explained that they could not make any compromise before the international conference was summoned as it would be seen by the public eye as defeat. After dismissal and acceptance, the German government honestly felt that the crisis could find a peaceful and harmonious end.

**Evaluation:** In this sequence we can see crisis escalation and de-escalation co-varies primarily according to the increase or the decrease of symbolic threats.

Recognition policy: 0

Economic incitement policy: 2

Deterrence policy: 2

Reassurance policy: 1

### *Sequence 3 – Planning the Conference (July 1, 1905 – January 1906)*

While tensions could have cooled down decisively in this phase of the crisis, tensions nevertheless heightened once again. The beginning of this sequence is marked by a growing bifurcation within the crisis, with the Franco-German antagonism on the one side, and the Anglo-German antagonism on the other side. While the Franco-German relations since the French acceptance of the international conference improved, the Anglo-German relations in fact further deteriorated. While France and Germany reached an agreement on September 1905 concerning the program of the conference and the domains for which reforms should be discussed, Britain and Germany were exchanging threats. Already on July 12 an article in *Le Gaulois* referring to Delcassé reported about Anglo-French negotiations regarding a military pact. A further article on October 15, informs that the former Foreign minister claimed that Great Britain had concretely assured France that it would land with 100 000 soldiers in Schleswig-Holstein if Germany attacked France.

#### *Policies of military threat*

Was it the British threats and the balance of power that made Germany make compromise with the program of the international conference and comply to French requests?

Generally, it can be said that British military threats did not lead German decision-makers in believing they were surrounded by the Franco-Anglo-Russian alliance. It was not due to Russians military weakness caused by its war with Japan that it did not represent a threat for Germany, but it was the sentiment of family bond that made Emperor Wilhelm II esteem that the Tsar was his friend. As for the Anglo-French rapprochement: it was still not seen as solid – German decision-

makers and even some French members of government suspected Britain to have a hidden agenda and hoped to benefit from the Franco-German dispute. The Emperor was not willing « Wegen Morokko England den Gefallen zu tun, das Odium eines Angriffs gegen Frankreich auf uns zu nehmen, damit es die endlich ersehnte Gelegenheit hat unter dem schönsten Gewande 'Unterstützung des überfallenen Schwachen' über uns herzufallen » (Moritz, 1974:113).

On the whole, by the end of the year 1905, all evaluations by the army or the navy indicate that the situation was strategically inappropriate for war. Wilhelm II in his new year's letter to Bülow underlines that 1906 would be « besonders ungünstig für die Führung eines Krieges (...) und zwar wegen der Umbewaffnung der Artillerie und Infanterie » and other deficient facilities necessary to secure the border. The Emperor declared : « Somit befinden wir uns militärtechnisch nicht in einem Stadium, in welchem ich als oberster Kriegsherr einwilligen würde ohne weiteres meine Armee leichten Herzens einzusetzen » (Moritz, 1974:90). Admiral Tirpitz, for his part, estimated that a war at that moment of time would represent the most severe test for the German nation since the Thirty Years' War, as foreign trade and imports would be stopped.

These estimations nevertheless did not deter German decision-makers to enter into serious diplomatic dispute with Great Britain after Delcassés revelations of October 15. The Kaiser was so enraged that we wanted to recall his ambassador in London and demanded for an official British official denial of those military provisions. Chancellor Bülow, who until now had tried to calm the German press, now started some kind of press war. The Emperors language became militaristic as can be shown at the inauguration of the Molke-monument on October 26 : « Wie es in der Welt steht mit uns, haben die Herren gesehen. Darum das Pulver trocken, das Schwert geschliffen, das Ziel erkannt, die Kräfte gespannt und die Schwarzseher verbannt! ».

#### *Policies sensitive to symbolic threats*

Moreover, we can say that Germany was not looking for war. They send the Emperor to Tangiers to make clear their standpoint and because they felt that German demands were completely understandable to the other signatory powers. Put simply, the German government did not anticipate that crisis would escalate to such a degree. The more the British press attacked the German government over its supposed hidden maleficent agenda, the more the German government estimated it necessary to resist to pressure. They were only willing to make compromise as French Prime minister Maurice Rouvier showed respect to Germany by proposing to find an accord that would end the crisis with « ni vainqueurs ni vaincus » that would not only please all parties but also permit France and Germany equally to save face.

The demanded international conference therefore was of great importance for German leaders and they did everything they could to assure that it would take place. Topics on which no agreement could be reached were left out of the program and only a general subject was retained

and to be decided upon at the conference. The most important thing at that moment of the crisis was for German decision makers that the content of the program would be conform to the basic line of argumentation which the German government had repeated all over again since the beginning of the crisis: that it was up to the decision off all signatory powers together to decide about the destiny of Morocco. Therefore, a program that already contained the seeds of a future French dominance was unacceptable. What is interesting, however, is, that in private discussions German diplomats did not exclude to hand over Morocco entirely to France. But this had to be done in the future, when the Moroccan affair would be forgotten and French-German relations improved so that German this major concession would be appreciated as a gift of friendship and not as something given due to international and British pressure. The public image was so important that when the French press started presenting Germany as the inferior and disgraced the chancellor even threatened to breakup negotiations altogether. In contrast, the moment the French government managed to calm the press, negotiations continued more smoothly. The moment the program for the conference was accepted by all powers Bülow and the Kaiser estimated the chances that a war might result were very low.

**Evaluation:** We can observe that German decision-makers calmed in reaction to policies that permitted to save its face and radicalized towards actors that threatened it symbolically, and materially. Although the conference could have been motivated by decision-makers hope for economic reward, one has to bear in mind that the German government already planned to hand over Morocco to France in the future. This relativizes the financial aspect of the conference and underlines its symbolic component.

Recognition policy: 1

Economic incitement policy: 1

Deterrence policy: 3

Reassurance policy: 0

#### *Sequence 4 – At the conference (January 16, 1906–April 1906)*

When the conference opened in January the German government was confident that a solution to the Moroccan issue could be found. Negotiations nevertheless started to be held up concerning the topics of the reform of the police and the state bank that was to be created. France insisted that it should be accorded particular rights in both domains due its special interests in North Africa and the proximity to Algeria what the German government denies. Nevertheless, the German delegation finally make important concessions to France who gains control together with Spain about important parts of the policing sector and the bank capital stock. Although both should be supervised by international committees, the latter were left with only small leverage.

*Policies promising economic reward*

In fact, the French government tried already before the official opening of the international conference to make a deal with Germany, proposing territorial and commercial rewards in exchange for its compliance. Rouvier proposed to create at the conference an interim arrangement at the end of which France could be accorded more responsibilities over Morocco. The minister even promised in exchange for the general mandate over the police not only that German economic interests in Morocco would be guaranteed, but was willing indemnify with territories in the Congo. The German government nevertheless declined the offer, as this was in complete contradiction with the idea to decide collectively over Morocco. And this could only be done at the conference with the consent of all participating powers. During the conference the French representative at numerous occasions proposed to Germany extensive guarantees for its financial and commercial rights in Morocco but these propositions were turned down by German decision-makers as they came with the cost of accepting a stronger and unequal influence of France in Morocco's banking and police sector. The final accord that was found by the signatory powers surely cannot be seen as great economic success either, although Germany was accorded parts of the capital stock of the newly created Moroccan state bank.

*Policies of military threat*

By the beginning of 1906 fear of a German attack had taken hold within the population of France and Britain and was seen as imminent. The French government even planned to draft a part of the reservists near Metz in order to rehearse for the case of an emergency and calm public fears. Nevertheless, German decision-makers refused to give in. They would rather have the conference fail altogether than submit to international threats.

When in January the government in London was replaced by a supposed more German-friendly one, Bülow was relieved : « nun glaube ich bestimmt, das sein Einvernehmen zustande kommen kann ». In February however the new British government shows incomprehension to Germany's continuing resistance concerning the reform of the police and the bank. Grey threatened that under these conditions an Anglo-German rapprochement would be impossible. Metternich provocatively replied that the price Britain asked for his friendship was be too high if this meant that French rights were more important than German rights. As long as the British governments and especially the British public opinion « agitated » against Germany no compromise could be found. Without the permanent meddling of Britain, German decision-makers were convinced, negotiations would go rather smoothly.

*Policies sensitive to symbolic threats*

What drives the German government during the whole deliberation at the conference is the motivation to find an accord in which no power should acquire a predominant position in Morocco (neither financially, nor administratively) and which would permit Germany an honourable exit from the crisis. At no point in time the German government tries to gain exclusive rights or privileges in Morocco. However, it tries to question the self-proclaimed privileged position of France in Morocco. For German decision-makers France's pretention to have an automatic or natural right to dominate Morocco has no legal or moral basis. It therefore was hard to convince to compromise. Nevertheless, as public pressure was mounting, the international press was demonizing Germany as hostile power, and even the other conference participants lost their last sympathy for the continuing German objections on the Moroccan reform proposition, German decision-makers could do nothing more than accept. Caught between the need to compromise in order to bring the conference to a positive end, the will not to be perceived as loser and troublemaker in the end, the German government made considerable concessions to France. While it prevented France from imposing reform unilaterally, this came at a price Germany had not foreseen: international recognition and prestige.

**Evaluation:** The last sequence of the crisis shows that moral isolation by the other international powers did leave Germany no way out than to retreat, as it was not prepared to risk an open conflict. As Germany's rights were economically speaking secured, the German leaders had no real legitimacy to take other coercive steps – and the more because the other participating powers did not see any inconvenient with the result.

Recognition policy: 1

Economic incitement policy: 2

Deterrence policy: 2

Reassurance policy: 1

**Concluding remarks**

Our sequential analysis has shown, that material gain was not the primary motive that pushed Germany to trigger crisis. Rather, our indicators hint that it was primarily the indignation that German decision-makers felt when they were not integrated into the renegotiation of the status of Morocco, like it was done with Britain, Italy or Spain, that made them act. The neglect to include Germany into the negotiations contradicted German decision-makers self-images to be a great world power. The German government intervened to impose its say, convinced that its objections were understood by the other powers concerned as their argumentation was backed by the legal provisions of the Madrid agreement of 1880. However, the objections of the German government were not understood. The more the German government was threatened or

presented as a trouble maker the more it insisted on its position. On the one hand, symbolic vulnerability made German decision makers insensitive to physical threat. On the other hand, the more it was treated with respect and seriousness the more peaceful the negotiations developed, though Germany did not lower its requests. Germany's giving in in the end was due to its incapability to achieve its aims peacefully and the fact that its international esteem had substantially suffered.

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