

The Anglo-French Rapprochement and the Question of Morocco: an Uneasy Way to the Entente Cordiale, 1898–1904

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Through the signature of the Entente Cordiale, France and Great Britain settled their colonial disputes in non-European territories and started the cooperation. The entente became a milestone towards the birth of the alliances, which later clashed in the First World War. Based mainly on the non-published documents, this contribution tries to analyze the motives that permitted the Anglo-French rapprochement from 1898–1904. Attention is paid to the influences of the world diplomacy on the development of the negotiations. Furthermore, this article deals with the Moroccan points of contention between France and Great Britain, which together with the Egyptian question, were of crucial and strategic importance for the development of the Anglo-French relations.

[Entente Cordiale; Anglo-French relations 1898–1904; Morocco; Lord Lansdowne; Paul Cambon]

Introduction

In April 1904, nearly a diplomatic revolution took place when the eternal enemies, Great Britain and France, finally came to terms and throughout settlement of their mutual difficulties in extra-European areas concluded alliance, which had far reaching effects upon the later world diplomacy. However, the origins of the Anglo-French rapprochement and final understanding must be seen farther than in spring of 1904, but as soon as in 1898.

When Théophile Delcassé succeeded Gabriel Hanotaux at the post of the French Foreign Minister in June 1898, his vision was to improve the French diplomatic position. He was reported to have said: “*I do*

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not wish to leave this desk without having restored the good understanding with England.”¹ He was in between two millstones since his genuine desire was to make the Anglo-French rapprochement come true but on the other hand he was sincerely devoted to the cause of ending the British occupation of Egypt.² In the autumn of 1898 the Anglo-French relations became tight because of the existing struggle for the Upper Nile basin. Jean-Baptiste Marchand led an expedition from the French Congo to the Upper Nile and hoped that the French presence in the area would force the British to reopen the Egyptian question. Marchand reached Fashoda on July 10, 1898 and hoisted there the Tricolour. The British mission for the re-conquest of Sudan, controlled by religious fanatic Khalifa, disciple of Mahdi, had already begun by that time. On September 2, 1898 the Mahdists were defeated in the battle of Omdurman by Anglo-Egyptian army led by Horatio Herbert Kitchener and the British forces then continued south in the direction towards the confluence of Sobat and White Nile, to Fashoda.

On September 7, 1898 Delcassé met Edmund Monson, British Ambassador in London, and since he had already received news of the victorious battle of Omdurman, he was worried and told British Ambassador that Captain Marchand had received “*the clearest instructions as to his position and attitude*” and that “*he had been distinctly told that he is nothing but an emissary of civilisation*” and emphasized, that “*all outstanding differences between the two countries might be amicably arranged by the exercise of patience and conciliation*”.³ Monson then wrote to Salisbury that Delcassé’s moderate tone and very cordial manner inspired him to believe that Frenchmen will discuss the question again with calmness.⁴ Delcassé knew, that France could not go to war, and as soon as Great Britain pointed out that she is not willing to share the influence upon Upper Nile Basin with any other European country,

¹ J. M. GOUDSWAARD, *Some Aspects of the End of Britain’s “Splendid Isolation”, 1898–1904*, Rotterdam 1952, p. 96.

² C. ANDREW, “France and the Making of the Entente Cordiale”, in: *The Historical Journal*, 10, 1, 1967, p. 93.

³ Monson to Salisbury, Paris, September 8, 1898, in: G. P. GOOCH – H. W. V. TEMPERLEY (eds.), *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898–1914. The End of British Isolation*, Vol. 1, London 1927 (hereafter BD 1), Doc. No. 188, p. 163.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

he knew that diplomacy would be the only way out of the precarious situation.⁵

When the French expedition of Captain Jean-Baptiste Marchand finally encountered the expedition of Herbert Horatio Kitchener on September 19, Fashoda became nearly a nightmare for Quai d'Orsay. Delcassé was afraid that Kitchener's encounter with Marchand might end in blows and provoke a European conflict. He tried to reduce the possible harm by denying existence of Marchand's mission itself and pointing out that "*Marchand was but a one of the subordinates of Liotard*" whose mission started in 1892/1893, so already two years before Edward Grey's speech, by which Great Britain claimed the whole area of the Upper Nile Basin and stated that any incursion would be considered an unfriendly act.⁶

After receiving news of the encounter at Fashoda on September 26 Delcassé realized that Marchand and Kitchener exchanged just formal protests and drank a bottle of champagne and such information was a load off his mind. He wrote to his wife: "*I can at least congratulate myself for having taken the first step a month ago [on September 7] in opening negotiations and having thus perhaps prevented bloodshed.*"⁷ He knew that the Nile valley was not worth of a large-scale war, but he did not want to abandon Fashoda without discussion. According to Charles Porter, he should have told captain Baratier on October 27, 1898: "*You cannot desire a hostility of such a powerful state as England when we are still bleeding on our eastern frontier.*"⁸ It was no surprise that Delcassé was hoping to find such a way out of the crisis that would save the face of France. But regrettably, Great Britain did not offer such a way. According to Christopher Andrew: "*Delcassé firstly wanted to use interpellations on the Fashoda crisis as an opportunity to address the Chamber on Marchand's withdrawal, but on November 4 he finally changed his mind and told the Chamber that the national interest demanded that he stay silent.*"⁹ Delcassé finally agreed to withdraw from Fashoda, but even though

⁵ J. J. MATHEWS, *Egypt and the Formation of the Anglo-French Entente of 1904*, London 1939, p. 19; A. J. P. TAYLOR, *Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848–1918*, Oxford 1954, p. 381.

⁶ Monson to Salisbury, Paris, September 19, 1898. BD 1, Doc. No. 192, p. 166.

⁷ C. M. ANDREW, *Théophile Delcassé and the Making of Entente Cordiale. A Reappraisal of French Foreign Policy 1898–1905*, London 1968, p. 92.

⁸ C. W. PORTER, *The Career of Théophile Delcassé*, Philadelphia 1936, p. 130.

⁹ ANDREW, *Théophile Delcassé...*, p. 102.

the crisis was settled quickly, Fashoda left deep scratches in the face of the French national pride.¹⁰

Throughout the year of 1898 the core of the French *parti colonial*¹¹ realized that without any French foothold in the Basin of the Upper Nile not only would they not be able to reopen the Egyptian question but neither get support of any other country. Eugène Étienne and Paul-Anthelme Bourde¹² therefore considered for the first time the idea of territorial compensation. The birth of the idea of the Anglo-French barter lies in autumn of 1898, when the Bulletin of the *Comité de l'Afrique Française* declared for the first time French “readiness to accept Egypt as English in return for compensation in Morocco”. However, Delcassé was not ready to take it as a solid base for the French policy yet.¹³

There were three men whose influence upon Théophile Delcassé was significant. These gentlemen were Étienne, Bourde and Paul Cambon, who was a close friend of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Pierre Paul Cambon had a law degree from Oxford, Cambridge and Edinburgh Universities and he later started his diplomatic career by becoming the French minister plenipotentiary at Tunis. A prelude to the Anglo-French rapprochement was a change at the post of ambassador at the Albert Gate House, the seat of the French Embassy in London. When the Fashoda crisis was culminating, Delcassé suggested to the British Government that Paul Cambon should replace baron de Courcel in London. By that time, Cambon was already well known as an Anglophile and according to Monson “he was the best man that could be [sic] chosen”.¹⁴ Delcassé was well aware of Cambon’s exceptional diplomatic qualities and negotiation skills and therefore

¹⁰ P. M. H. BELL, *France and Britain, 1900–1940. Entente and Estrangement*, 2nd Ed., London 2014, pp. 19–20.

¹¹ Delcassé was one of the founders of *parti colonial*, colonial group which existed in the French Chamber and whose purpose was to carry the ideas of colonialism through. For further reference see: C. ANDREW – A. S. KANYA-FORSTNER, “The French Colonial Party. It’s Composition, Aims and Influence, 1885–1914”, in: *The Historical Journal*, 14, 1, 1971, pp. 99–128.

¹² Both Étienne and Bourde had large influence upon Théophile Delcassé. Bourde, who was Delcassé’s close friend, was believed to be his right hand and the soul and the brain of the whole French colonial movement.

¹³ ANDREW, “France and the Making of the Entente Cordiale”, p. 91.

¹⁴ ANDREW, *Théophile Delcassé...*, p. 113.

he emphasized that “the French republic is [...] choosing an ambassador notoriously most friendly and inspired with the best disposition towards England”.¹⁵ Queen Victoria’s approval came by a letter by Edmund Monson, British Ambassador in Paris, on September 19, 1898 and the path to the Anglo-French entente could hereby begin.

Shortly after his arrival to London, Cambon reported to Delcassé about tight atmosphere and hoped he would not become the second Benedetti.¹⁶ His instruction was to dissipate the persistent points at issue in between of France and Britain.¹⁷ In December 1898 Cambon told his guests at the reception for the French colony that “the interests of France and England are not incompatible and they ought always to be in accord with those of civilisation and progress”.¹⁸ Monson wrote privately to lord Salisbury that he did not know why France expected that Cambon would be able to plunge into the most serious negotiations with the Prime Minister and he was persuaded that such was the hope of both Quai d’Orsay and Élysée Palace.¹⁹ When it was finally publicly announced that Fashoda had been evacuated on January 11, 1899, Cambon tried to approach Salisbury and discuss the question of the area of Bahr al Ghazal, where Fashoda was located. Salisbury refused any other than commercial outlet to be allowed and Cambon shortly came back with an idea of demarcation line which Salisbury admitted to be a possible basis for the settlement. Cambon tried to bring up the question of Newfoundland fisheries rights, but Salisbury did not take up the bait and said that the problem has been discussed for sixty years already and could continue for a long time.²⁰

The negotiations of the fate of Bahr al Ghazal continued throughout January and February of 1899. The Anglo-French treaty was finally

¹⁵ K. EUBANK, *Paul Cambon: Master Diplomatist*, Westport 1978, p. 62.

¹⁶ H. CAMBON (ed.), *Paul Cambon, ambassadeur de France (1843–1924) par un diplomate* (hereafter CAMBON), Paris 1937, p. 173.

¹⁷ ANDREW, “France and the Making of the Entente Cordiale”, p. 94. According to W. L. Langer Cambon accepted the post of French Ambassador to London on condition that efforts will be made in the direction of coming to some general agreement in between of France and the Great Britain. See W. L. LANGER, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890–1902*, New York 1951, p. 566.

¹⁸ EUBANK, p. 65.

¹⁹ ANDREW, *Théophile Delcassé...*, p. 113.

²⁰ Delcassé to Cambon, Paris, January 14, 1899, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Paris (hereafter MAE), Papiers d’agents, Paul Cambon papers (hereafter PA, Cambon), 78, f. 091.

signed in London on March 21, 1899 and the spheres of influence in the Congo-Nil watershed were determined as follows: the whole Egyptian Sudan and the part of the Libyan dessert adjacent to the western part of Egypt passed under the control of Great Britain while France gained the area between Darfur and Lake Chad.²¹ As soon as the treaty was signed, Delcassé was persuaded that a settlement of the other mutual colonial disputes will follow shortly.²² Cambon tried to approach lord Salisbury before the summer of 1899, but the talks on Madagascar, Newfoundland, Muscat and Shanghai had failed before any real negotiations could have started. Salisbury actually believed that nothing more than a status of mutual apathetic tolerance could exist in the relations of Great Britain and France.²³

Due to the Boer War, which burst out during the fall of 1899, the mutual relationships worsened again. Paul Cambon reported “*prevailing Francophobe sentiments of the British society*” and his apprehension that “*once British deal with the Transvaal issue, they will have time to look for a dispute directed against us*”.²⁴ In a letter to D’Estournelles de Constant at the end of October 1899 Paul Cambon confessed, that he was asked from all sides why France did not seek any discord with England while she was busy in Transvaal.²⁵ He begged Delcassé to quiete the French press which actually referred to London as to “*an eternal enemy*”, while on the other side of the Channel, the British press ostentatiously refused to leave the topic of the Dreyfus Affair.²⁶ According to Christopher Andrew “*the mutual hostility of both sides of the Channel became with the beginning of the Boer War even greater than during a Fashoda Crisis a year before*”.²⁷ In a letter to D’Estournelles de Constant, Paul Cambon confessed: “*There is an abyss in between of what the English say and what they really do, in between of what they believe in and what the reality is. It is necessary not only to be aware of this but to act accordingly.*”²⁸

²¹ EUBANK, p. 66.

²² ANDREW, “France and the Making of the Entente Cordiale”, p. 94.

²³ Ibidem.

²⁴ Cambon to Delcassé, London, November 11, 1899. Documents diplomatiques français (hereafter DDF), 1st series, Vol. XV, Paris 1959, Doc. No. 297, p. 514.

²⁵ CAMBON, p. 30.

²⁶ MATHEWS, p. 16; P. GUILLEN, “The Entente of 1904 as a Colonial Settlement”, in: P. GIFFORD – W. R. LOUIS (eds.), *France and Britain in Africa. Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule*, London 1971, p. 334.

²⁷ ANDREW, “France and the Making of the Entente Cordiale”, p. 94.

The situation at the close of 1899 was according to Daily Mail such as follows: "The French successfully persuaded John Bull about being his eternal enemies [...]. Nothing like Entente Cordiale could exist between Great Britain and her nearest neighbour."²⁹ Even Cambon expressed his worries in a letter to his mother on November 28, 1899: "Delcassé's discourse will luckily bring 'une détente' because we have been marching to the war" and later on December 10 he expressed his disillusionment about the atmosphere in the French Chamber: "I am terrified by foolishness of our deputies. It's been 8 days since Delcassé gave a speech for which he received much praise and ovation. Etienne said the exact opposite but ended with the same ovation and praise. Lockroy declares that a war with England is inevitable."³⁰

Paul Cambon wrote to Delcassé on December 12, 1899 that according to some indications he received from several sources Foreign Office would appreciate to come to more relaxed relations with France, and such was the British public opinion, even though the indications were still vague. Cambon was persuaded that British, who suffered succession of failures in South Africa, would appreciate the return of the French sympathies.³¹ However, the question remains whether the wish was not the father to the thought.

Another affair which brought mutual relations to a boiling point was the one of French caricaturist Lucien Léandre who offended Queen Victoria by displaying British Secretary of State for the Colonies Chamberlain hiding behind her skirts. The Queen has seen the caricatures personally and the fact that Léandre was decorated with the Legion of Honour by the Minister of Fine Arts was taken by her as an insult. She even privately urged that British Ambassador Monson should be recalled from Paris. Monson left the French metropolis, and he moved less ostentatiously to Cannes. There was a large campaign in the French press making fun of the Queen and criticizing the current French Government.³² French journal *Gaulois* referred to this in-

²⁸ P. CAMBON, *Correspondance 1870–1924*, Tome II, Paris 1940, p. 29.

²⁹ G. MARTINEAU, *L'Entente Cordiale*, Paris 1984, p. 78.

³⁰ CAMBON, *Correspondance 1870–1924*, p. 31.

³¹ Cambon to Delcassé, December 12, 1899. MAE, Nouvelle série (1896–1918, hereafter NS), Grande Bretagne, 12, f. 121.

³² *Ibidem*.

cident as to a “*revenge for Fashoda*”³³ while *Écho de Paris* ribbed Sir Edmund Monson for taking a French leave and criticized Théophile Delcassé for being a boot licker of the British Government.³⁴ *La Patrie* described Delcassé in the same way, as a person who has no equal concerning apologizing to British and demeaning French diplomacy.³⁵

On 21 March 1900 Cambon informed Delcassé about the campaign the British press pursued against Germany and he expressed his hopes that such a campaign would lead to persuasion that any conflict between France and Great Britain would help no one but the interests of Germany.³⁶ Just one day later he wrote to his brother Jules, French Ambassador to Madrid at that time, that he met Lord Salisbury the day before and he was sure that détente was coming but we should not be too optimistic in France, because the impression caused by the Léandre affair was not dispelled yet.³⁷ The same day Delcassé received a letter by Edmund Monson in which he thanked him for punishing the offenders and for suggesting the Minister of Public Instruction (the same gentleman who decorated caricaturist Léandre) the inconvenient results which may arise from the delivery of lectures at this moment upon South African questions.³⁸ The change in the English public opinion and the relief in the Anglo-French relations were finally perceptible. According to Paul Cambon, such a change in the English public opinion was caused by three principal causes: (1) Britain was exhausted by the ongoing Boer war which was very expensive and could not see any profit in the possibility of running a new conflict; (2) the British politicians realized that any conflict between London and Paris would help only to the interests of Germany; and (3) the French decided to effect a defensive and fortification works in their ports and colonies.³⁹

The mutual rapprochement was supported at the end of March during the banquet organized in London by municipal corporations. The mayors of the important cities were invited to attend this event as well

³³ *Le Gaulois*, February 17, 1900. MAE, NS, Grande Bretagne 12, f. 147.

³⁴ *L'Écho de Paris*, February 6, 1900. MAE, NS, Grande Bretagne 12, f. 143.

³⁵ *La Patrie*, February 6, 1900. MAE, NS, Grande Bretagne 12, f. 142.

³⁶ Cambon to Delcassé, March 21, 1900. MAE, NS, Grande Bretagne 12, f. 217.

³⁷ CAMBON, *Correspondance 1870–1924*, p. 41.

³⁸ Monson to Delcassé, March 22, 1900. MAE, NS, Grande Bretagne 12, f. 220.

³⁹ Cambon to Delcassé, April 5, 1900. MAE, NS, Grande Bretagne 12, ff. 241–245.

as number of politicians and some members of British Government. Baron Estournelles de Constant attended the event too and he used this opportunity to give a speech on the Anglo-French relations, for which he received an applause and praise. He stated that there can never be complete peace between two nations whose interests are colliding in so many parts of the world, but he insisted on the necessity of living in harmony without any hostilities.⁴⁰

In the meantime Delcassé had changed his priorities – he postponed his hopes for understanding with Great Britain in near future and he decided to pursue another matter instead. He believed that British engagement in South Africa would allow France to resolve the questions of Egypt and Morocco. But instead of settling those questions jointly and by agreement with London, he decided to take them apart and solve them without the prior agreement of London.⁴¹ Delcassé's plan was to divide Morocco between France and Spain and not earlier than in 1903 he was ready to modify this plan and to offer British anything more but commercial freedom and neutralisation of the Strait of Gibraltar.⁴²

By March 1900 Delcassé realized that he will not be able to end the British occupation in Egypt and this moment was crucial for the origins of the Entente Cordiale since there was an essential step towards Delcassé's eventual conversion to the idea of Morocco-Egypt barter.⁴³ Since 1899, Cambon had given the French foreign minister pieces of advice and exact recommendations, particularly on the subject of the Moroccan question and of Anglo-French relations. In the previously mentioned subjects they usually had opposite opinions. In the Moroccan question Delcassé adhered, according to Cambon, too much upon the *status quo*. Therefore the French ambassador to London persuaded him that it was necessary to open the debate with England on that subject.⁴⁴

British were in a difficult position at the turn of the century. The Boer war produced diplomatic weakness and they had to face French in Morocco and Russians in Persia and Afghanistan. Great Britain had

⁴⁰ Ibidem.

⁴¹ ANDREW, "France and the Making of the Entente Cordiale", p. 95.

⁴² Ibidem, p. 99.

⁴³ Ibidem.

⁴⁴ C. GEOFFROY, *Les Coulisses de l'Entente Cordiale*, Paris 2004, pp. 236–237.

never before been confronted with such intensive competition in every part of the world.⁴⁵ This war together with other circumstances led the British to the idea that the time has come to leave the policy of splendid isolation. In November 1900 the change of the balance of forces in the British Cabinet allowed pro-German section to open the way for an experiment in foreign policy. Lord Lansdowne, new Foreign Secretary, was involved in the negotiations with Germany throughout the 1901, but the attempt to conclude any Anglo-German alliance failed.⁴⁶

Paul Cambon, apart from Delcassé, decided that the time has come to raise the interest of the British Government for the settlement of Moroccan question and he tried to pursue this in March 1901 on his own. Cambon called upon Lord Lansdowne, who replaced Lord Salisbury as the British Foreign Secretary, and he tried to get him involved in the idea of exchanging French position in Morocco in return for French claims in New Foundland.⁴⁷ Edmund Monson was surprised by Cambon's proposal: "*Cambon has reputation of being keenly ambitious, but his suggestion of obtaining compensations on the Moroccan frontier for a French abandonment of Treaty Rights in Newfoundland seems to my limited intelligence [...] and unpractical so much so that I cannot but think that so clever a man as he is could only have been thinking of eliciting an expression of opinion as to the length, to which his country may go in that region without hindrance or protest of England.*"⁴⁸

While Joseph Chamberlain, Secretary of State for Colonies, was willing to discuss the issue further, Lansdowne was not ready to consider that matter yet. Regarding Morocco, Chamberlain reminded Lansdowne: "*[I]f we are to discuss such a large question as Morocco, please bear in mind that the Germans will have something to say – and both they and we will want compensation.*"⁴⁹ Cambon approached Lansdowne again

⁴⁵ G. MONGER, *The End of Isolation. British Foreign Policy 1900–1907*, London 1963, p. 13.

⁴⁶ For further details see A. LAJEUNESSE, "The Anglo-German Alliance Talks and the Failure of Amateur Diplomacy", in: *Past Imperfect*, 13, 2007, pp. 84–107.

⁴⁷ ANDREW, *Théophile Delcassé...*, p. 206; Monson to Lansdowne, March 22, 1901. The National Archives, London, Kew (hereafter TNA), FO 800/125, f. 83. According to George Monger, Cambon proposed to Lansdowne on 6 March 1901, that New Foundland fishery privileges could be surrendered in exchange for a territory in the Gambia. See MONGER, p. 39.

⁴⁸ Monson to Lansdowne, March 22, 1901. TNA, FO 800/125, f. 83.

⁴⁹ MONGER, p. 39.

in June 1901 and during the conversation he mentioned that “*the compensation for the loss of Treaty Shore Rights in Newfoundland being possibly to be sought for in the granting of a free hand to France in the dealing with Morocco*”.⁵⁰ Lansdowne was actually convinced of the necessity of keeping *status quo* in the Moroccan question and he was not ready to change his mind about this issue, at least not till the end of 1903.

Morocco was of a strategic importance to Great Britain because of the Strait of Gibraltar and because of the trade, as she controlled more than 50 per cent of Moroccan trade. The sultanate dominated the western portion of the Mediterranean Sea. The French, who were in possession of neighbouring Algeria, occupied oasis Tuat in 1899 and then since 1902 tried to penetrate to Mauritania. The frontier between French Algiers and Morocco stayed undefined.⁵¹ Young sultan Abdelaziz invited many European counsellors in order to modernize the country and such a request represented an ideal opportunity for Great Britain that was willing to increase its influence in the country.⁵² Therefore many British financial and technical experts were heading towards Morocco. Among them, Harry Maclean, known as *kaid*, military instructor and former non-commissioned officer in the British army, who worked his way up to become Sultan’s private advisor. Another important Englishman was Sir Arthur Nicolson, British Minister at Tangiers who pressed for firm action against the French. He reported that “*Sultan had decided upon an extensive scheme of reforms and had asked for a British loan to carry them out*”.⁵³ He believed that Britain must either get the reforms through or she must be ready to give up Morocco in favour of France and therefore pressed for cooperation with Germany in order to support Sultan.

On June 22, 1901 Moroccan Minister of War, Menebhi, who was well known to be an ardent Anglophile, arrived to London accompanied by Nicolson.⁵⁴ The British were careful not to make any promises and

⁵⁰ Monson to Lansdowne, June 28, 1901. TNA, FO 800/125, f. 101.

⁵¹ E. GOMBÁR, *Moderní dějiny islámských zemí*, Praha 1999, p. 351.

⁵² Nicolson to Lansdowne, April 1, 1901. TNA, FO 800/135, ff. 13–14.

⁵³ MONGER, p. 40.

⁵⁴ Originally, Sultan himself wanted to visit London in person, but Lansdowne dismissed this idea as such a visit would not be opportune and suggested that a visit of the Minister of War would be less objectionable. Lansdowne to Nicolson, March 20, 1901. TNA, FO 800/135, f. 8.

Moroccan envoy departed to Berlin “*virtually empty handed*”.⁵⁵ During his visit in Berlin, the German Minister at Tangiers Mentzingen criticized French plans in Morocco and declared that “*the Kaiser was even ready to go to war to thwart them*”.⁵⁶ Lansdowne was persuaded that reports on the French activity in Morocco were exaggerated and after Cambon’s assurances the British did not want to believe that France was considering any forward action in Morocco.⁵⁷ When a serious crisis burst out at the end of July 1901, Lansdowne could see that since he would not come to terms with France, his only possibility was to turn to Germany. However, Morocco was a question of far greater importance to Britain than to Germany, and therefore Lansdowne was lucky that no further crisis flamed up until the end of 1902.⁵⁸

Throughout 1901 Cambon tried to broach other points at issue as well. In July 1901 he renewed his proposal for renouncement of the French Shore fishery rights in Newfoundland in return for compensation elsewhere and Lansdowne referred to Chamberlain as follows: “*I don’t see why a settlement should be unattainable – I wish they would ask for a bit of hinterland somewhere or other.*”⁵⁹ On 31 March 1901 Lansdowne opened a discussion, which finally ended at a deadlock due to Cambon’s ostentatious claim for Gambia territory compensation. Lansdowne rejected that on the ground that “*it would give rise to further demands on each side for concessions and counter concessions, demands which, in my opinion, would probably destroy all hopes of an arrangement*”, but he offered that he would be ready to discuss a compensation elsewhere but Gambia. Cambon did not take up the bait and because Lansdowne remained silent, the negotiations ended.⁶⁰

In Siam the British and French were at odds because of the spheres of influence. By the end of 1901, London received alarming reports that other Powers might be trying to penetrate into the Malay States while using the Siamese suzerainty. The Colonial Office was pressing

⁵⁵ Sultan planned that his emissary would visit London, Paris, Berlin and St. Petersburg, but French agent informed him that neither Paris nor St. Petersburg would accept a mission which previously went to London and Berlin. Nicolson to Lansdowne, TNA, FO 800/135, f. 27.

⁵⁶ MONGER, p. 41.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 42.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 44.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*.

the Foreign Office hard to assert British rights there. In October Lansdowne expressed his worries about Germany possibly interfering in Siamese affairs: *"Her interests are different from ours and she has a habit of securing her pound of flesh whenever she confers or makes belief to confer a favour. In this case I should be afraid of her cutting the pound of our joint. She has lately been hoping to squeeze out British employees of the Siamese Government and she is sure to seek privileges or preferences of some sort at our expense."*⁶¹

Lansdowne preferred to negotiate with Siam directly instead of trying to come to terms with France, but the negotiations with Siamese ended at a deadlock by July. Later in August he realized that he would need to find other way instead of relying on Siamese only. Germans were interested in a coaling station and Russia was possibly interested in the area too. Lansdowne therefore proposed that a decisive unilateral action should be taken in order to defend British interests in the Malay Peninsula. Chamberlain had presented the idea to lord Balfour and new Prime Minister *"agreed that French influence in Mekong can do us no harm"*.⁶²

The year of 1902 brought a decisive change into Franco-British relations. By that time Paul Cambon argued that the solution to the Franco-British disputes laid in the Moroccan-Egyptian exchange, which would address a reciprocal recognition of interests and swapping of rights and advantages they enjoyed in those countries. At the beginning of 1902, Lord Lansdowne wrote to Monson: *"The attitude of the French Government towards the Morocco question appears to have undergone a remarkable change."*⁶³ When Cambon met Lansdowne after lord Salisbury's retirement in July 1902, French diplomat suggested possible settlement of Moroccan issue – he proposed that Britain could secure the neutralisation of Tangiers in return for unspecified concessions in the hinterland to be done in favour of France. Cambon stated: *"Our interest in Morocco is Tangiers. Europe cannot let us establish there and we cannot let any Power to do the same. Why don't we neutralize Tangiers?"*⁶⁴ Later on he went further and on July 30 he added that France

⁶¹ Lansdowne to Monson, October 13, 1901. TNA, FO 800/125, f. 113.

⁶² MONGER, p. 78.

⁶³ Lansdowne to Monson, January 2, 1902. TNA, FO 800/125, f. 125.

⁶⁴ Cambon to Delcassé, July 23, 1902. MAE, PA, Cambon, 78, ff. 111–112.

and Britain could come to terms in Siam too.⁶⁵ Lansdowne assured Cambon he was aware of special interests of France in the area along the Moroccan-Algerian frontier, where political unrest occurred.⁶⁶ The British were “*persistently discouraging Sultan from any extravagant enterprises as well as from any action calculated to embroil him with his French neighbours*”.⁶⁷

Because of the reports of Saint-René Taillandier, new French Minister in Tangiers, Cambon was very concerned about the activities of British in Morocco, particularly about Maclean, who constituted a battalion of Personal Guard, well equipped and well trained. The British secured a monopoly to supply all military equipment including guns.⁶⁸ Furthermore, the Sultan was considering a loan and he was pressing British, that if they refuse to help him he would turn to France or to Germany. Sultan was considering conceding the telegraph monopoly to British, which aroused temper in France too.⁶⁹ Another source of anxiety was restless Moroccan tribes. Cambon was aware that Moroccan sultan was weak and this made him feel uneasy about the future.⁷⁰ He was equally depressed about the French attitude to the Moroccan question and for that reason he wrote to Delcassé on July 23, 1902: “*For God’s sake, let’s stop complaining and start acting a little bit rationally.*”⁷¹

On August 6, 1902 Paul Cambon and Lord Lansdowne met and had another long and important conversation. French Ambassador had met Delcassé and he was authorized to present definite proposals. He emphasized that France was not dreaming about new acquisitions with regards to her colonial dominion and that “*all that France desired was to ensure the security of what she already possessed*”.⁷² According to Delcassé there were only two points where French position was insecure, Siam and Morocco. In Siam, French and British had signed an agreement in 1896 under which each of them had recognized that

⁶⁵ MONGER, p. 77.

⁶⁶ EUBANK, p. 73.

⁶⁷ Lansdowne to Monson, January 2, 1902. TNA, FO 800/125, f. 125.

⁶⁸ Cambon to Delcassé, July 23, 1902. MAE, PA, Cambon, 78, f. 113.

⁶⁹ Cambon to Delcassé, January 13, 1902. MAE, PA, Cambon, 78, f. 103.

⁷⁰ EUBANK, p. 74.

⁷¹ Cambon to Delcassé, July 23, 1902. MAE, PA, Cambon, 78, f. 113.

⁷² Lansdowne to Monson, August 6, 1902. TNA, FO 800/125, Doc. No. 316A, f. 198.

the other possessed a sphere of influence in the Siamese territory. Concerning Morocco, the French were worried about “*too energetic [British] officers, who might, by the advice which they gave to Sultan, encourage him to adopt a policy which might drive him in conflict with France*”.⁷³ Most importantly, Cambon presented Delcassé’s concerns that “*the two Governments should frankly discuss the action which they might need to take in the event of Morocco’s passing into liquidation*”. He admitted that Spain would have to be reckoned with. Regarding Tangiers, Delcassé suggested that the best solution would be to make it an open and international port.⁷⁴

Lansdowne was reluctant to any premature liquidation of Morocco, as he feared a possibility of further complications and international crisis, because at least Germany, Italy and Spain were having their interests there too. Nevertheless, he promised to consider the proposal and to consult the cabinet, which was on eve of the parliamentary vacation, and because of that he might not be able to say anything more on the subject for a few weeks.⁷⁵

Few weeks later, the Moroccan Minister of War informed German vice-consul in Fez about negotiations being in progress between London and Paris and he referred that these negotiations might give French the free hand in Morocco. Walter Harris from London Times had informed the vice-consul that he was the source of the information and a roundabout of pumping about the talks begun. Austrian chargé d’affaires in Paris was inquiring Monson about details and von Eckhardstein was inquiring Lansdowne in London and he finally got a statement that the French had made some propositions.⁷⁶

Cambon made another attempt to discuss the matter on October 15, 1902 when he repeated what he said in August already, suggesting that Spain should get a stretch of the coast and some hinterland, leaving France to exercise exclusive influence in the rest of the country. He kept turning back to German failure to establish them in Morocco and he emphasized that Italy was now without an interest in the area.⁷⁷

⁷³ Ibidem, f. 199.

⁷⁴ Ibidem.

⁷⁵ Ibidem.

⁷⁶ EUBANK, p. 76.

⁷⁷ MONGER, p. 77; MATHEWS, p. 46. Delcassé was able to manage the Italians quite easily. He aimed to break up the coalition between Italy and the Triple Alliance, and

However, Lansdowne did not have any motive to discard his idea of ignoring the Moroccan question as far as possible and he rejected Cambon when stating that they were not prepared to discuss a possible “liquidation of Morocco”. Lansdowne then wrote to Monson: “We have no wish to anglicize the Sultan’s army and use it then in favour of our interests. I wish we could persuade M. Delcassé of an absolute sincerity and disinterestedness.”⁷⁸ The Moroccan question was mothballed then.⁷⁹

Two months later, Cambon approached Lansdowne again broached the Moroccan problem on the ground of omitting formal treaty and discussing the present situation and possible future development. He emphasized the need for being prepared for unexpected events in the future. Another meeting took place on December 31, 1902 and Cambon did his best to avoid speaking about “liquidation” which probably frightened Lansdowne before. He assured Lansdowne that France desired the status quo even if the ongoing insurrections should lead to the overthrow of Sultan Abdelaziz. He equally mentioned that there was a danger that German Emperor might intervene in case of revolts in Morocco.⁸⁰

When Lansdowne repeatedly refused to come to terms on Moroccan issue, Cambon tried to reopen talks with Spain, whose interests were advocated in Paris by Ambassador Léon y Castillo. During September, October and November, the Spanish Liberal Government opposed any agreement which concerned Morocco and the situation did not change even despite the arrival of a Spanish conservative cabinet in December 1902. This cabinet declined any signature of such an agreement without previous notification of the British Government.⁸¹

In the second half of 1902 Great Britain had to face Russians in the Central Asia (Persia and Afghanistan), they challenged the question

for this purpose he made use of the Italian economic crisis. This policy bore fruit in 1900 and in 1901 when France successfully ruptured the Triple Alliance by signing a pact with Italy. In November 1902 Italy finally signed an agreement with France by which she promised neutrality in the event that France would face the aggression of one or several powers, or in case France would have to take the initiative because of direct provocation. That was Delcassé’s masterpiece.

⁷⁸ Lansdowne to Monson, December 28, 1902. TNA, FO 800/125, ff. 208–209.

⁷⁹ EUBANK, p. 82.

⁸⁰ J. M. GOUDSWAARD, *Some Aspects of the End of Britain’s “Splendid Isolation”, 1898–1904*, Rotterdam 1952, p. 101.

⁸¹ GEOFFROY, p. 240.

of the neutrality of Straits once again in September 1902 and then in January 1903. In August 1902 Arnold Foster visited Kiel and reported about the German naval establishments, emphasizing that Germany should be now regarded as possible enemy. Germans were a source of anxiety for British in the area of Yangtze and Shanghai in China too. By the beginning of 1903 the ground for possible Anglo-French entente was getting ready. Chamberlain was advocating the entente with France not only as a settlement of colonial differences but he desired it to be an arrangement for general diplomatic cooperation as well. According to George Monger, Balfour and Lansdowne were still more inclined to seek some kind of arrangement with Russians; it was mainly because of British precarious position in Central Asia. In December 1902 France was the only European Power with whom British had friendly relations. Furthermore, she was an ally of Russia.⁸²

When Moroccan insurrections burst out at the end of December 1902, Lansdowne could not ignore the problem anymore.⁸³ He was perturbed by the latest news from North Africa which revealed that sultan had sustained a serious revolt and he was afraid that the French might take advantage of such a course of events and renew the overtures.⁸⁴ Monson referred then: *“He [Delcassé] was undoubtedly excited and anxious about the situation in Morocco, and I cannot too much emphasize his insistence of the expediency of not sending ships of war to the coast and thus risking the further exasperation of the fanatical element against the Europeans in the country.”*⁸⁵

Spanish Ambassador then arrived to Paris and when he called upon Delcassé he was so upset that he was speaking so loud that all the ambassadors in the meeting room could hear him. He should have told Delcassé that *“Moors were a formidable race of warriors and it would take an army of four thousand men to reduce them”*. Monson believed that his Spanish colleague was rather given to exuberance of language and he added that *“I fear that very probable catastrophe which seems to await the sultan will not cause either this Government or public opinion in France*

⁸² MONGER, p. 108.

⁸³ For further details about the insurrections see: Gaillard to Saint-René Taillandier, January 12, 1902. France, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Documents Diplomatiques, Affaires du Maroc, 1901–1905, Paris, 1905, Doc. No. 41, Anexe, pp. 55–56.

⁸⁴ Lansdowne to Monson, December 28, 1902. TNA, FO 800/125, ff. 208–209.

⁸⁵ Monson to Lansdowne, December 31, 1902. Ibidem, f. 211.

any regret. He [sultan] is generally considered more or less a puppet in the hands of British advisers and his disappearance would be tailed as 'a check to our intrigues'".

According to Monson all what Delcassé desired was that the Moroccan struggle would be decided promptly and effectively on spot.⁸⁶ British Ambassador went further when stating that: *"When one sees what fanatics these Moors are, many years must elapse before the French will be able to round off their African dominions by the acquisition of the Northwest corner of the continent. [...] I cannot imagine that anyone, except so sanguine and enterprising an annexationist as Cambon, would care to stir up such a hornet's nest in cold blood."*⁸⁷ During this crisis Monson repeatedly warned Lansdowne not to believe Delcassé: *"I have found it impossible to take him at his word, and have been compelled to acquiesce that he is not only a liar, but a clumsy liar also."*⁸⁸

The situation in Morocco worsened again and therefore at the beginning of February 1903 even Paul Révoil, the French Governor General of Algeria, alarmed Delcassé when stating that he considered it dangerous for the safety of the people and for good relations with Morocco to ignore the current insurrections at the western part of the region and continuing the passive attitude.⁸⁹

Five British ships were hastily sent to Gibraltar to protect British residents in Morocco and Lansdowne had to make a decision with whom to cooperate with. He finally decided to go the way of least resistance and therefore he opted for France. According to George Monger, such a decision was a response to the needs of moment rather than any new general diplomatic course. At least Lansdowne and Balfour perceived it as temporary arrangement.⁹⁰

At the beginning of 1903 France and Britain came to agreement over one part of the Moroccan question. At that time, a private joint loan for the Sultan of Morocco was discussed in the banks in Paris, Madrid and London. In February the British revealed that the French were trying

⁸⁶ Monson to Lansdowne, December 31, 1902. Ibidem, f. 212.

⁸⁷ Monson to Lansdowne, January 9, 1903. Ibidem, f. 229.

⁸⁸ Monson to Lansdowne, November 28, 1902. Ibidem, f. 204.

⁸⁹ Révoil to Delcassé, February 9, 1903. France, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Documents Diplomatiques, Affaires du Maroc, 1901–1905, Paris, 1905, Doc. No. 44, pp. 57–58.

⁹⁰ MONGER, p. 113.

to keep the loan entirely in their hands and therefore the British had to intensify their pressure.⁹¹ The loan was finally contracted in April 1903 as three separate loans of the same size and on the same terms. The Moroccan question was then left alone until summer.⁹²

The time has come to prepare the grounds for future Anglo-French rapprochement and eventual agreement, therefore all newspapers, magazines and British and French chambers of commerce did their best to get the public opinion in favour of the mutual friendship. *The Times* of March 5, 1903 reported: "*The French Ambassador said he considered it his first duty to work for the development of good relations between the two countries [...] France and England had no serious reason for disagreement!*"⁹³ Cambon then suggested that The Association of Chambers of Commerce should be established.

New impetus for improvement of mutual relations came with the planned visit of the King to Paris. On March 11 Monson received a confidential letter from Lord Lansdowne stating that the King is thinking about taking a cruise on the Portuguese, Spanish and Italian coasts and that he would be pleased to meet the French president Loubet on the French soil, either in Cannes in the middle of April or at the end of April in Paris.⁹⁴ Due to the planned visit of Loubet to Algeria and Tunis with the planned return to Paris on May 1, 1903, the King decided to postpone his return and to appear in Paris on May 2.⁹⁵ The visit by Edward VII to Paris brought about a considerable change into the mutual relations of both countries. The English monarch was given a warm reception upon his arrival and he repeatedly emphasized that "*the enmity was no longer an issue*".⁹⁶

The king's visit to Paris provoked Berlin, where German newspapers commented on Edward's stay in the metropolis upon Seine sardonically. While one part of Germany was afraid that the king's visit to Paris would give birth to the anti-German alliance of France, Russia

⁹¹ Ibidem.

⁹² Saint-René Taillandier to Delcassé, April 2, 1903. France, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Documents Diplomatiques, Affaires du Maroc, 1901–1905, Paris, 1905, Doc. No. 56, p. 65.

⁹³ *The Times*, March 5, 1903. TNA, FO 800/125, f. 242; EUBANK, p. 80.

⁹⁴ Lansdowne to Monson, March 11, 1903. TNA, FO 800/125, ff. 246–248.

⁹⁵ Lansdowne to Monson, March 13, 1903. Ibidem, ff. 257–258.

⁹⁶ MATHEWS, p. 43.

and Great Britain, the second part thought that the journey of Edward VII could be an overture for the alliance of France, Great Britain and Italy.⁹⁷ Germany watched that visit with animosity not only because of fear of a possible alliance, but also because “*the Emperor’s uncle had not visited Berlin officially yet since the coronation of Wilhelm II*”.⁹⁸ German Ambassador at London Paul Metternich later wrote to German chancellery Bülow that rapprochement between France and England is a product of “*the general dislike of Germany*”.⁹⁹ In contrast the royal visit in Paris was well received in Saint Petersburg where such a visit was perceived as a slap in the face of German Emperor.¹⁰⁰

While relations with France were gradually improving, Britain had to face other problems and the most acute one among them was the Far Eastern Crisis. When British had concluded their alliance treaty with Japan in 1902, they hoped that such an agreement would ease their burden and they would not need keeping a strong force in Far Eastern waters anymore. In April 1903 the crisis burst out entirely and Hayashi announced that “*Japan could no longer pursue a policy of forbearance and would approach Russia for a direct settlement of the differences between the two countries in Manchuria and Korea*”.¹⁰¹ He invited Britain under the terms of alliance, to suggest the steps to be taken in defence of their threatened interests. British Government was in an uneasy and unenviable position. And a possible way out of the walk on the tightrope was a close entente with France.¹⁰²

At the end of May, Paris publicly announced the planned visit of French President Loubet to Great Britain. Before the visit took place, Eugene Étienne travelled to London to call upon Lansdowne. During their interview, Étienne “*dwelt in particular on the necessity of coming to terms with regards to Morocco*”.¹⁰³ The visit was probably Delcassé’s

⁹⁷ Prinnet to Delcassé, Berlin, April 26, 1903. In: DDF, Série II, Tome III, Paris 1931, Doc. No. 201, p. 277.

⁹⁸ Ibidem.

⁹⁹ MATHEWS, pp. 49–50.

¹⁰⁰ Bompard to Delcassé, May 21, 1903. France, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Documents Diplomatiques Français, Série II, Tome III, Paris 1931, Doc. No. 255, p. 343; P. J. V. ROLO, *Entente Cordiale. The Origins and Negotiations of the Anglo-French Agreements of 8 April 1904*, London 1969, p. 167.

¹⁰¹ MONGER, p. 127.

¹⁰² Ibidem.

¹⁰³ Lansdowne to Monson, July 2, 1903. TNA, FO 633/17, Doc. No. 325, p. 1.

idea, because he could unofficially find out Lansdowne's views prior to any commitment would be made by the French Government.¹⁰⁴ Few days after, the official state visit of President Loubet took place. He spent in London 3 days from July 6 until July 9, 1903 and during his stay he was accompanied by Théophile Delcassé. Cambon, who was in charge of the final preparations of the state visit, pressed upon Delcassé, that "*the entire trip would be of little value if the two ministers of foreign affairs would not meet in order to exchange the views*". Therefore at a very last moment such a private meeting was arranged at Cambon's request and Delcassé called on Lansdowne in the morning of July 7, 1903.¹⁰⁵ Lansdowne stated that even though the previous negotiations with Cambon did not bring any definite results, they helped them to understand that the points at issue between France and Britain were few in number and by no means incapable of adjustment.

Lansdowne then broached the questions of Newfoundland. In the previous discussions with Paul Cambon the French had proposed withdrawal from the French Shore on condition of receiving sufficient compensation, both territorial and monetary. He had suggested then that the subject of territorial compensation could be Gambia and Lansdowne had refused such a solution.¹⁰⁶ After seeing Lansdowne's somewhat reluctant attitude, Delcassé changed the subject and pointed out that the possibility of coming to an understanding as to the Newfoundland question will entirely depend upon the British attitude with regard to French interests in Morocco.¹⁰⁷ Regarding Morocco, Lansdowne required a guarantee that British trade and enterprise will not be placed at any disadvantage, neutrality of Straits and of the sea-board and finally, proper regards to be shown to Spanish interests. Delcassé said French would not have objections to any of these three points.¹⁰⁸

Lansdowne then broached the question of Siam and New Hebrides where both men came to an understanding. The most important points

¹⁰⁴ MATHEWS, p. 66.

¹⁰⁵ Lansdowne to Monson, July 7, 1903. TNA, FO 633/17, Doc. No. 336, p. 3; EUBANK, p. 82.

¹⁰⁶ Lansdowne to Monson, July 7, 1903. TNA, FO 633/17, Doc. No. 1, p. 3.

¹⁰⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁰⁸ Ibidem, p. 4.

at issue, Morocco and Egypt, were not discussed in detail.¹⁰⁹ Delcassé only stated that *“the Egyptian question formed part of the larger African question which could, he felt sure, be disposed of satisfactorily if the both countries could come to an agreement as to the position of France and Morocco”*.¹¹⁰ Delcassé did not go to any details with regard to the idea of general and comprehensive settlement, but the way to an entente was initiated. Shortly after the end of the state visit the Prime Minister Balfour informed Edward VII that British Government decided unanimously to continue Anglo-French negotiations.¹¹¹

The British General Consul of Egypt, lord Cromer, encouraged Lansdowne to take an advantage of the opportunity made by French for settling the various outstanding questions. He summarized the issues as follows: *“In Morocco, Siam and Sokoto the French want various things which we have it in our power to give; in Newfoundland and Egypt the situation is reversed. In these latter cases we depend to a greater extent on the good will of France. The New Hebrides question [...] does not fall into one or other of these two groups.”*¹¹² Cromer then emphasized that his own opinion is in favour of making concessions in Morocco, in return for counter-concessions in Egypt and elsewhere. He acknowledged: *“Morocco will, to all intents and purposes, become before long a French province.”*¹¹³ In Egypt, Cromer wanted to get rid of the Caisse de la Dette and he wanted to realize the conversion of the Egyptian Debt and he expected the French objections. Cromer suggested not entering into any discussion on the Egyptian question yet, because it will require very careful consideration. He finally ended his letter to Lansdowne while stating that *“I should be inclined [...] to negotiate on the basis of an explicit, or in any case implicit, recognition by the French that Egypt falls within our sphere of influence, as Morocco would fall within theirs”*.¹¹⁴

Later in July, Paul Cambon took over the task to continue the negotiations with Lord Lansdowne and presented the views of Delcassé on questions they had discussed before. The only question which was not

¹⁰⁹ GEOFFROY, pp. 248–249.

¹¹⁰ Lansdowne to Monson, July 7, 1903. TNA, FO 633/17, Doc. No. 1, p. 3.

¹¹¹ Monson to Lansdowne, July 24, 1903. TNA, FO 800/126, f. 17; ANDREW, p. 211.

¹¹² Cromer to Lansdowne, July 17, 1903. TNA, FO 633/6, f. 174, p. 347.

¹¹³ Ibidem.

¹¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 349.

mentioned was the Egyptian one and Lansdowne immediately paid attention to it. According to Delcassé Egypt, like Morocco, formed part of the “African question” and if British and French would come to terms as to Morocco, there would probably be no great difficulty in coming to terms as to Egypt too. Cambon suggested leaving the Egyptian problem alone for the present and firstly settling the other points at issue, but Lansdowne refused to do so. Cambon then emphasized that France would only give up her rights in Egypt for equivalent concessions in Morocco.¹¹⁵

Both diplomats met again on August 5 and discussed the details. Lansdowne consulted lord Cromer again and the General Consul of Egypt presented a memorandum where he made many suggestions particularly regarding obtaining as much freedom of action as possible in the administration of Egypt. Lansdowne then adopted this memorandum and used it as a basis for his letter to Paul Cambon.¹¹⁶

The French suggestion about the settlement of Moroccan problem caused uproar in Britain. The Colonial Office and War Office were consulted and particularly the latter one was against Lansdowne’s plan to leave the future fate of Morocco in the hands of France and Spain. According to memorandum of July 31, 1903 War Office argued that “*as the concessions which France asks for in Morocco will be to our disadvantage and may carry with it serious consequences, it should not be granted unless we receive a very substantial quid pro quo in other parts of the world*”.¹¹⁷ Another opponent of the French suggestions was Prince Louis of Battenberg, the Director of Naval Intelligence, who argued that leaving the fate of Morocco in the French and Spanish hands, especially in a situation when France had recently been working towards Latin League and trying to ally with Spain and Italy, would be foolishness. He was convinced that “*no more formidable coalition could be brought against us in the Mediterranean*”.¹¹⁸ He therefore concluded that “*our possible acceptance of these French proposals must depend in the main on how far it would be practicable to effectually prevent France from using the Moroccan coast as her own in time of war, and further, we must consider how far any advantages*

¹¹⁵ Lansdowne to Monson, July 29, 1903. TNA, FO 633/17, Doc. No. 4, p. 8.

¹¹⁶ Memorandum by the Earl of Cromer. TNA, FO 633/17, Doc. No. 6, pp. 11–13.

¹¹⁷ MONGER, p. 130.

¹¹⁸ Memorandum by August Battenberg, August 7, 1903. TNA, PRO, FO 800/126, ff. 32–33.

we may gain elsewhere [...] can be held to balance the risk involved to our maritime position in the Mediterranean by allowing France to obtain such a mastery of the interior of Morocco".¹¹⁹

According to George Monger, it was finally the situation at the Far East, which persuaded Lord Lansdowne that *"the Government's service advisors must be overruled and the strategic risk of concessions in Morocco accepted"*.¹²⁰ On September 10, 1903 he issued a memorandum and pushed his colleagues towards the entente. *"An all-round settlement with France upon the lines now suggested would, I believe, be enormously to our advantage. [...] A good understanding with France would not improbably be the precursor of better understanding with Russia, and I need not insist upon the improvement which would result in our international position, which, in view of our present relations with Germany as well as Russia, I cannot regard with satisfaction."*¹²¹

Lord Cromer supported Lansdowne and they shared the same views regarding the entente with France. He wrote to Prime Minister: *"The question [...] extends to far wider sphere. I cannot help regarding an understanding upon all pending questions with France as possibly a stepping-stone to a general understanding with Russia [...] this possibly may prepare the ground for some reduction in our enormous military and naval expenditure."*¹²² Lansdowne believed in the same and he particularly hoped that the entente might be a stepping-stone towards an agreement with Russia.¹²³

Lansdowne was persuaded, that Britain could not prevent France from penetration into Morocco and he shared the opinion of Nicolson, that surrender in Morocco was sooner or later inevitable, because the French were gaining positions not only in Fez but in the whole country and *"if bargains are to be made it would perhaps be prudent to arrange them before the French have entirely occupied the field"*.¹²⁴ With regards to Morocco, there was another Power that Lansdowne had to reckon with –

¹¹⁹ Ibidem.

¹²⁰ MONGER, p. 132.

¹²¹ Memorandum by Lansdowne, September 10, 1903. TNA, PRO, FO 27/3765, ff. 15–16.

¹²² Cromer to Balfour, October 15, 1903. TNA, FO 633/6, Doc. No. 340, p. 326, f. 164.

¹²³ MONGER, p. 136.

¹²⁴ Nicolson to Sanderson, July 26, 1903. TNA, FO 800/135, f. 163.

Germany and it was recognized that as far as Morocco was concerned, Germany “will do her best to make things difficult”.¹²⁵

Lansdowne’s memorandum of September 10 was approved by the Cabinet and therefore Lansdowne could send Cambon the first definite statement of the terms upon which Britain would be able to conclude an entente on October 1, 1903. A detailed discussion about the general scheme of an Anglo-French entente then followed and it was more and more clear that the proposed entente would be based on an exchange of interests in Morocco and Egypt.¹²⁶ Monson reported to Lansdowne that “either he [Delcassé] or someone in his confidence seems to dribble to the press at frequent intervals some of information as to the continuance of your negotiations with Cambon” and he mentioned that: “The French would of course never have dreamed of entering on negotiation of such extensive proportions had it not been for their hungering after Morocco, and their fear that unless they secured that big bite at North West Africa now the tempting morsel might eventually be snatched from their lips.”¹²⁷

The next meeting, which took place on October 7, showed that the French were unwilling to abandon their rights and privileges at Newfoundland and the British would not do so at Morocco.¹²⁸ By that time, both Lord Lansdowne and the Earl of Cromer were persuaded that Great Britain was getting more in Egypt than she was losing in Morocco.¹²⁹

Delcassé answered to Lansdowne’s proposals by letter from October 26 and few days later Cromer could write to Lansdowne: “the French answer is quite as favourable as we could reasonably expect [...] the Newfoundland question seems to me the most serious task ahead [...]. We ought to be able to come to terms about Morocco and Egypt”.¹³⁰ Meanwhile in Morocco, both Governments were considering another loan to the Sultan. Lansdowne informed Balfour about the progress of the negotiations: “Cambon told me today that he had been in communication with

¹²⁵ MONGER, p. 134.

¹²⁶ ANDREW, p. 212.

¹²⁷ Monson to Lansdowne, October 16, 1903. TNA, FO 800/126, f. 55.

¹²⁸ Lansdowne to Cambon, October 1, 1903, in: G. P. GOOCH – H. W. V. TEMPERLEY (eds.), *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898–1914. The Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the Franco-British Entente*, Vol. II, London 1927, Doc. No. 370, p. 317.

¹²⁹ T. G. OTTE, *The Foreign Office Mind. The Making of British Foreign Policy, 1865–1914*, Cambridge 2012, p. 287; MATHEWS, p. 84.

¹³⁰ Cromer to Lansdowne, October 30, 1903. TNA, FO 800/124, f. 108.

Delcassé as to the possibilities of a further loan to the Moors. He was instructed to tell me that the French Government would make no objection to a new loan on the same conditions as the loans raised in April. [...] It is possible that the Spaniards may wish to come in also. Delcassé added that should our negotiations with regard to Moors result in the establishment of an understanding of the kind proposed, the loan to be raised here would be repaid by a new operation, which would be conducted entirely in France."¹³¹

During October and November 1903 Cambon and Lansdowne were finally able to come to terms regarding Morocco and Egypt, the agreement was based on the lines determined earlier in the summer. A very important measures were achieved regarding the British position in Egypt: *"In return for being given a free hand in Morocco [...] France is willing to enter into following pledges as regards Egypt – not to impede the action of England in Egypt, nor to demand the termination of British occupation of that country."*¹³² Lansdowne only refused Cambon's proposal that British advance in Egypt should go with an equal step with the French advance in Morocco.¹³³ Meanwhile, British Governor General Cromer was very anxious about the reaction of the other powers, particularly Germany. He was as well anxious that in case British secured the French consent to the abolition and to the conversion of the Egyptian debt, there might still be obstacles from the other Powers and from the bondholders. Cromer therefore pushed Lansdowne to guard against the possibility of German obstructions and he wanted to use diplomatic support of France in order to achieve this goal. According to Cromer's letter from October 30, 1903, the Caisse de la Dette should be nominally maintained on condition that the French will pledge that they will, in case of need, address the other Powers conjointly with Britain in order to urge them to accept the plan previously agreed by British and French.¹³⁴

After another meeting which took place on December 9, 1903, Bafour reported to King that: *"There seems no insuperable or even serious difficulty in connection with Egypt; and though Morocco still presents*

¹³¹ Lansdowne to Balfour, October 28, 1903. British Library, Prime Minister Papers, Add. 88906/17/5.

¹³² Memorandum on the proposals from October 1, 1903 and October 26, 1903. TNA, FO 27/3765, ff. 40–41.

¹³³ MONGER, p. 144.

¹³⁴ Cromer to Lansdowne, October 30, 1903. TNA, FO 633/17, Doc. No. 17, pp. 27–28.

certain point of difference, it ought not to be hard to find a way through them." All seemed promising but the negotiations then came later that month to a deadlock due to the question of Newfoundland and cessation of Gambia, which was broached again by Cambon, who required territorial compensation for the abandonment of French Shore fishing rights.¹³⁵ When Gambia was rejected, Delcassé suggested a territory on the right bank of Niger instead. According to Monson, this territory was "infinitely more valuable than Gambia", but Lansdowne refused again.¹³⁶

Cambon then warned Lansdowne, that "it is important to reach agreement on this point before continuing our conversations on other questions" and he emphasized that "it is useless to reach agreement on Egypt [...] if the failure of our talks on Newfoundland prevents us from making any settlement".¹³⁷ The negotiations reached another deadlock in January 1904. When Balfour heard about the situation, he wrote to Lansdowne: "I am sorry, but not surprised at the hitch which has occurred in the French negotiations. It would be an international misfortune if they broke down and unsatisfactory as any negotiation must be which does not include the vexed question of Newfoundland. I would rather that we settled Egypt, Morocco and Siam without Newfoundland, than that we settled nothing at all. However I imagine we have not yet heard the last word."¹³⁸ But Lansdowne did not want to leave the Newfoundland question alone and answered to Prime Minister that "the arrangement would be very incomplete without it, and we shall be less liable to attack if we are able to show that we have succeeded in clearing the French, bag and baggage, out of a British colony".¹³⁹

At the same time, Cambon reminded Delcassé not to agree too hastily to the agreements. The British were more eager to settle the Egyptian question than the French were to conclude an agreement over Morocco and therefore Cambon wanted to bide their time and wait for better offer.¹⁴⁰ Monson reported to Lansdowne that "the time now come in which Delcassé must consult colleagues on the general scheme of ar-

¹³⁵ GOUDSWAARD, p. 113.

¹³⁶ Monson to Lansdowne, January 15, 1904. TNA, FO 800/126, f. 84.

¹³⁷ ROLO, p. 233.

¹³⁸ Balfour to Lansdowne, January 15, 1904. British Library, Prime Minister Papers, Add. 88906/17/5.

¹³⁹ Lansdowne to Balfour, January 18, 1904. Ibidem.

¹⁴⁰ EUBANK, p. 85.

rangement".¹⁴¹ The French were annoyed by the British reluctance to sacrifice either Gambia or territory in Western Africa in return for the Newfoundland issue. Lansdowne argued that *"our position in Egypt is practically unassailable, although we should be glad to regularize it. [...] In France, on the other hand, France had no position corresponding to ours in Egypt, and we should certainly be told that we were retreating ignominiously from that country"*.¹⁴² Cambon opposed that *"France, for instance, would still have to negotiate with Spain, and perhaps with the other Powers, about Morocco, and she could, if she chose, make herself very inconvenient to us in Egypt"*.¹⁴³ The French were exasperated and George Cogordan, Director of Political Affairs at the Quai d'Orsay informed French Consul General in Egypt: *"The negotiations with the Great Britain were interrupted [...] it would be desirable if you visited lord Cromer and informed him about the possible failure of the negotiations unless some fairly valuable territorial concessions were made."*¹⁴⁴ Two days later, Cromer cabled to Lansdowne that *"the information received by me leaves little room for doubt that serious danger of the breakdown of the negotiations exists. The necessity of making concessions [...] appears to me most urgent"*.¹⁴⁵

At the end of February, Lansdowne informed the Spanish Government that the negotiations about Morocco had already started.¹⁴⁶ Despite this step Lansdowne finally caved in to French pressure and allowed France to negotiate with Spain separately.¹⁴⁷ Madrid would be informed of the final statement once this was already settled between France and Great Britain.¹⁴⁸ On March 4, 1904, the question of territorial compensation in the area of Nigeria and Lake Chad were raised

¹⁴¹ Monson to Lansdowne, January 15, 1904. TNA, FO 800/126, f. 84.

¹⁴² Lansdowne to Monson, January 13, 1904. TNA, FO 633/17, Doc. No. 32, pp. 44–45.

¹⁴³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴⁴ Cogordan to De la Bouliniere, January 19, 1904. DDF, Série II, Tome IV, Paris 1932, Doc. No. 198, p. 274.

¹⁴⁵ Cromer to Lansdowne, January 21, 1904. TNA, FO 633/17, Doc. No. 36, pp. 46–47.

¹⁴⁶ MATHEWS, p. 92; ROLO, p. 247.

¹⁴⁷ During November of 1903, Lansdowne informed Cromer about the note by Paul Cambon, which commented an existing draft of entente between France and Spain. According to Lansdowne Cambon's note contained such a declaration, by which Spain and France prohibited any cessation of the Moroccan territory to any third Power. Lord Lansdowne warned that this would not prevent Spain from ceding them to France. See Lansdowne to Cromer, November 13, 1903. TNA, FO 800/124, ff. 128–129.

¹⁴⁸ ROLO, p. 237.

and after nine days both powers reached a compromise. The long discussions about the territorial changes were therefore completed.¹⁴⁹ On March 13, France and England then agreed, that the question of Newfoundland should be arranged by a special convention.¹⁵⁰

Both powers finally came to terms on April 6, 1904 and Lansdowne informed the King in his letter later that day that the mutual Anglo-French negotiations are leading to the successful conclusion: *"I beg to inform Your Majesty that my discussion with French ambassador has proceeded satisfactorily and that I hope to reach a final agreement tomorrow. As Parliament is not sitting I think that no announcement should yet be made."*¹⁵¹ The agreement was signed two days later at Chateau Clouds and consisted of three documents, the Convention between the United Kingdom and France respecting Newfoundland and West and Central Africa, the Declaration between the United Kingdom and France respecting Egypt and Morocco with five Secret Articles and the Declaration between the United Kingdom and France concerning Siam, Madagascar and the New Hebrides.¹⁵² All the pending colonial disputes in non-European territories were to be settled between France and England through what later became known as the Entente Cordiale.

By the Entente Cordiale the friction between France and England in non-European territories was removed. The colonial rivalry was ended and the mutual relations between both great powers were finally smoothed out. France abandoned the policy of pinpricks in Egypt in exchange for the policy of a free hand in Morocco, but the struggle over Morocco was still not ended. However, the main opponent was not Britain, but Germany and the fate of Morocco was to be determined seven years later.

¹⁴⁹ Lansdowne to Monson, March 13, 1904. In: BD 2, Doc. No. 399, p. 354; ROLO, p. 253.

¹⁵⁰ D. VILLEPIN, *L'Entente Cordiale de Fachoda à la Grande Guerre dans les archives du Quai d'Orsay. Dans les archives du Quai d'Orsay*, Bruxelles – Paris 2004, p. 90.

¹⁵¹ Lansdowne to Edward VII, April 6, 1904. British Library, Lansdowne Papers, Add. 88906/19/25.

¹⁵² Convention signed at London, April 8, 1904. TNA, FO 633/17, Doc. No. 95, pp. 123–128.