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Thesis subject:  
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THE FOREIGN POLICY OF SIR EDWARD GREY:  
GERMANY AND THE ENTENTES WITH FRANCE  
AND RUSSIA, 1905-1914

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of  
Master of Arts  
in the Department of History  
University of Saskatchewan

by

Terilyn Joan McKenzie  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

October, 1966.

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## PREFACE

Much has been written about the foreign policy of Sir Edward Grey as part of an attempt to illuminate the origins of the First World War. While Grey has been criticized by some historians for various parts of his policy, the overwhelming verdict has been favourable to him. The reputation he gained while Foreign Secretary as a completely honest, selfless, peace-loving man and the apparent credibility of the two volumes of his memoirs, Twenty-five Years, has resulted in these memoirs, unlike those of most other important pre-war diplomatic figures, having been largely accepted at face value as a true record of his ideas and motives, rather than as an apologia. It is on the basis of Grey's own account of his policy that the source material on British foreign policy between 1905 and 1914, mainly the British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914, has been interpreted. As G. M. Trevelyan, Grey's very apologetic biographer, writes: "The main principles of Grey's policy were these -- Entente but not Alliance with France and Russia, accompanied by constant efforts to achieve more friendly relations with Germany."<sup>1</sup> In other words, Grey's policy has

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<sup>1</sup>G. M. Trevelyan, Grey of Fallodon (London: Longman's, Green and Co., 1937), p. 116.

been interpreted as an attempt to balance between the two opposing diplomatic groupings in Europe, the Dual Alliance of France and Russia and the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria, and Italy in an attempt to remain on good terms with both while becoming committed to neither. This policy failed to prevent a European war and failed to keep Britain out of it, but Trevelyan concludes: "Where he failed no one could have succeeded; where he succeeded many would have failed."<sup>2</sup>

In 1963 George Monger published a work entitled The End of Isolation: British Foreign Policy 1900-1907 (London, Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd.) which includes a discussion of the first two years of Grey's Foreign Secretaryship. Monger has made use of a large amount of previously unpublished material, most important of which are some of Grey's private papers. About these papers Monger comments: "Of immense and unique importance. Although the editors of the official British Documents quote from them, they do not include some of the most significant material in the collection."<sup>3</sup> On the basis of this new evidence, Monger has come up with a radically new interpretation of Grey's foreign policy. His thesis is that far from balancing between the two diplomatic

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>3</sup>Monger, p. 335.

groups in order not to commit Britain and only coming down on the side of France and Russia in August 1914, Grey very soon after taking office definitely took the side of the Dual Alliance. Grey, Monger argues, made preservation of the entente with France at all costs the basic principle of his foreign policy and thus rendered an Anglo-German rapprochement not only impossible but also undesirable.

Monger has only examined Grey's policy during his first two years in office. The aim of this thesis is to try to determine whether his new interpretation of Grey's foreign policy holds true right up until the outbreak of war in 1914. Since the rest of the unpublished material is not available to this writer, the main source for this study will be the published British Documents. But they will be examined from the point of view of Monger's new insights on Grey, rather than from the point of view of Grey's explanations of his policy in Twenty-five Years.

This thesis will not attempt to deal with all the questions of foreign affairs which Grey faced between December 1905 and August 1914. Instead, it will examine only the most important issues -- the two Moroccan Crises, the conclusion of the Anglo-Russian convention, the Bosnian Crisis, and the search for an agreement with Germany. The focus will be upon Grey's policy towards Germany and the ententes with France and Russia -- the core of British foreign policy in the last

decade before the war. The Balkan Wars have been left out owing to a shortage of time and in the belief that a detailed study of the numerous documents relating to this crisis would not substantially change the conclusions which have been arrived at. A detailed study of the final Sarajevo Crisis has deliberately been omitted. So much has been written on this crisis that it would be futile to attempt to deal with it again. Also, the amount of material on the Sarajevo Crisis alone would in itself provide the basis for a separate thesis. Too often Grey's policy as a whole has been interpreted in the light of what he did in July and August 1914. Instead, this thesis will trace Grey's policy from the beginning of his Foreign Secretaryship, and the aftermath of Sarajevo will be examined in the concluding chapter in the light of his previous policy and not vice-versa.

Grateful acknowledge is made to Dr. I. N. Lambi, my faculty advisor, for his many helpful suggestions and to the University of Saskatchewan for the Graduate Fellowship awarded the author in 1965-66.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Part 1: Grey the man and the statesman

In the governing class that ruled England until the early twentieth century, the name Grey was an important one. From this great Liberal family of the gentry came Earl Grey of the Reform Bill. And perhaps equally famous is his great-nephew, Sir Edward, later Viscount Grey of Fallodon, who was British Foreign Secretary from December 11, 1905 until December 11, 1916, eleven years of crucial importance for Britain internationally. This thesis is a study of Sir Edward Grey's foreign policy from 1905 to 1914. But in order to understand better Grey as Foreign Secretary and as statesman, it will be helpful to sketch a picture of Grey the man.

Sir Edward Grey was born and bred a member of the English governing class, yet in his early years it appeared that he might idle his life away and amount to nothing. At school he was a good student, but showed no great ambition to be at the top, preferring the solitude of fishing to academic or other athletic pursuits. He was sent down from Oxford for incorrigible idleness but returned to pass his examinations which entitled him to a degree he neglected to

take. But after taking these examinations in 1884 at the age of twenty-two, Grey was never idle again.

Grey began his public life in 1884 as Private Secretary to Sir Evelyn Baring, later Lord Cromer,<sup>1</sup> and then to H. C. E. Childers.<sup>2</sup> That same year he made his first public speech against the House of Lords' refusal to pass the Third Reform Bill without a redistribution bill which stamped him officially as a Liberal. In the general election of November 1885 he was elected as a Liberal for North Northumberland and retained that seat until he moved to the House of Lords in 1916. A great bond was soon forged between Grey and his constituents, a bond which helped restrain his frequently recurring desire in later years to be done with politics. After a few months in office in 1886, the Liberals fell from power over the issue of Gladstone's Home Rule Bill. When in 1892 Gladstone formed his fourth ministry, Grey was offered the Parliamentary Under-Secretaryship for Foreign Affairs. Thus began his first real contact with foreign policy, the area of government which he was to control for so many years.

During Grey's three years as Under-Secretary, Britain's chief difficulties were with France and Russia. In March

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<sup>1</sup>British Consul-General and Agent in Egypt in 1883 and from 1885 until 1907.

<sup>2</sup>Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1882-85.

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1895 he achieved some prominence with what became known as the "Grey Declaration", a warning in the House of Commons to France regarding her ambitions in the area of the upper Nile, a warning which became important during the Fashoda incident in 1898. But Grey also gained from his period of service as Under-Secretary a growing suspicion of Germany, supposedly Britain's friend at this time. "Grey ... when he left the Foreign Office for the first time, carried away a much graver impression of the dangers to European peace and of the isolated position of England than anything that disturbed the minds of the ordinary Liberal politicians."<sup>3</sup> This experience was to have a profound impact upon his policy when he became Foreign Secretary ten years later.

When the Liberal party was defeated in 1895, Grey left office "with the expectation and the intention of never returning to it".<sup>4</sup> During the next ten years in opposition he gained a reputation as a Liberal Imperialist. The Liberal party split over the question of the Boer War. The Liberal Imperialists led by the former Liberal Foreign Secretary, Lord Rosebery, upheld the position that the war must be carried through for the future of the empire, while the "Pro-Boers" led by Henry Campbell-Bannerman believed that the Boers

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<sup>3</sup>Trevelyan, p. 65. For further evidence see Grey's statements quoted below in Chapter II, pp. 35-36.

<sup>4</sup>Viscount Grey, Twenty-five Years, 1892-1916 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1925), Vol. I, p. 33.

must be reconciled if there was ever to be peace in South Africa. Here was the division in the Liberal party which was to plague Grey as Foreign Secretary until the outbreak of war in 1914, although the meaning of the term "Liberal Imperialist" changed somewhat in the early years of the new century. The term always referred to those Liberals who were in favour of a strong British foreign policy -- for Britain's standing up unflinchingly in defence of her rights. At the time of the Boer War the Liberal Imperialists saw the defence of the empire and British imperial rights as the main duty of British foreign policy. By the time that they took office in December 1905 they had recognized the threat of German hegemony and shifted their emphasis accordingly from the empire to the continental situation. Grey and his fellow Liberal Imperialists still saw the necessity of protecting British imperial interests and did so. But they would make concessions on imperial matters that were not of vital importance to the empire if they believed such concessions essential to an improvement in what they regarded as the more menacing situation in Europe.

Grey approved wholeheartedly of the entente with France negotiated by the Conservatives in 1904. Significantly he did so less because of the colonial bargain than in view of general policy -- as "an expression of sincere good will towards each other on the part of both nations".

With regard to article nine, the pledge of diplomatic support in Egypt and Morocco, he told the House of Commons:

Everything depends on the spirit and not upon the letter; but it is precisely because so much does depend on the spirit that there are, in that clause alone, great opportunities, looking to the probabilities of future politics, for the two nations using the Agreement, by a liberal interpretation of that article, to draw closer to each other.<sup>5</sup>

Grey's views on the French entente were in disagreement with those of his former head at the Foreign Office and mentor, Rosebery, who believed that Britain should seek the strongest possible ally, namely, Germany. Grey wrote in August 1905:

I think more and more that Rosebery is wrong about Germany, and I feel it so strongly that if any government drags us back into the German net I will oppose it openly at all costs.<sup>6</sup>

By 1903 Grey had made up his mind that after the next general election he would retire from politics unless the futility of opposition were ended. In December 1905 the Conservatives fell from power and Grey became British Foreign Secretary in the new Campbell-Bannerman ministry, a post he

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<sup>5</sup>Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 4th series, Vol. 185, June 1, 1904, pp. 516-24.

<sup>6</sup>Grey to a friend, August 1905. Quoted in Trevelyan, p. 84.

was to hold continuously for the next eleven years.<sup>7</sup>

Grey did not fit into the mould of the typical British Foreign Secretary. Because of the large amount of work involved in this office, it was usual for Foreign Secretaries to sit in the House of Lords rather than the House of Commons. For only four years between 1853 and Grey's accession in 1905 was the Foreign Secretary in the lower chamber. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the amount of Foreign Office work had grown so much that Grey had to beg the indulgence of the Commons to allow him to answer questions on foreign policy only twice a week, thus allowing him time to meet ambassadors and perform the many other non-parliamentary tasks connected with the formulation and administration of foreign policy.

Grey at forty-three was younger than most Foreign Secretaries and lacked the cabinet experience usually a prerequisite for this post. The office of Foreign Secretary was usually regarded as second in importance and prestige only to that of the Prime Minister and awarded to a senior party

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<sup>7</sup>Grey was involved in a brief cabinet making crisis resulting from the so-called "Relugas Compact" between the three leading Liberal Imperialists: Grey, Henry Herbert Asquith, the new Chancellor of the Exchequer and Campbell-Bannerman's successor as Prime Minister in 1908, and Richard Burdon Haldane, the new Secretary of State for War. These three had agreed not to serve unless the new Prime Minister took a peerage and left the Commons leadership to Asquith as they thought Campbell-Bannerman too weak a House leader. However, the crisis was short-lived as first Asquith and then the other two gave in.

member of long-time service, not to a man who had never before held any cabinet post whatsoever. Grey's only qualifications were his three years as Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office. But during these years he had gained valuable experience and insights into the workings of British foreign policy, a very specialized area of government, as the two Foreign Ministers under whom he had served, Lords Rosebery and Kimberley, had both been in the upper house and Grey had therefore had to explain and defend the government's foreign policy in the Commons.

Also unusual for a Foreign Secretary was Grey's insularity. His foreign travel was limited to visits to India in 1887, to the West Indies in 1897, and to Paris with George V on his state visit in 1914. The latter trip was the only time Grey crossed the Channel before the war. Furthermore, he had little or no knowledge of foreign languages and was the first British Foreign Secretary to address foreign ambassadors in English.<sup>8</sup> More personal contact with foreign countries would no doubt have been an asset to Grey although during Grey's time this lack was less of a handicap. For in the days of the "Old" (Pre World War I) Diplomacy it was the custom for a Foreign Secretary to

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<sup>8</sup>They replied in French usually and Grey could understand them without an interpreter. British diplomats in corresponding with one another had always used English.

transact his business in London by letters, telegrams and interviews, on the basis of information from the specialists in the diplomatic service in the various foreign countries, rather than by travelling around the world for summit conferences.

Grey did not possess great intellectual powers, but he had a good and a clear mind governed by common sense and logic. However it lacked creativeness, imagination and daring. For example, in his speeches there is no trace of the brilliant flash of genius. But if Grey lacked the attributes of a great statesman, it cannot be said that he was not a credit to the high office he held. He was the most diligent and conscientious of men and served his sovereign and his country faithfully to the best of his abilities. If certain aspects of Grey's foreign policy are criticized in this thesis and part of the myth surrounding him repudiated, it is Grey the Foreign Secretary, not Grey the man, who is under attack. No aspersion can be cast upon the purity of his motives -- his sense of duty, his application of high moral principles to foreign policy as well as to his personal life, his selflessness -- or upon his sincerity. For while it will be shown that Grey was not always perfectly frank with his colleagues in the cabinet and in parliament, there is no question but that his reasons for withholding information were beyond reproach. He was an idealist who hated war with a vengeance. The preservation

of peace was his most fervent desire. But unlike some of the more left wing Liberals, he was not afraid of war. When British interests demanded it, Realpolitik overrode idealism. Grey soon won for himself an international reputation as a man of honour, a man who could be trusted, which could not help but be an asset to his country.

Grey cannot easily be categorized. He was an idealist who passionately desired universal disarmament in order to abolish war, yet he was a realist who knew that war was a fact of life and therefore prepared his country by diplomatic alignments and large armament programs to meet the contingency. Therefore, even in foreign affairs he was both a Radical and a Liberal Imperialist. In domestic affairs he was a nineteenth century laissez-faire Liberal -- a convinced free-trader all his life -- and at the same time an ardent champion of the Radicals' program of social welfare legislation. He showed his left-wing political tendencies in his desire during the Parliament Crisis of 1911 to abolish the House of Lords completely and to substitute for it an elective chamber, and in his strong support of the women's suffrage and Irish Home Rule movements. Arthur James Balfour, the Conservative Prime Minister from 1902 to 1905, once described Grey as "a curious combination of the old-fashioned Whig and the Socialist".<sup>9</sup> He was too

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<sup>9</sup>Quoted in Trevelyan, p. 170.

much the typical Englishman and too much the Whig like his ancestors to be a real systematizer. Yet he had a definite set of principles which he followed in his foreign policy. The contradictions in the man are too many to be resolved.

Perhaps the most important side of Grey the man was the side which his political career forced him virtually to give up. That was his great love of nature, especially of fishing and bird-watching, on both of which subjects he wrote books, Fly Fishing in 1899 and when an old, blind man, The Charm of Birds and Fallodon Papers. Grey's moments of greatest happiness were those spent at his country estate, but his political duties made such moments infrequent and the pressures of the Foreign Secretaryship made them almost nonexistent.

Grey disliked formal society and the social duties imposed upon him as a result of his high position in the state. He was a quiet, reserved man with a calm, cool temperament. His reaction upon being awarded the Knighthood of the Garter in 1912 was:

I suppose my real feeling about the Garter was that I was very pleased at being offered it, but shrank from having it. It will make life a little more conspicuous and more complicated: and it gives me a feeling of being still deeper in.<sup>10</sup>

Grey's wife, Dorothy, shared his love of the quiet world of nature. Her death in February 1906 just after he had

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<sup>10</sup>Grey to Katherine Lyttleton, February 1912. Quoted in Trevelyan, p. 164.

taken office was a shattering blow to Grey, who had had no life but their common life. A great sense of loneliness engulfed him as he plunged back into the work of the Foreign Office four days after the funeral. But the work offered no real solace. The idea of retirement continued to haunt him as it had ever since 1887. Indeed, Grey was the typical English squire who had no higher ambitions, but whom duty forced into one of the most important governmental positions at one of the most critical times in his country's history. In the words of Trevelyan: "He obeyed the sterner call but he never ceased to murmur and look back. He was one who said 'I go not', and went."<sup>11</sup>

## Part 2: The legacy of British foreign policy

In the last part of the nineteenth century, Britain had largely disengaged herself from European affairs. The "new imperialism" greatly expanded the British empire, and it was upon the extension and protection of these colonial possessions that Britain concentrated her energies. As a result the cardinal aim of British foreign policy -- supremacy of the seas -- became even more important, for only if Britain controlled the seas could she ensure that the life-line between her and her far-scattered colonies would remain open.

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<sup>11</sup>Trevelyan, p. 56.

It is debatable just how isolated Britain was at the turn of the century under Lord Salisbury,<sup>12</sup> who has been hailed as the supreme exponent of "splendid isolation". Britain had many old treaty obligations which had never been repudiated, although most had ceased to be of any vital importance.<sup>13</sup> Exceptions, however, were a long-standing guarantee of Portugal and her possessions, renewed in 1899, and the 1839 guarantee of Belgian neutrality and independence, renewed in 1870, which was to play an important part in bringing Britain into the World War in 1914. Britain had not under Salisbury abdicated her position as a great power in the European scene. She was merely concentrating on imperial rather than continental affairs. Even in the remote areas of Africa, the Far East and Central Asia, she could not help but become involved with the other European powers. They were her rivals for imperial possessions. And with the largest and richest empire by far, she inspired bitter jealousy and unrestrained competition. Her relations with both France and Russia were strained to

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<sup>12</sup>Salisbury was Foreign Secretary from 1878 to 1880 in Disraeli's second ministry and Prime Minister as well as Foreign Secretary in 1885-86, 1887-92 and 1895-1900. He remained in the single office of Prime Minister until 1902. The most recent and authoritative work on Salisbury's foreign policy is: J. A. S. Grenville, Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy, (London: Athlone Press, 1964).

<sup>13</sup>Lillian M. Penson, "Obligations by Treaty: Their place in British Foreign Policy, 1898-1914," Studies in Diplomatic History and Historiography, ed. A. O. Sarkissan (London: Longman's Green and Co. Ltd., 1961), pp. 76-89.

the breaking point by colonial rivalry, and Germany, with whom she was forced to co-operate from time to time to offset the opposition of the French and Russians, was not adverse to taking advantage of her imperial troubles -- such as the Boer War -- to try to form a continental coalition against her.

Salisbury, like Palmerston, based his foreign policy upon the premise that Britain had no eternal allies or enemies, only eternal interests. To protect and further these British interests the means employed should vary with the circumstances. He was opposed to signing alliances which a future British government might not believe it in Britain's interest to honour. It was his impulsive Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, who pushed the negotiations at the turn of the century for an alliance with Germany. But Salisbury opted instead for an imperial-centred alliance with Japan to protect British interests in the Far East. If anything, this alliance confirmed rather than ended British "isolation", for it gave Britain some measure of security against Russian and German interference in the Far East and allowed her to be even less aware of continental affairs.

Salisbury's successor, Lord Lansdowne, British Foreign Secretary from 1900 to 1905, was more aware of the European scene and more anxious for Britain to compose her differences with other European powers, but the basic principles

underlying his foreign policy were the same. Like Salisbury, he shrank from the idea of a general alliance with the Triple Alliance. After negotiating the alliance with Japan, he put Britain's relations with France upon a friendly basis by an agreement regarding the two powers' respective special interests in Egypt and Morocco. By the terms of the 1904 entente agreement, Lansdowne promised British diplomatic support for the French claims to a predominant position in Morocco. But the promise of support was strictly limited to diplomatic support in Morocco. It was not an alliance in disguise, not even a defensive one. Less than a year after the signing of the entente agreement, it was put to the test by the First Moroccan Crisis. Lansdowne stuck to his promise, but before the conference called to settle the crisis had begun to meet, the Conservatives had been thrown from office. Sir Edward Grey was the new Liberal Foreign Secretary.

On October 5, 1905, foreseeing the imminent probability of the Liberals coming to power with himself as Foreign Secretary, Grey made his famous City Speech.<sup>14</sup> He emphasized that a Liberal government would make no radical changes in Britain's foreign policy. Indeed, the Liberal party did not wish to see changed even one of "the three cardinal

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<sup>14</sup>Sir Edward Grey, Speeches on Foreign Affairs, 1904-1914 (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1931), pp. 26-32.

features at the present moment of British policy": the growing friendship with the United States, the Anglo-Japanese alliance, and the Anglo-French entente. As for other powers -- a specific reference to Germany and Russia -- he stated: "We are perfectly ready to enter into new friendships bearing in mind that you can never make a new friendship which is worth having by backing out of an old one." And he concluded:

I think it is important to emphasize the need for continuity in foreign policy. I would not say that we are always bound, at all costs, to advocate continuity in foreign policy. There have been times in the past when it was impossible. There may be times again in the future; but at the present time it is not only possible, but it is most important, to adhere to the principle of continuity.

This then was the legacy left to Grey by his Conservative predecessors: an entente with France which could be either strengthened or destroyed by his action at the upcoming Algeiras conference; an alliance with Japan which safeguarded British imperial interests in the Far East yet which was a hindrance to better relations with Russia, France's ally; and, since the failure of the negotiations for an alliance, increasingly more tense relations with Germany which was rapidly becoming a major naval power. Grey promised in his City Speech that he would continue the foreign policy of the previous government. The First Moroccan Crisis with which he was faced upon taking office will provide an opportunity to determine to what extent

he actually carried out this promise.

Part 3: The extent of Grey's control over British  
foreign policy

To what extent did Grey as Foreign Secretary control British foreign policy? What were the opinions and what was the influence of the monarchy, the cabinet, parliament, the Foreign Office, and public opinion? These are questions which have to be answered in order to study the foreign policy of Sir Edward Grey. They will be dealt with in more detail in the main body of the thesis in relation to the specific diplomatic questions which Grey faced, but it will be useful to set forth here a few general statements regarding the administration of British foreign policy.

Donald G. Bishop writes in The Administration of British Foreign Policy: "The control of foreign policy rests basically in the hands of the Crown and is shared with the legislature only as and to the extent that the Crown deems this desirable."<sup>15</sup> That is, it is a sphere of government delegated to the executive. By the beginning of the twentieth century parliament's field of legislation had increased too greatly for it to have much time for the discussion of foreign policy which was, anyhow, such a

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<sup>15</sup> Donald G. Bishop, The Administration of British Foreign Policy (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1961), p. 4.

highly specialized field that only the experts could really deal with it. And in most cases parliament could not be consulted before negotiations had been completed and decisions made. Parliamentary debates on foreign affairs were infrequent before World War I, and in some sessions they were altogether absent. There were question periods several times a week, but by tradition a Foreign Secretary was free to refuse to answer or to answer noncommittally and evasively. The government published blue books for the information of parliament, but those on foreign affairs were carefully edited and did not present the entire picture of Britain's foreign relations. And by the time of Grey's period in office, their number had declined since the peak of publication under Palmerston.

Judged by a Blue Book test Sir Edward Grey took the public into his confidence very much less than did Palmerston.... It is literally true that as Parliament became more democratic its control over foreign policy declined, and, while Blue Books on domestic affairs expanded and multiplied at the end of the nineteenth century, those on foreign affairs lessened both in number and interest.<sup>16</sup>

After 1885 it was generally accepted that foreign policy was above and outside party strife. A tradition of continuity in foreign policy had grown up -- that a new government would not repudiate the general lines of its predecessor's

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<sup>16</sup> Harold Temperley and Lillian Penson (ed.) A Century of Diplomatic Bluebooks, 1814-1914 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), p. ix.

policy. And since there was little legislative work in this realm of government, parliament was left with only one real function here -- the ultimate decision as to war or peace.

Not only did parliament by the twentieth century have little chance to exert influence on the actual formulation of British foreign policy, but in the last decade before the war it took very little interest in foreign affairs. Domestic affairs held the attention of both the country and their elected representatives. It was a period of serious domestic crises, with agitation over Irish Home Rule, the showdown with the House of Lords, strikes, suffragette demonstrations, and other disruptive incidents. And the great Liberal majority elected in 1906 was strongly interested in social reform. International questions were largely strange to many of the members of parliament.

Public opinion as a whole, like parliament, took little interest in foreign politics before 1914. Only on rare occasions such as during the Agadir Crisis in 1911 and the naval panic of 1909 did Britain's international position concern the average Englishman. Although the development of a cheap popular press in the late nineteenth century had resulted in an enormous increase in the size of the reading public and the "publicity given to politics



and foreign affairs was increased a thousand times",<sup>17</sup> it is probably safe to say that public opinion did not exert much influence on the formulation of British foreign policy while Grey was Foreign Secretary. At least it was certainly not a sustained influence.

Thus, as stated above, the control of British foreign policy lay not with the legislative but with the executive branch of government. Nominally it was the sovereign who exercised the control. British monarchs clung to the belief that foreign policy was their own special sphere of influence long after they had conceded to parliament control of most of the other areas of government. But by the beginning of the twentieth century, they had also lost any real influence even in this last bastion of monarchical power. Both Edward VII and George V were strictly constitutional monarchs.<sup>18</sup> The myth of Edward's great influence on British foreign policy has long since been exploded. Whatever influence he did have, most notably in effecting the entente with France, was because he was

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<sup>17</sup>Oron James Hale, Publicity and Diplomacy, with Special Reference to England and Germany 1890-1914 (New York: D. Appleton Century Company Inc., 1940), p. 40.

<sup>18</sup>The two most important biographies of Edward VII are Sidney Lee, King Edward VII, a Biography, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1927) and Philip Magnus, King Edward the Seventh (London: John Murray, 1964). The best work on George V is Harold Nicolson, King George V (London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1952).

a good public relations man for Britain during his famous visit to Paris in 1903.

If parliament lacked the aptitude and the monarchy the power to control British foreign policy, one must look to the cabinet, the real governing body of the country. What control did the cabinet as a whole have over its Foreign Secretary to ensure that he served Britain's national interests to the best of his ability?

Grey as Foreign Secretary had a special position in the cabinet, for while domestic affairs were divided among a dozen ministers, foreign affairs were concentrated almost completely under the control of one. His work was of a different character from that of his colleagues, for not only was it highly specialized, but he was not responsible for administering new laws passed by parliament and much of his work was such that parliament could not pass final judgement upon it. And Grey, as was usual for British Foreign Secretaries, retained the same cabinet post while most of his other colleagues were transferred from one office to another.

Grey's powers were further increased by the fact that the twenty-odd cabinet ministers had departments of their own to administer which monopolized almost all of their time and energy. And, like parliament, many of Grey's colleagues were not interested in foreign affairs. The

Radical wing, the old Pro-Boers, led by the Prime Minister from 1905 to 1908, Campbell-Bannerman, was pre-occupied with its extensive programs of social legislation as well as with the many domestic crises which the Liberals had to face. Grey was thus more independent in foreign affairs than his predecessor, Lansdowne, had been since both of the Prime Ministers under whom Lansdowne had served, Salisbury and Balfour, had been deeply interested in foreign affairs, and both intervened on occasion to change Lansdowne's policy. There is no evidence to show that Campbell-Bannerman ever attempted to modify Grey's policy.<sup>19</sup> His successor, Asquith, was on the most intimate terms with Grey and, as a fellow Liberal Imperialist, agreed with him on all important questions of foreign policy, often serving as his main support against the Radicals.

All members of the cabinet were kept informed of the current state of foreign affairs by the daily circulation of dispatches, by personal conferences, and by formal discussions of foreign policy at cabinet meetings. But many ministers did not bother to read the documents, and even if they did they would not have learned the whole story. There was a separate system of circulation for the most highly confidential despatches, the "confidential

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<sup>19</sup>Monger, p. 308.

print," which went only to the Prime Minister, the sovereign and the heir to the throne. And to this list Grey added a few colleagues whom he had selected to take into his confidence, colleagues who shared his Liberal Imperialist views. Thus the control of foreign policy rested not with the entire cabinet but with the Foreign Secretary, the Prime Minister, and a few chosen ministers.

Yet while parliament, public opinion, and even the cabinet were not able to have a large say in the formulation of foreign policy, Grey could certainly not ignore them. The British system of government was a parliamentary one, and he worked within it. He knew that in the last resort it was parliament, not he himself, who must decide whether Britain went to war, perhaps regardless of the policy he had been pursuing should it be a policy of which parliament strongly disapproved. He had to consider a parliament and a cabinet where many members took a completely different point of view in foreign policy from himself -- a Gladstonian rather than a Palmerstonian approach. Although, as stated above, the Radicals were little interested in foreign policy, when they did concern themselves with this area of government their position was intrinsically opposed to that of Grey, and they could make a lot of trouble for him. It was a negative influence that they wielded, for parliament could only pass judgement upon Grey's work after he had accomplished it, and the cabinet

were also not informed fully as to the state of Britain's relations until sometime later. What influence this Radical opinion had upon the actual formulations of foreign policy was to restrain Grey from adopting more fully than he did the opinions of the permanent officials of the Foreign Office and from putting them into practice.

"The prestige of the Foreign Office reached its modern zenith in those years under Grey and thereafter suffered a noteworthy decline."<sup>20</sup> The purpose of the Foreign Office was not to formulate policy -- that was the task of the Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister, subject to the approval of the cabinet. But it was the Foreign Office officials who made available to the elected representatives the information and recommendations upon the basis of which policy was formulated. The sheer pressure of business, not to mention the impossibility of being a master of all the various areas of Britain's foreign relations, compelled British Foreign Secretaries in the last decades before the war to delegate an increasing proportion of their authority to the chief permanent officials in the Foreign Office.

A revolution took place in the Foreign Office in 1906 just at the time when Grey took over as Foreign Secretary. The impetus of Sir Charles Hardinge, the new

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<sup>20</sup>Bishop, p. 70.

Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, "transformed what had been a stuffy family business into an efficient Department of State, second only to the Treasury."<sup>21</sup> "Experts" were introduced into the various political departments, men with first-hand knowledge of particular countries. While in the old days the Permanent Under-Secretary, T. H. Sanderson, had alone written minutes on dispatches, Hardinge allowed all sorts of junior officials to write what they pleased. And not only was the Foreign Office under Grey more democratic in its procedure, but it contained a group of very able men. Besides this, the Foreign Office officials in the embassies abroad were supplying more opinions and recommendations than before. Beginning in 1906, the British Ambassadors were directed by Grey to send to the Foreign Office at the end of each year a General Report on the events of that year in the particular country to which they were accredited.

The influence of the Foreign Office depended to a large extent upon the personality of the Foreign Minister -- upon whether or not his views coincided, at least in the broad outlines of policy, with those of the permanent officials. For even though these officials were the real experts

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<sup>21</sup>Harold Nicolson, Sir Arthur Nicolson, Bart., First Lord Carnock - A Study in the Old Diplomacy (London: Constable and Co. Ltd., 1930), p. 325.

on foreign policy and even though they provided the Foreign Minister with information and recommendations, he was perfectly free to ignore their advice if he so chose. Under Lansdowne a change had gradually been wrought in the prevailing opinions in the Foreign Office. With the retirement of Sanderson early in 1906 a new group with anti-German, pro-entente views was triumphant, headed by Sir Francis Bertie, Ambassador to Paris; Sir Charles Hardinge, Ambassador to St. Petersburg; Sir Arthur Nicolson, who succeeded Hardinge in St. Petersburg when the latter took over from Sanderson as Permanent Under-Secretary in February 1906; Eyre Crowe, a Senior Clerk in the Foreign Office; and Louis Mallet, Grey's Private Secretary. The views of this group were anathema to the Radical Liberals who made up a majority in the House of Commons and in the cabinet, but, as will be seen in this thesis, for the new Liberal Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, they held a strong appeal. The Foreign Office was, as Bishop says, to reach its peak of greatest influence during the period of Grey's Foreign Secretaryship.

CHAPTER II  
ALGECIRAS AND THE MILITARY CONVERSATIONS  
WITH FRANCE

When the Liberal party took office in Britain in December 1905 for the first time in ten years, it was at a critical moment internationally. The change of government came in the midst of a serious crisis over Morocco in which France and Germany were the main protagonists, but which in revolving around the question of the interests of the great powers in Morocco also involved Britain because of her agreement of April 1904 with France. All eyes in Europe were therefore anxiously fixed upon the new ministry and particularly upon Sir Edward Grey, the new British Foreign Secretary, in anticipation of a change in British foreign policy which could affect the outcome of the present crisis and, beyond that, perhaps the state of international relations for years to come.

The legacy of Gladstonian Liberalism seemed to indicate that the foreign policy of the new Liberal ministry would be softer, more pacifistic than that of their Conservative predecessors. The French were fearful that the Liberals would not honour the terms of the 1904 agreement, and the Germans took heart at the prospect of a weakening of the entente and

perhaps its collapse as Britain pulled back into her isolationist shell.<sup>1</sup> But Paul Cambon, the French Ambassador to London, reassured his government that although the Liberals were for the most part pacifists: "The recent entente with France has received their approval because they believe it is a guarantee of peace."<sup>2</sup> The Liberals, he said, would like a rapprochement with Germany to go along with the French entente, but if Berlin showed bellicose tendencies the new ministry would be drawn towards liberal and pacific France "with perhaps an even more, energetic determination than the Conservatives demonstrated in the same circumstances". As for Grey, Cambon advised that although he had previously been

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<sup>1</sup>Eugene N. Anderson in his monograph, The First Moroccan Crisis, 1904-1906, cites evidence from Die Grosse Politik to show that:

"Prince Búlow and the Emperor both expected an improvement in Anglo-German relations, and exerted their influence in achieving it. The Chancellor did not believe that the new Liberal government would stiffen the French resistance by holding out the prospect of active aid in case of war as the Unionist cabinet had done. He interpreted the overwhelming Liberal victory at the elections in January as a clear rejection of chauvinism and an equally clear expression by the nation of an earnest desire for peace and for further improvement in Anglo-German relations."

(Eugene N. Anderson, The First Moroccan Crisis, 1904-1906 [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930], pp. 317-18.) This study by Anderson was not found to be of much importance because of its early date of publication, before any of the French Documents diplomatiques were available. Anderson has, however, used the German documents as this writer has not.

<sup>2</sup>France, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Documents diplomatiques français, 1871-1914 (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1929- ). Cambon to Maurice Rouvier [French Finance Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs], December 12, 1905, 2<sup>e</sup> série, Vol. VIII, Number 219. Hereafter cited as D.D.F.

antagonistic towards France as Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, he had lately shown himself to be a resolute partisan of the entente: "I do not think that we have to worry about seeing him entrusted with the direction of foreign affairs."

Cambon was correct in anticipating that Grey would not abandon the new British policy of friendship with France. But was Grey just continuing the foreign policy of the Conservatives as he had promised in his City Speech<sup>3</sup> or did he go further than Lansdowne in his support of France, so much further as to introduce an entirely new direction into that policy? Monger's thesis is that the latter happened. This chapter will examine Grey's policy during the First Moroccan Crisis in order to elucidate the principles according to which he acted during his first important months in office and in order to try to determine whether Monger's thesis is valid and can be used as a tool of analysis for Grey's foreign policy until the outbreak of war in 1914.

British interests in Morocco were commercial and naval rather than territorial. Britain had already established for herself a large African empire and now desired to consolidate it as well as her many other widely scattered imperial possessions. But the Mediterranean was the highway

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<sup>3</sup> See above, Chapter I, pp. 14-15.

to her Eastern empire, and she was therefore forced to take an interest in those states which bordered upon it, of which Morocco was one. As Grey stated, Britain desired that two conditions be met in Morocco: the maintenance of order and the open door policy.<sup>4</sup> She would have preferred to see the Mediterranean ringed with weak, independent states rather than colonies and naval bases of other powers. However in 1904, as part of her turn-of-the-century policy of removing outstanding grievances with other powers, Britain settled differences with her greatest rival in the Mediterranean and Africa, France, by recognizing her preponderant interest in Morocco. The British believed that their own interests in Morocco had been safe-guarded by this agreement.

Less than a year after the signing of the Anglo-French entente treaty, the Kaiser landed at Tangier in a brash attempt planned by the German Chancellor, Bernhard von Bülow, and the Senior Councillor in the German Foreign Office, Friedrich von Holstein, to force Britain and France to admit that the power and might of Germany necessitated her consent to any such agreements as the one over Morocco, as well as

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<sup>4</sup>Great Britain, British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914, ed. G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1927-38). Grey to Sir Frank Lascelles [British Ambassador in Berlin], February 14, 1906, Vol. III, Number 285 and Grey to C. A. Spring-Rice [British Secretary, later Councillor, and sometimes Chargé d'Affaires of Embassy at St. Petersburg], February 20, 1906, Vol. III, 297. Hereafter cited as B.D..

to bolster sagging German prestige and to test, and probably break, the Anglo-French entente, propelling the deserted France into waiting German arms. The Germans were successful at first, forcing first the resignation of Theophile Delcassé, the French Foreign Minister and one of the architects of the entente, and then France's acceptance of an international conference. Delcassé's fall and his successor, Rouvier's, subsequent capitulation to German demands shook British faith in France as a diplomatic partner.<sup>5</sup> This faith began slowly to return when Bülow, despite Rouvier's conciliatory attitude, remained hostile and the French Minister was forced to turn back to Britain. But while the Conservatives were in office in Britain, faith in France did not return to the high level it had attained while Delcassé was in charge of French foreign policy. In the autumn of 1905 while preparations were being made for the Algeciras conference, Anglo-French collaboration was infrequent. Yet by the time the Liberals took office on December 11, the danger of a Franco-German conflict had superseded that of a Franco-German compromise.

By the entente agreement, Britain had promised France her diplomatic support in securing for her a preponderant position in Morocco. Lansdowne, who had negotiated the entente,

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<sup>5</sup>Monger, p. 202.

lived up to this promise in the early stages of the crisis. Likewise, before the Algeciras conference began Grey made it clear in his instructions to the British representative, Sir Arthur Nicolson, that in his opinion Britain had an obligation to France arising from the 1904 agreement and that he intended to honour it:

Generally speaking ... Your Excellency will, in accordance with Articles II and IX of the Anglo-French Declaration of April 8, 1904 respecting Egypt and Morocco, cordially support the proposals which your French colleague may bring forward with a view to the improvement of the existing state of affairs, and you should encourage your Spanish colleagues to adopt a similar attitude.<sup>6</sup>

When the Germans expressed hopes that Britain would support their proposal that reforms in Morocco be carried out on an international rather than a unilateral basis, Grey informed them that Britain had already conceded to France a special position in Morocco.<sup>7</sup> And when Holstein expressed fears that if the results of the conference were unfavourable to France, she might, relying on British support, attempt to create a fait accompli by invading Morocco, Grey expressed hope that such a contingency would not arise but warned: "Should it however be otherwise we cannot deprecate any action on the part of France which comes within the terms

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<sup>6</sup> Grey to Nicolson, December 14, 1905, B.D. III, 193.

<sup>7</sup> Grey to Lascelles, January 9, 1906, ibid., 230.

of the Anglo-French declarations of April 1904."<sup>8</sup>

Thus when the conference opened, Grey had defined the policy to be followed by Britain: support of France within the limits of the entente agreement, that is, diplomatic support in Morocco. But was Britain obliged to support the French no matter how exorbitant their demands? It appears that Grey did not think so. The main clash between France and Germany at Algeciras was over the question of the control of the police system to be set up in Morocco. The German delegates suggested control either by several powers, by one small power, or by the Sultan alone. France would not accept anything less than control by herself, perhaps in association with Spain. The conference opened on January 16, 1906. By February 5 Nicolson was warning Grey of a probable breakdown.<sup>9</sup> By February 15 Grey had decided that the time had come for France to consider accepting the latest German proposal that the police be organized under the Sultan by officers from a neutral minor power with one head officer who, if the French insisted, must be French.<sup>10</sup>

In a memorandum dated February 20 Grey set forth some extremely important ideas:

If there is war between France and Germany it will be very difficult for us to keep out of it. The Entente and still more the constant and emphatic demonstrations of affection (official, naval,

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<sup>8</sup>Grey to Lascelles, January 15, 1906, ibid. 243.

<sup>9</sup>Nicolson to Grey, ibid., 268.

<sup>10</sup>Grey to Nicolson, ibid., 288.

political, commercial, Municipal and the Press) have created in France a belief that we should support her in war ...

There would also I think be a general feeling in every country that we have behaved meanly and left France in the lurch ... we should be left without a friend and without the power of making a friend and Germany would take some pleasure, after what has passed, in exploiting the whole situation to our disadvantage, very likely by stirring up trouble through the Sultan of Turkey in Egypt.<sup>11</sup>

Here Grey revealed himself as willing to support France, even to the length of war, and, in Monger's words, made "the significant admission that some sort of obligation already existed".<sup>12</sup> But he would do all that he could to prevent hostilities by advising the French to make concessions to Germany because: "The prospect of a European War and of our being involved in it is horrible."<sup>13</sup> He would thus risk incurring France's dislike in order to avoid war. And yet he quickly retreated from this position when rumours of British willingness to concede the port of Mogador caused anxious French inquiries. Under combined French and Foreign Office pressure Grey gave up the idea of forcing concession upon France, telling the First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Tweedmouth, that the reason was fear of alienating the French

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 299.

<sup>12</sup>Monger, p. 275.

<sup>13</sup>B.D. III, 299.

and asking him to conceal the fact that the concession was even contemplated.<sup>14</sup>

Grey repeated this pattern of resistance followed by capitulation to the French. On March 8 the German delegates allowed the Austrians to propose a compromise that the police be exclusively French or Spanish in every port except Casablanca where they would be under the control of a Swiss or Dutch officer, with such an officer also exercising general powers of inspection of the police in all ports. Both Grey and Nicolson greeted this concession with relief. It was, Grey said, "a real concession on the part of Germany and had brought an agreement so near that it would not do to let the conference break up now without a settlement."<sup>15</sup> For, he added: "Germany has conceded the substance and it would be a great pity, if France sacrificed the substance to the shadow."<sup>16</sup> The French, however, refused to accept the Casablanca solution. By March 14 Grey had again capitulated to the French, commenting: "As the French take Casablanca so seriously we must take it so too."<sup>17</sup> He

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<sup>14</sup>Monger, p. 276. From the Grey MSS. Monger comments in a footnote: "It is interesting that there is no trace of this episode in the British Documents."

<sup>15</sup>Grey to Sir Francis Bertie [British Ambassador to Paris], March 9, 1906, B.D. III, 333.

<sup>16</sup>Grey to Nicolson, March 10, 1906, ibid., 335.

<sup>17</sup>Minute by Grey on Nicolson to Grey, B.D. III, 342. Quoted in Monger, p. 278. The minute is not printed in the British Documents.

thought the French were making "a great mistake" in not accepting this German concession which would have been a diplomatic victory. And if the conference broke up now, France, not Germany, would be blamed: "People will say that France is unreasonable and did not know how to take her advantage when she had it."<sup>18</sup> But as Grey saw Britain's position vis-à-vis France: "We can't press our advice on them to the point of breaking up the entente."<sup>19</sup> This last statement is the key one. Grey had admitted that he thought France was making a mistake, and he had admitted the very real possibility that the conference would break up and war probably result because of her obstinacy. Yet in order not to weaken the entente he intended to support her anyhow.

Two main factors can be detected which were influential in encouraging Grey along this course. First, his previous experience at the Foreign Office had had a lasting impact upon him. In his memoirs, he says that when he took office in 1905 the time was at hand for Britain to give France the diplomatic support promised the year before:

If it were not fulfilled, then the Entente with France would disappear; all that had been gained by the Anglo-French Agreement would be lost. We should be back where we had been in 1892-5, constantly on the brink of war with France or Russia

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<sup>18</sup>Grey to Bertie, March 15, 1906, B.D. III, 353.

<sup>19</sup>Grey to Lord Cromer [British Consul-General and Agent in Egypt], March 15, 1906. From Grey MSS. Quoted in Monger, p. 278.

or both, and dependent for our diplomatic position in the world on German good-will. My recollection of the discomforts and dangers of that position, when I was inside the Foreign Office in those years, was vivid and disagreeable; the relief felt at the conclusion of the Anglo-French Agreement was very present to my mind. I was determined not to slip back into the old quaking bog, but to keep on what seemed then the sounder and more wholesome ground.<sup>20</sup>

Another strong influence upon Grey was the Foreign Office. It is difficult to estimate exactly how great this influence was, for there is no way of knowing how many important foreign policy decisions were made at private meetings between Grey and his Foreign Office advisors of which there are no written records. Yet the study of both the recorded opinions of these officials and the policy that Grey followed leaves no doubt that the anti-German group which had gradually worked its way into the most influential positions in London and the embassies abroad played a large part in determining the line which British foreign policy took during this crisis.

A few important officials remained opposed to the new Foreign Office policy of commitment to France and suspicion, or even hatred, of Germany by the time Grey took office. Of these officials, most notable were Sanderson, the Permanent Under-Secretary, and Sir Frank Lascelles, British Ambassador to Berlin. Sanderson had for several

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<sup>20</sup>Grey, Twenty-five Years, I, p. 103.

years been striving in vain to stem the anti-German tide. He tried to restrain Grey during his important interview with Cambon on January 10.<sup>21</sup> But he retired in February. The position of his successor, Hardinge, is rather hard to determine. He was an important member of the anti-German group, although in the course of 1906 he became estranged from the more violent Germanophobes. He feared and distrusted Germany, but he was not embittered towards her as were some of his colleagues. In March he expressed his belief that Britain should not have withdrawn her pressure on France to accept the Casablanca proposal,<sup>22</sup> yet less than a month before he had warned: "If France is left in the lurch an agreement or alliance between France, Germany and Russia in the near future is certain."<sup>23</sup> Nicolson was another member of the group who disagreed with Grey's support of French opposition to the Casablanca scheme.<sup>24</sup> And Lascelles,

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<sup>21</sup>Cambon to Rouvier, January 11, 1906, Enclosure 2 in B.D. III, 212. Printed in full in D.D.F., 2<sup>e</sup>, VIII, 385. See below p. 41 for the details of this interview.

<sup>22</sup>Hardinge to Nicolson, March 15, 1906, B.D. III, 354.

<sup>23</sup>Minute by Hardinge on Grey's Memorandum of February 20, 1906, ibid., 299.

<sup>24</sup>Monger, p. 279. From Grey MSS. But Monger is perhaps in error when he states that it was against Nicolson's advice that Grey rejected a United States proposal in late March that France and Spain should act cojointly as agents of Europe under a strict inspection in policing the ports. He cites a telegram from Nicolson to Grey dated March 21, 1906 which is not printed in the British Documents. However, in the two telegrams immediately preceding and following the one to which Monger refers, Nicolson opposed the American scheme. (See B.D. III, 366 and 367).

who consistently worked to improve Anglo-German relations, similarly urged a more conciliatory French attitude. Grey was therefore not receiving just one point of view from his Foreign Office advisors.

But the anti-German voices were loud and persistent. Hardinge and Nicolson, while drawing the line at encouraging France in her rejection of a proposal that would be a diplomatic triumph and, at the same time, avoid a war, were still very pro-entente. And even more so were Sir Francis Bertie, the British Ambassador to Paris; Eyre Crowe, a Senior Clerk and Head of the Western Department in the Foreign Office until 1912 and thereafter an Assistant Under-Secretary, perhaps the most anti-German and most able and rapidly becoming one of the most influential men in the Foreign Office; and Louis Mallet, Grey's Private Secretary. Bertie continually warned Grey from Paris of the dangerous consequences for the entente if Britain failed to give the French anything more than a promise of diplomatic support or neutrality in the event of a Franco-German war:

... there is a serious danger of a complete revulsion of feeling on the part of the French Government and of public opinion in France. The Government would consider that they had been deserted and might, in order to avoid the risks of a war without ally, deem it advisable to make great concessions to Germany outside Morocco in order to obtain liberty of action in that country.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Bertie to Grey, January 13, 1906, B.D. III, 213.

If France were forced by Britain to give in to Germany, Bertie warned, "it may then become a cry -- encouraged by Germany -- of save us from our friends".<sup>26</sup> And Crowe advised that if Germany was inclined to go to war with France: "A promise of armed assistance will involve no practical liabilities while the good effects on strengthening our ties with France might be considerable."<sup>27</sup>

The policy Grey pursued at Algeciras was not a strong or an independent one. His capitulations to the French point of view after several attempts at standing firm would indicate that he was very susceptible to the opinions of others. And it seems logical to surmise, given his previous unfortunate dealings with Germany and his relief at the conclusion of the French entente, that it was the anti-German group in the Foreign Office and the embassies whose opinions he was most likely to adopt.

Before discussing the consequences of Grey's making the entente the determining principle of British foreign policy, one must first look at another aspect of that policy -- the military conversations with the French Chiefs of Staff.<sup>28</sup> There is some difference of opinion as to whether

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<sup>26</sup> Bertie to Grey, March 12, 1906. Quoted in Monger, p. 277. From Grey MSS.

<sup>27</sup> Minute by Crowe on B.D. III, 213. Quoted in Monger, p. 271. (Minute not printed in B.D.)

<sup>28</sup> Military conversations were also begun with the Belgian Chiefs of Staff at the same time.

the conversations began under the Conservatives or under the Liberals, and the question will perhaps never be answered beyond all shadow of a doubt. There is, however, no record of any conversations from the Conservative era, although Grey states in his memoirs that he was merely continuing what Lansdowne had begun.<sup>29</sup> But there is evidence of unofficial meetings about a week after the Liberals came to power. Grey was informed of these "feelers" in January and agreed to the continuation of the conversations. Military conversations became official on January 15, although naval conversations never really began owing to the opposition of First Sea Lord, Sir John Fisher. Both sides emphasized that these conversations were to be purely on the military level, involving no commitment of the respective governments.

Grey, however, had important conversations with the German and French Ambassadors. On January 9 he told Paul Count von Wolff Metternich, the German Ambassador: "If France got into difficulties arising out of the very

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Grey, Twenty-five Years, I, pp. 74-75.

J. D. Hargreaves in an article in 1951 concluded on the basis of a re-examination of the evidence for military conversations in the Balfour era: "All the contemporary evidence seems to indicate that there was no direct or indirect contact between British and French general staffs until after the fall of the Balfour government." (J. D. Hargreaves, "The Origin of the Anglo-French Military Conversations in 1905" in History Vol. 36, October 1951, p. 246.) Monger in 1963 has reached the same conclusion.

document which had been the foundation of the good feeling between us and France, sympathy with the French would be exceedingly strong" and "it would be impossible to be neutral."<sup>30</sup> On January 10 Cambon asked Grey the inevitable question whether France could depend upon British armed assistance in the event of aggression by Germany. Grey gave him his personal opinion that "if France were to be attacked by Germany in consequence of a question arising out of the Agreement which our predecessors had recently concluded with the French Government, public opinion in England would be strongly moved in favour of France."<sup>31</sup> This was what he had told Metternich, although he cautioned Cambon that any British action must be conditional, depending largely upon the circumstances. In a private letter he told Bertie: "My opinion is that if France is let in for a war with Germany arising out of our agreement with her about Morocco, we cannot stand aside, but must take part with France."<sup>32</sup> Monger points out: "This was the first time, as far as we can tell, that a member of the Cabinet had said this unequivocally."<sup>33</sup> And in his warning to Metternich

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<sup>30</sup>Grey to Lascelles, January 9, 1906, B.D. III, 229.

<sup>31</sup>Grey to Bertie, January 10, 1906, ibid., 210(a).

<sup>32</sup>Grey to Bertie, January 15, 1906, ibid., 216.

<sup>33</sup>Monger, pp. 271-272.

Grey did not specify the cause of a war in which he felt Britain would lend France military aid, although in his further conversation with Cambon on January 31 he warned that Britain "would not be prepared to fight in order to put France in possession of Morocco".<sup>34</sup>

Grey says in his memoirs:

My object in these conversations was to make the Germans understand that the situation was serious, and let the French feel that we were sympathetic, while carefully avoiding anything that might raise expectations in their minds which this country might not fulfill. To do this it was necessary to avoid bluff in the one case and promises in the other.<sup>35</sup>

On the surface this would seem to have been a wise policy for a British Foreign Secretary to have followed -- a combination of firmness and non-commitment. Grey's explanation of what he was attempting to do would account for his more restrained statements to the French than to the Germans. And many, including Trevelyan, would also accept his statement that his conversation with Cambon on January 31 "defines the position that was maintained up to the very outbreak of war. From time to time the same question was raised, but never did we go a hair's-breadth beyond the position taken in the conversation with M. Cambon on January 31, 1906."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Grey to Bertie, January 31, 1906, B.D. III, 219.

<sup>35</sup>Grey, Twenty-five Years, I, p. 85.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

But even if Grey did not, as he says, go a "hair's-breadth" beyond the position taken on January 31, 1906 -- and it will be one of the aims of the succeeding chapters of this thesis to show whether or not he did -- some dangerous precedents were established in that conversation.

Grey believed that if Cambon was not given an unconditional promise of British military aid, the French would not count on such aid and thus would not be further encouraged to resist reasonable German offers at Algeciras. Yet just the opposite happened. Cambon's report to Rouvier of his conversation with Grey on January 31 clearly indicates that the French were counting on Britain for more than just diplomatic support:

This whole situation can be summed up as follows: the English do not want to commit themselves except in the case of a certain threat and when faced with an absolute necessity, but all indications are that, when the day of this necessity arrives, we can count on them.<sup>37</sup>

The military conversations did not bind Britain to give France military assistance. They only made it possible for that assistance to be given in the quickest and most efficient way if the British government should so decide. That decision was a political one; the conversations were purely on the military level. However, as a result of the

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<sup>37</sup>Cambon to Rouvier, January 31, 1906, D.D.F., 2<sup>e</sup>, VIII, 106.

initiation of the conversations, British military priorities were changed. Previously all emphasis in military planning had been upon imperial defence and the threat of invasion. Now plans were formulated for sending an expeditionary force to France, "an eventuality to be seriously considered".<sup>38</sup> In the next few years, as the conversation continued, ties between the British and French General Staffs became increasingly strong. Numerous leading British military men expressed the conviction after 1906 that war with Germany was inevitable.<sup>39</sup> And the sharing of military secrets with the French made it less likely that Britain would go to war against France.<sup>40</sup>

And it was not only the top military officers who encouraged this more continental outlook. Over and above them was the political arm of the military -- the War Office.

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<sup>38</sup> From a "Memorandum on the Military Forces required for Overseas Warfare" drawn up by the Operations Directorate early in 1906. Quoted in J. E. Tyler, The British Army and the Continent, 1904-1914 (London: Edward Arnold and Co., 1938), p. 67.

<sup>39</sup> Tyler states that Sir John French, Commander of the First Army Corps at this time, was certain of it in 1908 and Haig when he became Director of Military Training in August 1906. Generals Rawlinson, Smith-Dorrien, and Cowans were of the same opinion (Tyler, p.69-70).

<sup>40</sup> Winston Churchill says: "Henceforward the relations of the two Staffs became increasingly intimate and confidential. The minds of our military men were definitely turned into a particular channel. Mutual trust grew continually in one set of military relationships, mutual precautions in the other. However explicitly the two Governments might agree and affirm to each other that no national or political engagement was involved in these technical discussions, the fact remained that they constituted an exceedingly potent tie." (Winston S. Churchill, The World Crisis [Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, Ltd., 1923], p. 27).

The new Secretary of State for War, Haldane, set about a complete reorganization of his department with the intention of creating a British expeditionary force which would be large enough and efficient enough to be of use in a continental war, and which would be ready for prompt intervention upon a British declaration of war. It was in no small measure due to Haldane's reforms that when in August 1914 Britain did decide to aid France, she was able to do so quickly and effectively. Also helpful in this respect was the Committee of Imperial Defence, created by Balfour in 1904 as a permanent advisory committee on defence questions. Consisting of the Prime Minister and those cabinet ministers and military and naval officers whom he summoned, it provided an important link between government and armed services, and between military and naval personnel and plans.<sup>41</sup> Although it was ineffective at its inception, and Campbell-Bannerman would have liked to have eliminated it, its influence grew apace in the last years before the war so that "C.I.D. conclusions were in practice, by the eve of the war, authoritative".<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> However, despite the C.I.D., the army and navy continued to work out their defence plans in almost complete isolation from the other, for their plans clashed. The navy was opposed to sending an expeditionary force to the continent, arguing that since Britain could not hope to send more than a few divisions, she should concentrate instead upon building up even further her naval supremacy.

<sup>42</sup> Arthur J. Marder, From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919, Vol. I: The Road to War, 1904-1914 (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 342.

None of these manifestations of closer British-French military relations could create a definite British commitment to France. But the conversations must not be viewed in isolation. They must be coupled with the support that Grey gave the French at Algeciras -- with his great fear lest the entente be weakened or destroyed and his consequent capitulations to French anxieties despite his belief that France was making a mistake and despite his knowledge that her unreasonableness might very well break up the conference. When the total picture of Grey's action between his taking office in December 1905 and the end of the Algeciras conference in April 1906 is considered, the conclusion cannot be avoided that he believed that Britain must support France at all costs -- even to the extent of going to war against Germany. In other words, Grey felt a commitment to France.

In his memoirs Grey states: "It was a matter of interest to preserve it [the entente] as well as a point of honour to act up to the diplomatic obligations contained in it."<sup>43</sup> There is no space here for a long discussion of what "commitment" means, but this writer would argue that since any realistic foreign policy is based upon the principle of national self-interest, it makes no sense to say that a commitment exists only when a state acts for reasons other

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<sup>43</sup>Grey, Twenty-five Years, I, p. 104.

than self-interest. For in so defining it, the term "commitment" becomes meaningless. If it is in the interest of one state to support another, some sort of commitment exists. This commitment will be strengthened if a formal agreement is signed, although even a treaty of alliance can be repudiated by one partner. It will also be strengthened if other less tangible factors such as honour and prestige are at stake. There was no written agreement in which Britain had promised France military support. But the British had always put much emphasis on unwritten tradition. Their constitution had gradually evolved without ever having been precisely defined.

Grey's dispatches and memoranda during the First Moroccan Crisis clearly indicate that these more or less intangible factors were as important to him as his desire to serve Britain's national interests. He would not stand idly by and let aspersion be cast upon Britain's good name. Nor was he willing to let the prestige of the entente be decreased:

If she [France] can succeed in getting this with our help it will be a great success for the Anglo-French Entente; if she fails the prestige of the Entente will suffer and its vitality will be diminished.

Our main object therefore must be to help France to carry her point at the Conference.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Grey to Nicolson, December 21, 1905, B.D. III, 200.

Grey's memoirs would indicate that he believed that he was only honouring the "diplomatic obligations" laid down in the entente agreement, but his actions and words during the crisis show that in practice he acted upon the principle that Britain was committed to support France over Morocco come what might.

It must be stressed that Grey's commitment was a personal one, for Britain could not go to war without the consent of parliament. However the impact of public opinion during this crisis was negligible. Grey refused to make any statements in the House of Commons while negotiations at Algeciras were still in progress. And he had little interference from members of the cabinet, most of whom were engrossed in the Liberal program of social reforms. Probably, however, Grey would have encountered much more opposition had he kept his cabinet colleagues fully informed.

Grey may have been criticized more because of his failure to inform the whole cabinet of the military conversations than for any other aspect of his foreign policy. Only he himself, Campbell-Bannerman, Ripon, Lord Privy Seal and leader in the Lords, Haldane, Tweedmouth, First Lord of the Admiralty, and possibly Asquith knew of them at the time, the rest not until 1911. Grey's explanation in his memoirs is that they did not commit Britain any further than the 1904 agreement; that it was difficult to call a cabinet

as the members were dispersed throughout the country for the election; and that Campbell-Bannerman and Ripon, who were informed and who had more experience with cabinets than Grey, did not suggest a meeting.<sup>45</sup> None of these explanations, however, is really satisfactory. Rather, Cambon's explanation to Rouvier seems the right one -- that Grey did not inform the cabinet, knowing that certain members of the Radical wing would have opposed what he was doing.<sup>46</sup>

Monger labels Grey's action "grossly unconstitutional" and questions his fitness to be Foreign Secretary.<sup>47</sup>

The episode as a whole exhibits a lack of candour on his part and the introduction of a new conception of the relations between the Cabinet and Foreign Secretary. Lansdowne had referred everything of importance to his colleagues and had several times allowed himself to be overruled by them. Grey was not prepared to accept this risk; and foreign policy, more than ever before, fell into the control of one man.<sup>48</sup>

Monger makes a good point here in emphasizing the extent to which Grey personally had control of British foreign policy. It is a point which increases immensely the importance of

<sup>45</sup>Grey, Twenty-five Years, I, pp. 86-87.

<sup>46</sup>Cambon to Rouvier, January 31, 1906, D.D.F., 2<sup>e</sup>, IX(1), 106.

<sup>47</sup>Monger, p. 255.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., pp. 255-256.

Grey's personal ideas on foreign policy. Thus his belief that Britain must support France at all costs, that Britain was committed to France, although not automatically binding on the British government, would be the basis for Britain's foreign policy as long as Grey remained Foreign Secretary and unopposed in foreign policy and as long as he retained that belief.

Monger, however, perhaps goes too far in implying that Grey was deliberately devious, concealing such vital information from the cabinet as would cause opposition to his favourite policy. Grey's inexperience at this time cannot be ignored. He admits in Twenty-five Years: "I have always regretted that the military conversations were not brought before the cabinet at once: this would have avoided unnecessary suspicion."<sup>49</sup> In reply to his critics, both during his period in office and after, he admits that he is open to the charge of not revealing all he knew, especially not to parliament even when specific questions were asked:

Parliament has an unqualified right to know of any agreements or arrangements that bind the country to action or restrain its freedom. But

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<sup>49</sup>Grey, Twenty-five Years, I, p. 96.

it cannot be told of military and naval measures to meet possible contingencies.<sup>50</sup>

His argument is that neither the military conversations nor the later naval conversations with France committed Britain. Yet he acted during the First Moroccan Crisis as if Britain were committed to France. The answer to this seeming contradiction is not that Grey was lying, but rather that he himself was not really aware, either in 1906 or after the war, that joint military plans almost inevitably result in obligations binding upon the political authorities. Grey was wrong in assuming that the arrangements of the military

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 289-90. As for the amount of information withheld from the cabinet, it is interesting to note the difference of opinion revealed in the memoirs of Asquith and Lloyd George. Asquith states: "Important questions of foreign policy were always laid before the Cabinet, where they were open to the fullest investigation and discussion before final and binding decisions were taken." (Herbert Henry Asquith, The Genesis of the War [New York: George H. Doran Company, 1923], p. 17).

Lloyd George says that apart from the cabinet members who attended C.I.D. meetings: "The Cabinet as a whole were never called into genuine consultation upon the fundamental aspects of the foreign situation. There was a reticence and a secrecy which practically ruled out three-fourths of the Cabinet from the chance of making any genuine contribution to the momentous questions then fermenting on the continent of Europe, which ultimately ended in an explosion that almost shattered the civilisation of the world." (David Lloyd George, War Memoirs of David Lloyd George, Vol. I: 1914-1915 [Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1938], p. 44).

In the light of Monger's work one is inclined to agree with Lloyd George that Grey did not consult the cabinet as often as he might have. Yet Lloyd George's statement that the "Cabinet were not privileged to know any more of the essential facts than those which the ordinary newspaper reader could gather from the morning journal" is surely an exaggeration in light of the dispatches which were daily circulated to each minister. (Ibid., p. 45).

authorities whom he allowed to concert between themselves without interference from the respective governments, would have no political ramifications. In the light of his own actions during the crisis such an assumption was unwarranted.

Grey's action during this crisis reveals a gradual, faltering groping towards a policy rather than a pre-meditated set of manoeuvres. His policy was in a process of evolution during his first year in office. At first he believed that he was only continuing Lansdowne's policy as he had promised in his City Speech. But the following statement indicates his realization as the crisis progressed that he had gone further than his predecessor: "Cordial co-operation with France in all parts of the world remains a cardinal point of British policy and in some respects we have carried it further than the late Government were required to do."<sup>51</sup>

Actually Grey was operating upon a different set of assumptions from Lansdowne. Lansdowne was ready to go to war, but only, as he told Balfour, in "certain eventualities",<sup>52</sup> only if British interests were clearly threatened. And Grey, too, as a realistic Foreign Secretary, would go to war to protect British interests. But their interpretation of what British interests actually were differed --

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<sup>51</sup>Grey to Bertie, March 15, 1906, B.D. III, 357.

<sup>52</sup>Quoted in Monger, p. 192.

and likewise did their foreign policy. Lansdowne saw it as his duty to prevent Germany from acquiring a Moroccan port: a natural conclusion following from the Conservatives' preoccupation with imperial and naval affairs. Under the Conservatives Britain had not really abandoned "splendid isolation", for the alliance with Japan and the entente with France had been negotiated in order that she might be able to continue to concentrate on imperial affairs without fear of becoming entangled in continental matters. Thus for Lansdowne, "the entente was a valuable diplomatic arrangement which it was desirable to preserve, but it was not an overriding principle of policy which must be defended at all costs."<sup>53</sup> In the summer of 1905 he was equally, if not more, concerned with the negotiations for the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance as he was with the Moroccan Crisis.

Grey, on the other hand, was much less concerned with the imperial and naval aspects of the Moroccan Crisis. He even thought seriously of conceding a port to Germany in order to get a settlement:

I doubt whether it is important to us to prevent Germany getting ports at a distance from her base; and the moment may come when a timely admission that it is not a cardinal object of British policy to prevent her having such a port may have great pacific effect.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Grey to Campbell-Bannerman, January 9, 1906. Quoted in Twenty-five Years, I, p. 117.

He considered such a concession "a card which might any day take a valuable trick in diplomacy".<sup>55</sup> And his criticism of this idea in his memoirs as likely to have broken up the entente had France learned of it<sup>56</sup> only adds to the evidence in support of Monger's thesis that the main principle of Grey's foreign policy was preservation of the entente. Whereas Lansdowne would go to war in the last resort in order to prevent Germany from securing a Moroccan port, Grey would go to war to retain the friendship of France.

The most unfortunate consequence of this new line in British foreign policy evolving under Grey was its effect upon his policy towards Germany. He tried to keep the door open for a rapprochement with Germany, but by making relations with her dependent upon the preservation of the entente, he was necessarily closing the door to such a rapprochement because of the great anxiety of the French that any improvement in Anglo-German relations would be at their expense. "By putting the entente at the forefront of his policy he necessarily made it difficult to act independently of the French and so reduced his freedom of movement."<sup>57</sup>

Monger tries to make out a case that Grey by the end of his first year in office had a strong anti-German bias. While he probably goes too far in asserting this, it is

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., pp. 118-119.

<sup>57</sup>Monger, p. 280.

hard to deny that as Grey became more and more solicitous for France's anxieties, he became less and less concerned for those of the Germans. In the early stages of the Algeciras conference he was willing to cede a port to Germany or apply pressure on France to accept a compromise solution of the police problem. Yet by the end of the conference he had completely capitulated to French desires. From the start he was intent on casting the blame for a break-up on Germany.<sup>58</sup> And he blamed German sources for rumours in mid-March of Britain's pending desertion of France.<sup>59</sup> In his memoirs he states:

The Germans did not fear our Entente with France, or seriously think it a menace to them but they disliked it: it had suited them that we should be on bad terms with France, it did not suit them that there should be an Entente. It was their game to sow distrust, if they could.<sup>60</sup>

In passages like this one Grey sounds very much like the anti-German Crowe with his view that the aim of German policy had been, and still was, to "squeeze" Britain for Germany's own advantage.

Grey's thoughts were increasingly concentrated on Europe as his emphasis on the entente indicates. He told

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<sup>58</sup>B.D. III, 281, 286, 288 and others.

<sup>59</sup>Spring-Rice to Count Lamsdorff [Russian Foreign Minister], March 14, 1906. Quoted in Grey, Twenty-five Years, I, pp. 110-111.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

Nicolson during the crisis: "It is the situation in Europe that will in the long run decide the position of France and Germany respectively in Morocco."<sup>61</sup> As Monger points out, this is almost the reverse attitude of Lansdowne's. For Lansdowne, the 1904 agreement with France had been a convenient removal of colonial differences, and because the Moroccan Crisis beginning the next year involved one of the areas specifically dealt with in that agreement and because therein Britain had pledged France her diplomatic support, he took a part in the settlement of that crisis in fulfillment of that pledge. But Grey's solicitude for the entente seems to have transcended the boundaries of the Moroccan agreement. In July 1906 when the French expressed fear of a pending Anglo-German entente, Grey told Cambon: "It would ... be inconvenient for France that we should be on bad terms with Germany, just as it would be inconvenient for us that France should be on bad terms with Germany, for if we were called on to take sides we must take sides with France as at Algeciras."<sup>62</sup> Here Grey pledged British support to the French with no conditions whatsoever regarding either the issue at stake or the aggressor. If he was just trying to reassure the French and had no intention of keeping such a promise, he was certainly acting very foolishly

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<sup>61</sup>Grey to Nicolson, February 12, 1906, B.D. III, 278.

<sup>62</sup>Grey to Bertie, July 9, 1906, ibid., 420.

in arousing false hopes which when revealed as false would destroy his policy of friendship with France.

In September 1906 it would seem from the following minute that Grey was not opposed in principle to an alliance with France:

The difficulty of making an alliance with France now is that Germany might attack France at once, while Russia is helpless, fearing lest when Russia recovered she (Germany) should be crushed by a new Triple Alliance against her. She might make an alliance between us and France a pretext for doing this as her only chance of securing her future.<sup>63</sup>

And he was already looking ahead to a rapprochement with Russia:

The door is being kept open by us for a rapprochement with Russia; there is at least a prospect that when Russia is re-established we shall find ourselves on good terms with her. An entente between Russia, France and ourselves would be absolutely secure. If it is necessary to check Germany it could then be done.<sup>64</sup>

This last statement is very significant as it reveals Grey's intention to base his foreign policy upon the idea of the balance of power. In Monger's words: "What Grey was in fact working towards was a new doctrine of the European balance of power."<sup>65</sup> Grey denies that his policy was ever

<sup>63</sup>Minute by Grey, September 18, 1906, ibid., 439.

<sup>64</sup>Memorandum by Grey, February 20, 1906, ibid., 299.

<sup>65</sup>Monger, p. 280.

based upon this doctrine:

I have never, so far as I recollect, used the phrase "Balance of Power". I have often deliberately avoided the use of it, and I have never consciously set it before me as something to be pursued, and preserved.<sup>66</sup>

His above statement about Russia, however, would seem to belie that denial. And in June 1906 he minuted: "The Germans do not realize that England has always drifted or deliberately gone into opposition to any Power which establishes a hegemony in Europe."<sup>67</sup>

On January 1, 1907 Eyre Crowe wrote his famous "Memorandum on the Present State of British Relations with France and Germany".<sup>68</sup> Grey's comments on it show its importance: "most valuable", "most helpful as a guide to policy", "the whole memorandum contains information and reflections which should be carefully studied". Indeed it was probably the most important memorandum written during the period under study, the classic expression of the balance of power theory which Grey already during his first few months in office had adopted as the basis of British foreign policy. In Monger's words: "Here for the first time the practical policies of the Foreign Office, substantially accepted by Grey as Foreign Secretary, were codified and

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<sup>66</sup>Grey, Twenty-five Years, I, p. 5.

<sup>67</sup>Minute by Grey, June 9, 1906, B.D. III, 418.

<sup>68</sup>B.D. III, Appendix A, pp. 397-420.

synthesized into a system of remarkable power and intelligence."<sup>69</sup>

Crowe's argument was, briefly, that England's geographical position compelled her to maintain a preponderance of seapower and to do this she must uphold the balance of power as she had always done as "almost ... a law of nature". Germany with her concept of "might is right" was identified as the threat to the balance of power as she either purposefully or haphazardly was building up a hegemony in Europe and around the world -- in either case equally dangerous to Britain. What, therefore, should British policy towards Germany be? Britain, Crowe stated, would not profit by Germany's being removed as an important factor in European politics. This might easily lead to a Franco-Russian predominance, "equally, if not more, formidable to the British Empire". Nor should Britain bar Germany's imperial and naval schemes, so long as "British or allied interests" were not adversely affected. But Crowe vetoed the possibility of an understanding with Germany. In his opinion there would be no basis for one since there were no such important questions at issue between Britain and Germany as formed the basis for agreements with France and Russia. Experience had shown that graceful British concessions to Germany did not lead to any permanent improvement in Anglo-German

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<sup>69</sup>Monger, p. 313.

relations. Germany only took advantage of British weakness to blackmail and bully her. Algeciras had shown that Britain was much better off to stand firm. In Crowe's opinion, there would be "no surer or quicker way to win the respect of the German Government and of the German nation" than a combination of "unvarying courtesy and consideration in all matters of common concern" coupled with "a prompt and firm refusal to enter into any one-sided bargains or arrangements, and the most unbending determination to uphold British rights and interests in every part of the globe."

Monger believes that by the summer of 1906 Grey had definitely singled out Germany as Britain's chief enemy -- the potential threat to the balance of power and the peace of Europe. The First Moroccan Crisis had demonstrated to him the willingness of Germany to throw her weight around by instigating an international crisis that might have resulted in war. But this was only one crisis. After Algeciras the Germans went out of their way to try to bring about a *détente* in Anglo-German relations. Grey, however, was suspicious of these German overtures, describing them as merely "a gratification of the desire to gush".<sup>70</sup> He also opposed King Edward's meeting with his nephew, the Kaiser, at Cronberg in August 1906.

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<sup>70</sup>Minute by Grey, June 26, 1906, B.D. III, 419.

The evidence in defence of Monger's thesis is such that it cannot be repudiated. Nevertheless, this writer would argue that Grey was guilty not of being too anti-German but rather of being too pro-French and thus allowing the French attitude towards Germany to become the British one. Yet while Grey's explanations of his policy, must in many cases be repudiated, as stated in Chapter I,<sup>71</sup> no aspersion is being cast upon his integrity. He was at the time, and no doubt remained, unconscious of the assumptions he had made. These assumptions were not necessarily permanent -- nor was the lack of opposition to Grey's policy. By the end of 1906 a precedent had been established of British support of France at all costs. Britain was rapidly moving away from isolation and signifying that what went on in Europe had become very important to her. But, in the words with which Monger ends his book: "There was a very real possibility of a change of policy."<sup>72</sup> It will be the purpose of the rest of this thesis to try to determine what, if any, change took place before 1914.

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<sup>71</sup>See above, Chapter I, pp. 8-9.

<sup>72</sup>Monger, p. 331.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE ANGLO-RUSSIAN CONVENTION

In the opening years of the twentieth century it was probably a toss-up whether France or Russia was regarded by the British as their greatest rival. British and French interests clashed in the Mediterranean and Africa, British and Russian interests in the Near and Far East and Central Asia. All were important areas of the British empire, the expansion and defence of which had, in the last part of the nineteenth century, become increasingly the most important object of British foreign policy.

On April 8, 1904 the Conservative government signed an entente with France. On August 31, 1907 the Liberals signed a convention with Russia. Both agreements settled the most outstanding imperial differences between the signatory powers. In the terms of neither agreement was there any indication that an alliance or even a diplomatic alignment had been formed. In the Anglo-French agreement Britain had only promised to give France diplomatic support in securing her special interests in Morocco, in return for French diplomatic support of Britain's already acquired special position in Egypt. But as was seen in the last chapter, during the Algericas conference Grey had gone

much further than the terms of the entente agreement, so far as to commit himself to the defence of France, making it the cardinal point of his policy to defend her at all costs. A new direction had been introduced into British foreign policy.

The negotiations for the Anglo-Russian convention must therefore be studied with the intention of finding out whether or not they were a logical step in the development of Grey's new policy, a policy based upon the doctrine of the European balance of power, singling out Germany as the most likely threat to that balance. Monger's unequivocal statement about Grey and the Anglo-Russian convention is that "Grey's own statements leave no doubt that his chief motive in seeking a Russian entente was to change the balance of power in Europe and in particular to create a counterpoise to Germany."<sup>1</sup>

The idea of a rapprochement with Russia was not new. For many years before 1907 Britain had been painfully aware of the dangers of remaining at odds with the czarist empire. In 1899 an agreement over railway lines in China had been concluded, but this had removed only one of many causes of friction. Russo-British relations again reached the breaking point during the Russo-Japanese War, with Britain allied with Russia's opponent. War between Britain and

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<sup>1</sup>Monger, p. 281.

Russia appeared almost a certainty over the Dogger Bank affair in October 1904, especially with Germany fanning the flames of resentment which the Russian Emperor felt towards the British.<sup>2</sup> But war did not come, and, in A. J. P. Taylor's words, "the Dogger Bank affair marked, indeed, the end of an epoch in European history -- the epoch in which an Anglo-Russian conflict seemed the most likely outcome of international relations."<sup>3</sup> Such a conflict had been expected in the Near East for fifty years, in central Asia for twenty, and in the Far East for ten.

Britain having escaped a war with Russia over the Dogger Bank affair, British isolationist feeling -- demanding isolation from European but not from imperial affairs -- climbed to its highest peak. Thus in the summer of 1905 Lansdowne's main concern was the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, which, in keeping with his concentration on imperial affairs, was of greater importance to him even than the First Moroccan Crisis. Once the alliance with Japan was renewed and peace between Russia and Japan was concluded, he sought better relations with Russia. However, the alliance with Japan proved to be a stumbling block to any real progress.

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<sup>2</sup>John Albert White, The Diplomacy of the Russo-Japanese War (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 182-184.

<sup>3</sup>A. J. P. Taylor, The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), p. 425.

Lansdowne was held back in his pursuit of a Russian understanding by concern for the alliance with Japan. The Conservatives ... regarded this as their finest achievement; the Liberals were indifferent, or even hostile, to it.<sup>4</sup>

In negotiating with Russia, Lansdowne was inhibited by his fear of alienating the Japanese. And, in addition, the publication of the renewed Anglo-Japanese alliance in September 1905 increased Russian suspicions of the British. The Russian Prime Minister, Sergei Witte, was pro-German and attempted to secure a Russo-German alliance as part of a Russo-German-French-American coalition against Britain and Japan. When France refused to join, Witte abandoned the idea and became an advocate of an entente with Britain. But by this time the Conservatives were out of office in Britain.

Under the Conservatives there was no great enthusiasm or feeling of urgency for a rapprochement with Russia. Lansdowne cautiously agreed to begin negotiations, but no headway was made. It was left to the new Liberal Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey actually to effect the Anglo-Russian convention.

Monger states that "Grey entered office with a strong desire to conclude an agreement with Russia".<sup>5</sup> This is a fact that cannot be disputed. Grey had favored a reconcilia-

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<sup>4</sup>Monger, p. 286.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 281.

tion with Russia as a way out of British isolation since the 1890's.<sup>6</sup> In 1902 he had spoken in the House of Commons in favour of an agreement with Russia on Asian questions, condemning equally perpetual quarrelling with Russia which would sooner or later result in war and a policy of drift which would result in a bloodless Russian victory.<sup>7</sup> And in his City Speech on October 20, 1905 he had said:

I am quite sure that in this country no Government will make it its business to thwart or obstruct Russia's policy in Europe. On the contrary, it is urgently desirable that Russia's position and influence should be re-established in the councils of Europe. The estrangement between us and Russia has, in my opinion, its roots not in the present but solely in the past. It may be, perhaps it must be, that confidence between the two countries must be a plant of slow growth; but the conditions should be favourable to its growth, and it should be the business of both Governments to foster and encourage these conditions.<sup>8</sup>

Official Anglo-Russian negotiations opened on May 29, 1906, the day after Sir Arthur Nicolson, the new British Ambassador to St. Petersburg, arrived in Russia with instructions to work for an agreement. Between December 1905 and May 1906 little had been accomplished since Nicolson, who had been appointed to St. Petersburg in January, was fully occupied in Tangiers as the British delegate to the Algeiras

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<sup>6</sup>Rogers Platt Churchill, The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Torch Press, 1939), p. 107.

<sup>7</sup>Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 4th series, Vol. 101, January 22, 1902, pp. 609-10.

<sup>8</sup>Grey, Speeches on Foreign Affairs, p. 30.

conference and since Russia was still in a state of domestic upheaval. Russia and Britain had, however, co-operated in supporting France at Algeciras.

In February 1906, at the height of the crisis at Algeciras, Grey did not neglect the possibility of a rapprochement with Russia which he related to the Moroccan Crisis and the German problem:

... the recovery of Russia will change the situation in Europe to the advantage of France; and it is the situation in Europe that will in the long run decide the position of France and Germany respectively in Morocco.

I am in hopes that when Russia recovers we may get and keep on good terms with her; if so this also will count on the side of France.<sup>9</sup>

And a week later he wrote:

The door is being kept open by us for a rapprochement with Russia; there is at least a prospect that when Russia is re-established we shall find ourselves on good terms with her. An entente between Russia, France and ourselves would be absolutely secure. If it is necessary to check Germany it could then be done.<sup>10</sup>

These are the two key passages in the British Documents indicating how the idea of an Anglo-Russian rapprochement fitted into Grey's foreign policy as a whole.

The difficulty in trying to test Monger's thesis with respect to Grey's negotiation of the Anglo-Russian

<sup>9</sup>Grey to Nicolson, February 12, 1906, B.D. III, 278.

<sup>10</sup>Memorandum by Grey, February 20, 1906, ibid., 299.

convention is that there is very little material in the printed British Documents indicating the relationship of the convention to the rest of British foreign policy. The documents on the Anglo-Russian convention deal almost exclusively with the actual negotiations and with the details of the various settlements. Almost all of the material which Monger uses is unpublished. Therefore the material which he quotes must be used in conjunction with whatever can be found in the printed sources in order to determine the mainsprings of Grey's policy concerning the Anglo-Russian convention.

Grey's two statements quoted above would indicate that he was definitely thinking in terms of a British-French-Russian alignment to act as a counterpoise to Germany. These are the strongest statements in the British Documents for 1906 and 1907 which would support Monger. But are they just isolated statements or do Grey's words and actions during the actual negotiations with Russia bear out this interpretation of his motives?

Those who interpret the Anglo-Russian convention as a purely Asiatic settlement would say that Britain's main aim was to secure India from Russian aggression. With Russia stalemated in the Far East by Japan, there remained two main areas where British and Russian policy conflicted. The first was the Near East where Russia's persistent efforts

to obtain a warm water outlet to the west through the Straits, her desire to replace Islam with the Russian Orthodox faith, and her "historic mission" to free her weaker Balkan Slavonic brothers from the Turkish yoke clashed with Britain's traditional insistence upon an independent Turkey in order to protect the best route to India. However, the Conservatives had already admitted that allowing Russia an exit from the Black Sea "would not fundamentally alter the present strategic position in the Mediterranean."<sup>11</sup> Grey, too, was willing to make concessions regarding the Straits in order to secure an agreement with Russia. In March 1907 he told Count Alexander Benckendorff, the Russian Ambassador to London:

I had felt all through these negotiations that good relations with Russia meant that our old policy of closing the Straits against her, and throwing our weight against her at any conference of the Powers must be abandoned. It was this policy which, in my opinion, had been the root of the difficulties between the two countries for two generations.

But he said he felt that it would be difficult to put anything concerning the Straits into the form of an engagement:

Even if the present Government were agreed that a settlement of the matter should be made, there was a risk that, when it was known that we had

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<sup>11</sup> Extract from Defence Committee Paper of February 13, 1903, quoted in a "Memorandum respecting the Passage of Russian War Vessels through the Dardanelles and Bosphorous" by Hardinge, November 16, 1906, B.D. IV, unnumbered, p. 59.

agreed to the Straits being open to Russia and closed to ourselves, there would be a storm in public opinion here. Then the whole Agreement, instead of being carried with general acceptance, might give rise to party feeling.<sup>12</sup>

Public opinion might also demand similarly large concessions from Russia. And such a modification of an international treaty could not be made without consulting the other European powers who might make trouble.<sup>13</sup> As a result of this less than encouraging British attitude, the Russian government agreed to wait until a more opportune moment for an agreement regarding the Straits, and there was therefore no mention of this question in the 1907 convention.

The second main area of Anglo-Russian conflict, and the one with which the convention dealt, was Central Asia. Russia had been gradually expanding her empire in Central Asia until by the beginning of the century the infiltration of her influence into Persia and Afghanistan, states bordering on India, had become alarming. By 1906 Russia was undoubtedly in the lead in Persia.<sup>14</sup> In Afghanistan and in Tibet, another state bordering on India, Britain was still most influential, but Russia's position was steadily improving. Thus before 1905 the Russians were not interested in a

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<sup>12</sup>March 15, 1907, ibid., 257.

<sup>13</sup>Grey to Nicolson, March 19, 1907, ibid., 258.

<sup>14</sup>R. P. Churchill, p. 212.

far-reaching settlement with Britain in Central Asia, realizing that they already had the upper hand. However, their humiliating and debilitating defeat at the hands of Japan and the revolutionary turmoil at home had made them much more receptive to the idea of an Anglo-Russian agreement by the time that Grey had come into office.

Certainly the defence of India was as important to the Liberals as to all British governments. Russia was on the offensive in Central Asia. She had virtual control over the northern part of Persia, by far the most important of the three areas (Persia, Afghanistan, and Tibet) discussed in the negotiations for the convention, and an agreement limiting her influence to where it already was supreme would, for purely imperial reasons, be all to Britain's good. But Grey had shown during the First Moroccan Crisis that he was not as imperially-minded as his Conservative predecessor; he tended to think more in European than in imperial terms. And his statements and actions in 1906 and 1907 during the negotiations with Russia would tend to bear this out.

Grey says in his memoirs: "The cardinal British object in these negotiations was to secure ourselves for ever, as far as a treaty could secure us, from further Russian advances in the direction of the Indian frontier."<sup>15</sup> However just a few pages earlier he has written:

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<sup>15</sup>Grey, Twenty-five Years, I, p. 159.

If we were to get out of the old, bad rut in which we had so often come to the verge of war with Russia, we had to work for a definite agreement. Russia was the ally of France; we could not pursue at one and the same time a policy of agreement with France and a policy of counter-alliances against Russia.... An agreement with Russia was the natural complement of the agreement with France.<sup>16</sup>

Here Grey ties up the projected agreement with Russia to the agreement already concluded with France. An agreement with Russia was necessary in itself in order to avoid a war over Central Asia, but Grey indicates that it was also necessary in order to keep the French entente as strong as possible. And since he had at Algeciras made the preservation of the entente the guiding principle of his foreign policy, it seems logical that the second, European-centred, motive behind a Russian agreement was as strong as, if not stronger than, the first, imperial-centred, one. Nor was the desire to avoid a conflict with Russia in Central Asia necessarily purely an imperial one. It could just as well have been motivated by concern for maintaining the balance of power in Europe. For with Britain and Russia both weakening themselves by fighting outside Europe, the situation in Europe itself would be affected. France, allied with Russia and aligned with Britain, would find herself in a difficult position. On the other hand, the Triple Alliance, and Germany in particular as the strongest member of that alliance, would be able to take

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 152-53.

advantage of the situation, possibly by extracting concessions from Britain and France, at any rate just by the weakening of the entente powers. And Grey had by the time of the signing of the Anglo-Russian convention singled out Germany as the potential threat to the balance of power and the peace of Europe.

In March 1907, Grey reported to Nicolson that he had told Benckendorff: "The direct object of a settlement between Russia and ourselves was to secure the Indian frontier; but there was also an indirect object, viz, to be on good terms with Russia."<sup>17</sup> He emphasized the importance of the second object in a dispatch in late August 1907 when the convention was in danger of falling through at the last moment because of the opposition of the Russian Council of Ministers:

I hope Russian Government will bear in mind that larger issues are indirectly at stake even than those directly involved in these agreements, for it has throughout been our expectation and belief that an agreement as regards Asia worked in a friendly manner would so influence the disposition of this country towards Russia as to make friendly relations possible on questions which may arise elsewhere in the future. Without such an Agreement this expectation must be disappointed.<sup>18</sup>

It was because of his concern for these larger issues that Grey would not be deterred from his objective of negotiating an agreement with Russia despite the constant criticism

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<sup>17</sup>March 7, 1907, B.D. IV, 256.

<sup>18</sup>Grey to Nicolson, August 26, 1907, ibid., 507.

of those who were fearful lest Britain's imperial position be damaged. C. A. Spring-Rice, British Ambassador to Teheran, steadily opposed the idea of a convention, warning Grey of the disastrous effect it would have upon Britain's reputation in the eyes of the Persians. Grey, however, minuted on one such dispatch from Spring-Rice: "It may annoy Persia who has lived on the enmity between us and Russia, but we cannot keep up a quarrel with Russia in order to curry favour with the Persians."<sup>19</sup> As R. P. Churchill says: "The irate minister was right in his estimate of Persian opinion of British actions; but he did not see clearly enough that the foreign office had decided that it was not worth the candle to support the flea-bitten government of Persia against Russian advances, when an agreement with Russia, with a division of the spoils, could more easily be had."<sup>20</sup> The European implications of an agreement with Russia were more important to Grey than the purely imperial aspects of the question.

Grey's lack of imperial concern is also shown by the fact that he attributed much less importance than had Lansdowne to the Anglo-Japanese alliance. There is no indication that Grey felt any qualms about negotiating an agreement with Japan's recent enemy. Intimate contact between

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<sup>19</sup>April 26, 1907, *ibid.*, 412.

<sup>20</sup>R. P. Churchill, pp. 164-65.

London and Tokyo ceased with the change of government.<sup>21</sup> Monger says that in Grey's opinion the alliance with Japan "was, of course, irrelevant or even an obstacle to his new policy."<sup>22</sup> It was irrelevant because the entente with France and the impending agreement with Russia removed the danger of a Franco-Russian Far Eastern coalition with Germany as a probable third partner, the main reason why the alliance with Japan had been negotiated, and an obstacle because of Russo-Japanese enmity.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, Grey could not scrap the alliance since such action would make necessary the increase of British naval strength in the Pacific. This could only be done by sacrificing strength in home waters which, in view of the growing German naval rivalry, was not feasible.<sup>24</sup>

Grey also disregarded the opinions of the government of India which remained implacably opposed to a rapprochement with Russia. The Earl of Minto, Viceroy and Governor-

<sup>21</sup>Monger, p. 286.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Having decided to secure an agreement with Britain, the Russian government concluded that it would be best to get on good terms with her Japanese ally. Russian negotiations with Japan were carried on simultaneously with those with Britain and had Grey's wholehearted approval. A Russo-Japanese convention was signed on July 30, 1907 and a Franco-Japanese treaty on June 10, 1907.

<sup>24</sup>In 1911 the Anglo-Japanese alliance was renewed for a period of ten years. Grey explained to the C.I.D. meeting attended by the Dominion Prime Ministers during the Imperial Conference in May 1911: "In the interests of strategy, in the interests of naval expenditure and in the interests of stability, it is essential that the Japanese Alliance should be extended." (Quoted in Marder, p. 238.)

General of India, argued that Britain was militarily weaker in Central Asia than Russia and that an entente would only perpetuate this inequality. He also feared that such an entente would not be in keeping with the Anglo-Japanese alliance. And he put no faith in Russian promises.<sup>25</sup> Grey, however, had the support of John Morley, the Secretary of State for India, and was thus able to push through a compromise solution acceptable to the Russians. Morley's support was vital, for Indian officials could not be completely ignored in the negotiations for a convention with Russia. Grey confided to Campbell-Bannerman: "Without Morley we should have made no progress at all, for the government of India would have blocked every point, and Morley has removed mountains in the way of negotiations."<sup>26</sup>

Grey, however, did not sacrifice British interests in his negotiations with Russia. He was not unbending; he knew when compromise was necessary. But he did not throw away anything vital to the British position in Central Asia.

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<sup>25</sup>Monger, p. 291.

<sup>26</sup>Grey to Campbell-Bannerman. Quoted in Trevelyan, p. 185. Morley's reasons for desiring a convention with Russia were different from those of Grey. A member of the Radical wing in the cabinet, Morley was anxious to reduce the military expenses and obligations of the government of India by reducing the danger of a Russian invasion. Monger cites evidence that Morley was also deeply suspicious of Germany, another reason for his support of Grey's Russian policy. (Monger, pp. 284-86). Yet he was one of the two cabinet ministers who resigned when Britain entered the war in 1914.

R. P. Churchill points out that since as a result of the convention, the Russian zone in Persia was larger and richer than the British zone and included the capital city, Teheran, Russia is usually regarded as having got the best of the deal. But actually Russia already had control of the northern part of Persia. What the convention did was to prevent her from gaining more: "What was wanted, and won, was to secure that part of Persia from future Russian penetration upon which the military security of India was assumed to depend."<sup>27</sup> In addition, Britain's special position in Afghanistan and Tibet was formally recognized by Russia. Grey says of the convention in Twenty-five Years:

The gain was equal -- on paper. In practice we gave up nothing.

... the Agreement seemed to me one-sided. What we gained by it was real -- what Russia gained was apparent.<sup>28</sup>

Yet one must agree with Sidney B. Fay that while Britain gained peace of mind regarding her Indian frontier, she lost her independence of action in Persia:

Hitherto she had been free to protest and object to the encroachments of the Russian imperialist steam-roller crushing Southward upon defenseless Persia. Henceforth she found herself involved as an accomplice in the destruction of the financial and political independence of the Shah's empire.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup>R. P. Churchill, p. 337.

<sup>28</sup>Grey, Twenty-five Years, I, p. 160.

<sup>29</sup>Sidney Bradshaw Fay, The Origins of the World War, Vol. I (2d ed. rev.; New York: MacMillan Company, 1930), p. 221.

It is interesting to note how often doubt of Russian good faith was expressed by the British. Minto and Spring-Rice, for example, would not trust the Russians. Grey, however, always expressed confidence that Russia would keep her word: "I do not believe the Agreement will be broken if our general relations with Russia are good: which I believe will be the result of the Agreement."<sup>30</sup> Nicolson agreed, predicting:

I think that we can rely with confidence on 15 or 20 years of peace and breathing time: and in political affairs we cannot with safety look further ahead. If we regard Russia as incurably smitten with bad faith, it would, I admit, be useless to make any agreements with her, and we should have to resign ourselves to a continuation of the former unsatisfactory relations. But, looking at all the circumstances, present and future, I think it was wise to come to an agreement.<sup>31</sup>

This faith in Russia's good intentions could be called willful blindness. It could not be assumed that once Russia had recovered she would continue to renounce an expansionist policy. Grey, however, believed, or convinced himself, that she would do so or at least that an agreement with her was so essential that such a chance must be taken.

But Grey's attitude towards Germany was definitely not one of faith or trust. His suspicions of her motives had been aroused at Algeciras, and he now suspected that she was

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<sup>30</sup>Grey to Nicolson, May 1, 1907, B.D. IV, 270.

<sup>31</sup>Nicolson to Grey, May 8, 1907, ibid., 271.

seeking to intervene in Central Asia. He therefore desired to keep the negotiations strictly limited to the two powers directly involved.<sup>32</sup> The Russians, however, were extremely anxious not to alienate their powerful German neighbours and thus insisted on constantly reassuring them that the proposed Anglo-Russian convention would not adversely affect their interests.

Monger says: "It is plain that the negotiations were dominated from beginning to end by fear of Germany."<sup>33</sup> As evidence he points out the rush by Britain and Russia to offer Persia a joint loan when rumours were heard that Germany was planning to loan the Shah the money which Russia and Britain had previously agreed to refuse him. As a result the negotiations, which had previously been very leisurely, became more serious and urgent in September 1906. In October the Russian Foreign Minister, Alexander Izvolsky, whose appointment in May had been interpreted, falsely as it turned out, as a victory for the German party in Russia, visited Berlin in order, as he told the British, to avoid a repetition of the Moroccan incident by consultation with the Germans before concluding an agreement with Britain.<sup>34</sup> These Russo-German

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<sup>32</sup>Grey to Spring-Rice, May 11, 1907, ibid., 329.

<sup>33</sup>Monger, p. 293.

<sup>34</sup>Bertie to Grey, October 22, 1906, B.D. IV, 230.

conversations aroused British suspicions, and as a result Grey attempted to accelerate the negotiations with Russia in order to forestall Germany.<sup>35</sup> Using unprinted sources Monger shows that this British fear and suspicion of German intervention in the negotiations continued into 1907.<sup>36</sup> For example, in May 1907 there was a sudden scare that Baron (later Count) von Aehrenthal, the Austrian Foreign Minister, was trying to resurrect the Dreikaiserbund of Germany, Austria, and Russia. And in August 1907, on the eve of the convention, Hardinge was saying he was "very uncomfortable" about the coming meeting between the Kaiser and the Czar at Swinemünde.

It is difficult to deny that fear of Germany was a powerful force in the negotiations, although it was expressed in different ways by the two negotiating powers. A. J. P. Taylor, however, denies that fear of Germany played an important part:

The two Powers were concerned to deprive each other of strategical advantages. Excluding Germany was a secondary consideration.<sup>37</sup>  
The Anglo-Russian entente ... had little to do with Germany.<sup>38</sup>

He says in defence of his position: "The Russians had, as yet, no conceivable cause for war with Germany except a German threat to destroy France, and they would have been reluctant to go to war even for that. In 1906 and 1907 much the same

<sup>35</sup>Monger, pp. 292-93.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 293.

<sup>37</sup>Taylor, p. 445.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 442.

was true of the British."<sup>39</sup> This writer would certainly take exception with these statements. Perhaps Russia would have stood aside and allowed France to be crushed by Germany, since her opinion of the military prowess of her French ally had greatly deteriorated in recent years while her opinion of the might of her German neighbour had steadily improved.<sup>40</sup> But Grey, as shown in the last chapter, had made the defence of France the cardinal point of his foreign policy. And his suspicions of Germany aroused at Algeciras had increased rather than diminished after the Moroccan Crisis was over. Thus it can be asserted that, contrary to what Taylor says, fear and suspicion of Germany were ever present in Grey's mind, even when he was negotiating with Russia over purely Anglo-Russian differences.

Monger is not alone in asserting the importance that fear of Germany played in Grey's desire for an agreement with Russia. He quotes Grey as saying in February 1906: "I am impatient to see Russia re-established as a factor in European politics."<sup>41</sup> R. P. Churchill in his book, The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, published in 1939 on the basis of the printed British Documents, emphasizes this point:

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Extract from Nicolson's Annual Report for the Year 1907, January 29, 1908, B.D. IV, 548.

<sup>41</sup>Grey to Spring-Rice, February 19, 1906. Quoted in Monger, p. 281. From Grey MSS.

Great Britain had striven to bring Russia back into European affairs from a Far Eastern excursion as an additional source of strength against a growing, aggressive German ascendancy ... in its European aspect this Convention removed the last traces of British isolation and brought needed support against the possible hegemony of Germany in Europe.<sup>42</sup>

Here is a clear statement that Grey in his negotiations for a convention with Russia was concerned with the situation in Europe, with maintaining the balance of power by seeing to it that Germany could not gain hegemony. Yet many historians have since interpreted the convention as a purely Asiatic settlement, and thus Monger's interpretation seems revolutionary. Actually Churchill had perceived without the aid of unpublished material that with the conclusion of the Anglo-Russian convention, Britain had finally abandoned her isolationist policy. Had Lansdowne concluded an agreement with Russia, it would probably have been an instrument of British imperial policy and a further confirmation of the policy of detachment from Europe, as had been the entente with France under the Conservatives. For Lansdowne had not been impressed by the dangers of German hegemony as was Grey.<sup>43</sup> Where Monger's interpretation is really different is in his belief that Grey was not only afraid and suspicious of German aims but that fear and suspicion of Germany were the determining

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<sup>42</sup>R. P. Churchill, p. 341.

<sup>43</sup>Monger, pp. 221-22.

factors in his foreign policy to the extent of making that policy an anti-German one.

At this point the question arises as to whether the aim of British foreign policy under Grey's direction was, as the Germans charged, the encirclement of Germany. Monger never says specifically that this was Grey's purpose, although he says that it was Bertie's.<sup>44</sup> But he does say that Grey's chief motive in seeking a Russian entente, was "to create a counterpoise to Germany",<sup>45</sup> and "to check Germany",<sup>46</sup> which amounts to much the same thing. And Grey's own few statements about the European implications of the convention<sup>47</sup> indicate that this was his aim, or at least one of them. However this policy of "checking" Germany was not necessarily a reproachable one. It depends first upon whether Germany really had to be checked. In view of her deliberate instigation of the First Moroccan Crisis in 1905, not to mention her action in the Bosnian and Agadir Crises, and her challenge to British naval supremacy, to be discussed below, it must be admitted that suspicion of possible German aims at hegemony was justified. It also depends upon whether the policy of "checking"

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 219.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 281.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 282.

<sup>47</sup>Most notably B.D. III, 278 and 299. See above p. 67.

Germany had a defensive or an offensive aim. Even if Grey can be criticized for having closed his mind to the feasibility of a rapprochement with Germany by identifying British interests too closely with those of France, his policy was basically a defensive one. He had a great dread of war, although he would go to war if he felt it was necessary to preserve what were in his opinion Britain's vital interests, as evidenced by his Moroccan policy. He was thus certainly not a pacifist. But just as certainly he was not a war-monger. A war-monger could have made this difference in motive clearer. As it is, he has left the false impression that Grey was building up a sinister coalition in order to smash Germany.

Harold Nicolson in his biography of his father, Sir Arthur Nicolson, condemns the two extreme interpretations of the Anglo-Russian convention as equally wrong: the first, that it was a purely Asiatic settlement and the second, that its only purpose was the encirclement of Germany, arguing that "the truth lies somewhere between these two extremes".<sup>48</sup> He believes that the immediate objective of the British was to secure the Indian frontier, but that they were also guided by considerations of wider scope, for Grey and the Foreign Office were alarmed by the prospect of a Russo-German alliance and a subsequent European coalition including even France

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<sup>48</sup> Nicolson, p. 234.

and realized that the only country to gain from Anglo-Russian as from Anglo-French friction would be Germany.<sup>49</sup> But having admitted that fear of Germany was one of the main motives in inspiring the agreement, Nicolson denies any deliberate programme of encirclement: "The British Government desired only to re-adjust, by such defensive precautions, the balance of power. It was not a question of getting Russia to join England against Germany: it was solely a question of preventing Russia from joining Germany against England."<sup>50</sup>

Nicolson makes an important point in emphasizing the two-sided nature of the Anglo-Russian convention. Neither aspect can be ignored. Grey was not so strongly imperially-minded as had been his Conservative predecessor. But neither was he solely interested in winning Russia over in order to check Germany. The convention served a two-fold purpose. However, with the new evidence which Monger presents, one is inclined to believe that the European aspect of the convention was most important to Grey.

Grey, of course, did not formulate British foreign policy all by himself. During the First Moroccan Crisis it was seen that the anti-German group in the Foreign Office and the embassies abroad had a strong influence upon him, increasing his already latent suspicions of German policy. And it was seen that he tended to conduct his foreign policy with

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., pp. 234-235.

the advice of only a select number of cabinet ministers. These two tendencies were continued during the negotiations with Russia.

Grey discussed the Russian negotiations not with the full cabinet but informally with a small group of the ministers directly involved -- Campbell-Bannerman, Ripon, Morley and Asquith.<sup>51</sup> The King also usually received the dispatches, although at times discretion was exercised as His Majesty did not always agree with what his Foreign Minister was doing.<sup>52</sup> An example of this circumventing of the full cabinet is Grey's minute on one of his own dispatches to Nicolson in July 1907 in which Grey decided to give in to Izvolsky's refusal to insert mention of Britain's special interests in the Persian Gulf in the convention: "If the Prime Minister, Lord Ripon and Mr. Morley agree to it, I do not think it need be submitted to the Cabinet, though the actual terms of the Declaration should perhaps be circulated when they are ready."<sup>53</sup> And, as mentioned above, Grey dealt as little as possible with the government of India, consulting Morley instead. In July 1907 Hardinge told Nicolson: "Recently we have left the Government of India entirely out of our account, and the questions which have arisen have been treated directly between us and the India Office, reference being made only to the

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<sup>51</sup>Monger, p. 284.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 292.

<sup>53</sup>July 5, 1907, E.D. IV, 444.

Prime Minister and Lord Ripon."<sup>54</sup>

Public opinion in Britain was not kept informed of the progress of the Anglo-Russian negotiations. Grey said very little in the House of Commons on the subject. In July 1906 he told that chamber: "I think that the less comment in this House on Russian affairs the better."<sup>55</sup> R. P. Churchill says: "This much may be said with confidence: not one provision contained in the convention of 1907 found its way in primarily because public opinion would have insisted upon it; not one provision was kept out of the convention simply because public opinion would not have stomached it."<sup>56</sup> According to Churchill: "The British Liberal ministers ... never worried unduly on the score of public opinion, because they felt confident that they had a sufficient number of followers in their parliamentary majority to approve anything within reason that they should present."<sup>57</sup> Monger, however, says that Grey feared British Liberal opinion.<sup>58</sup> In the summer of 1906 several members of parliament protested the massacre of Jews in Russia and proposed that Britain break

<sup>54</sup> July 10, 1907. Quoted in Monger, p. 292. From Carnock MSS.

<sup>55</sup> Parliamentary Debates, (Commons), 4th series, Vol. 160, July 5, 1906, p. 327.

<sup>56</sup> R. P. Churchill, p. 320.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Monger, p. 287.

off diplomatic relations with Russia, or at least that she cancel the proposed visit of the British fleet to Cronstadt.<sup>59</sup> Grey as a result was forced to make unofficial representations to the Russian government protesting the massacres. In the fall of 1906 he confided to Nicolson that he dreaded the reconvening of parliament: "I am not looking forward to it. The new members have now acquired the art of asking questions and raising debates and there is so much in foreign affairs which attracts attention and had much better be left alone."<sup>60</sup> Left-wing Liberals looked upon the prospect of a rapprochement with the most reactionary power in Europe as "an unprincipled act of 'power politics'".<sup>61</sup>

In any case, public opinion had no great impact upon Grey's foreign policy with respect to the Russian convention. When the convention was discussed in parliament in February

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<sup>59</sup>Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 4th Series, Vol. 159, June, 1906. The Cronstadt visit was called off at the Russian request. The British proposal had been badly timed, being too far ahead of the actual warmth of Anglo-Russian feelings. And Russia was at this time still plagued by internal disturbances. Another incident during the summer of 1906, Campbell-Bannerman's famous statement to the Inter-Parliamentary Union meeting in London after learning of the Czar's dissolution of the first Russian duma -- "La Douma est morte, Vive la Douma" -- also annoyed the Russian government.

<sup>60</sup>October 3, 1906. Quoted in Monger, p. 287. From Grey MSS.

<sup>61</sup>Taylor, p. 446.

1908, it was easily approved, although it came in for some strong criticism from imperially-minded Conservatives such as Baron Curzon, the former Viceroy of India, who believed that British interests had been needlessly sacrificed, especially in Persia, and from Radical Liberals who disapproved of the implied condonation of czarism.<sup>62</sup> But Grey and his supporters insisted that, as the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Lord Fitzmaurice, stated in the House of Lords: "The document must be judged as a whole" and not point by point, for an agreement was absolutely necessary to prevent an armed clash. The convention would be merely the beginning of cordial Anglo-Russian relations.<sup>63</sup> Grey in his

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<sup>62</sup>Parliamentary Debates (Commons and Lords), 4th series, Vol. 183 and 184, February 1908.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., (Lords), Vol. 183, February 6, 1908, p. 1028. Although Fitzmaurice, Lansdowne's brother, defended the convention in the Lords, he "could not overcome an instinctive distrust of the Russians; and, more important still, he sensed the connection between Grey's Russian and German policies." (Monger, pp. 289-90). Fitzmaurice wrote to Lascelles in Berlin in May, 1906:

"I am very anxious about our relations with Germany. A loyal attempt has been made to improve our relations with Russia; but with the absolute uncertainty of the future there, both in regard to institutions and individuals, nobody can tell whether a rapprochement will be possible or permanent.

Apart from this, I have always a profound doubt how far Russia is able to control her own agents, civil as well as military, in foreign parts.... Therefore, we must not rely too much on a Russian understanding -- at least according to my view --; and in any case it ought not to exclude good relations with Germany, if such are possible." (Ibid., p. 290.)

After the meeting between King Edward and the Kaiser in August 1906, Fitzmaurice told Lascelles: "Things are certainly better than they were -- nevertheless the anti-German current in the Foreign Office still flows, though it has been checked." (September 21, 1906. Quoted in Monger, p. 303. From Lascelles MSS.)

speech in the House of Commons on February 17, 1908 stated:

I admit that confidence is a plant of slow growth. I do not wish to force it. I could not if I wished, because the degree of friendliness depends, not on the Governments, but on public opinion in both countries. But I do not myself believe that, when once between England and Russia a belief in goodwill is established on both sides, it will be repaid by bad faith on either side.<sup>64</sup>

Nicolson was the person who was next to Grey most involved in the negotiations for the Anglo-Russian convention, as he had been in the negotiations at Algeciras. He was a member of the anti-German group in the Foreign Office, but not as violently anti-German as Crowe and Bertie. He was, however, very suspicious of German intentions. His biographer says:

By 1906 he was already convinced of the German menace, and his activity in Russia was inspired as much by considerations of the balance of power as by fears of Anglo-Russian rivalry.<sup>65</sup>

The nightmare which haunted Nicolson year in year out was

a continental coalition which would give Germany the fleets and armies of Russia, France, Austria, Italy, Turkey, Bulgaria, and Rumania, and thus place England in the position where she would either have to face a disastrous war or capitulate to German dictation.<sup>66</sup>

Nicolson himself admitted:

<sup>64</sup>Parliamentary Debates (Commons) 4th series, Vol. 184, February 17, 1908, pp. 495-96.

<sup>65</sup>Nicolson, p. xii.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. xiv.

Notwithstanding the fact that, in dealing both with France and Russia, we had honestly no other object than to place our relations on a safer and more secure basis in the general interests of peace, yet the subconscious feeling did exist that thereby we were securing some defensive guarantees against the overbearing domination of one Power. We were trending towards a regrouping of the States of Europe.<sup>67</sup>

But he insists that the new grouping -- the "Triple Entente" -- was neither hostile towards Germany nor jealous of her, although his references to the "Triple Entente" as a distinct grouping show that he regarded it as a counterpoise to Germany. Nicolson's thinking was quite similar to Grey's and no doubt had a strong influence upon him.

Others also expressed a fear of Germany. For example, Sir N. R. O'Connor, British Ambassador at Constantinople, wrote to Grey:

It appears to me very probable that if Great Britain and Russia do not very soon come to an agreement with regard to their respective interests in Persia, they may find themselves, confronted there with Germany very much as did France in Morocco.<sup>68</sup>

The British Documents give little indication of the views of the other important members of the anti-German group besides Nicolson on the Anglo-Russian convention. There are no minutes at all by Crowe and little indication of Hardinge's views. There is, however, one revealing dispatch by Hardinge

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<sup>67</sup>From Sir Arthur Nicolson's Diplomatic Narrative (written in 1916-17). Quoted in Nicolson, p. 236.

<sup>68</sup>April 24, 1906, B.D. IV, 328.

to Nicolson, written just after the convention had been signed:

I agree with you in thinking the conclusion of this Russian Convention a most important and far-reaching business which will, I believe, be productive of the most beneficial results to us in the future ... I have been so imbued with importance of an agreement with Russia that it was one of the reasons which induced me to give up the Embassy at St. P[etersburg] since I felt that I could do more by impressing my views on people at home.<sup>69</sup>

And Monger quotes a statement by Bertie before the Liberals came to power indicating his desire for an Anglo-Russian rapprochement as part of the larger plan to encircle Germany:

[The French] idée fixe is to be the means of bringing about an understanding between England and Russia. That was Delcassé's policy. If it could be effected German Bill might amuse himself as much as he liked within his own German ring. He could hurt nobody.<sup>70</sup>

One can only assume that this group was as influential upon Grey as it had been during the First Moroccan Crisis. And as further support for Grey's European-centred policy, the British War Office believed that the real purpose of a Russian agreement was to check Germany.<sup>71</sup>

Thus it would seem that the Anglo-Russian convention was a logical step in Grey's foreign policy as Monger interprets it -- a policy based upon the doctrine of the European balance of power, singling out Germany as the potential threat

<sup>69</sup>September 4, 1907, ibid., 520.

<sup>70</sup>Bertie to Hardinge, September 25, 1905. Quoted in Monger, p. 218. From Bertie MSS.

<sup>71</sup>Monger, p. 282.

to that balance. Grey was concerned with creating a counterpoise to Germany. The Anglo-French entente had been immensely strengthened as a result of his policy at Algeciras. Now in 1907 he settled Britain's most dangerous imperial grievances with Russia, thereby removing the imminent possibility of an Anglo-Russian conflict, and at the same time hoping that Anglo-Russian friendship would increase and that Russia would forsake the idea of a rapprochement with Germany.

The Russian agreement was not in 1907, and indeed never became, an entente in the true sense of the word as did the entente with France. It was never referred to as an "entente cordiale". Instead, it remained a purely political reconciliation, while the Anglo-French entente led to mutually friendly public opinion after a long period of enmity. And Russia had not abandoned her hopes of a reconciliation with Germany with whom she maintained, to Grey's dismay, fairly close contact.

Taylor is wrong in interpreting the Anglo-Russian convention as "essentially a settlement of differences, not a disguised alliance".<sup>72</sup> It was not a disguised alliance, not even really an entente, but it was more than a settlement of differences, even at the time of its signing in August 1907. And the hopes of Grey and the Foreign Office were that it would become much more. Indeed as a settlement of differences the

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Taylor, p. 445.

convention did not prove very successful. It did secure the Indian frontier, but a long series of minor troubles followed, since Russia, once she had begun to recover from her defeat by Japan, was not able to resist altogether the temptation of continuing her pre-1907 policy of expansion in Central Asia, especially in Persia. Grey says in his memoirs:

Persia tried my patience more than any other subject. I once told Benckendorff that if Russia made things too difficult the policy of friendly agreement with her might become impossible. In that case I should resign for I could not myself pursue any other policy, and if Russia made this policy impossible I should leave it to someone else to adopt and pursue another.<sup>73</sup>

The Anglo-Russian friction in Asia was not removed by the convention. But as it turned out, the situation in Europe and especially fear of Germany were to keep Britain and Russia together. With the conclusion of the convention, Russia was driven back upon the Near East and the Straits in her quest for a warm water outlet, having been already expelled by Japan from the China Seas and now, at British insistence, having given up most of her ambitions in the Persian Gulf. Izvolsky was a firm believer that Russia's true foreign policy was the acquisition of her historic "rights" in the Balkans and at the Straits. The next major crisis in European affairs, the Bosnian Crisis beginning in 1908, was to have a very damaging effect upon Russia's relations with Germany and consequently

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<sup>73</sup>Grey, I, pp. 169-70.

to push her further into the Anglo-French camp.

After the conclusion of the convention with Russia, Grey was still worrying about the possibility of Britain finding herself isolated in Europe and having to face a hostile continental coalition. In October 1907 in reply to a minute by Hardinge that: "the possibility of our isolation in Europe is at present somewhat remote", Grey wrote: "It is true that we have passed safely through a period of isolation a few years ago, but we might not do so a few years hence, if the German fleet was much stronger, or at any rate our power to do so might be put to the test."<sup>74</sup> But more optimistically in February 1908 he was contemplating the future strength of a British-French-Russian coalition:

A combination of Britain, Russia, and France in the concert must for the present be a weak one. France has her hands full in Morocco, and is naturally reluctant to run the risk of even diplomatic friction in connection with any other matter which might re-act unfavourably on her in Morocco. Russia is weak after the war, and her internal affairs are anything but secure.

Ten years hence, a combination of Britain, Russia, and France may be able to dominate Near Eastern policy; and within that time events will make it more and more clear that it is to the interest of Russia and us to work together: but we must go slowly.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>Minutes on Nicolson to Grey, October 21, 1907, B.D. IV., 544.

<sup>75</sup>Grey to Nicolson, February 24, 1908, ibid., 550.

CHAPTER IV  
THE BOSNIAN CRISIS

The second major European crisis which Grey faced as British Foreign Secretary was the Bosnian Crisis of 1908-1909 which Bernadotte Schmitt characterizes as "almost the nadir of diplomacy".<sup>1</sup> But inglorious as the diplomatic wranglings of the great powers may have been, the crisis is an important step towards the outbreak of the war. And it is also of great importance in a study of Grey's foreign policy. For the Bosnian Crisis was a Balkan crisis as would be the final Sarajevo Crisis. Grey's action in 1908-09 perhaps foreshadows his action in 1914. And the Bosnian Crisis was a crisis in which primarily Russian interests were at stake and thus illustrates the importance of the Anglo-Russian agreement in Grey's foreign policy.

The Anglo-Russian convention was a very weak instrument during the first two years after its signature. Indeed, in European terms it brought about no actual realignment of the powers. Izvolsky regarded the convention as a purely negative insurance which did not affect his relations with

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<sup>1</sup>Bernadotte E. Schmitt, The Annexation of Bosnia, 1908-09 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937), p. 244.

the central powers, Germany and Austria. Indeed, despite her long-standing alliance with France and her new agreement with Britain, Russia was gradually drifting into the Austro-German camp before the rude Bosnian blow in October 1908.

Even as an Asiatic Agreement the Anglo-Russian Convention was a feeble and artificial growth. It was popular neither in England nor in Russia. It was in essence an attempt to reconcile two fundamentally divergent attitudes -- to reconcile the Slav tendency towards disintegration with the Anglo-Saxon tendency towards preservation -- to combine the British policy of creating a chain of self-supporting and independent States on the borders of India with the Russian policy of 'spontaneous infiltration'. It was a regrettable alliance between the sand-dune and the sea.<sup>2</sup>

In June 1908 King Edward paid a state visit to the Czar at Reval, the first time in history that a British monarch visited Russia. Hardinge, who accompanied the King on this as on many of his state visits, had urged that the visit was "necessary to cement the friendship"<sup>3</sup> between the two powers, and in his official report he concluded that it had been "a most satisfactory visit, which should be productive of the best possible results in the future".<sup>4</sup> However, although Hardinge urged Izvolsky that "in seven or eight

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<sup>2</sup>Nicolson, p. 261.

<sup>3</sup>Hardinge to Nicolson, April 13, 1908, B.D. V, 194.

<sup>4</sup>June 12, 1908, ibid., 195.

years' time a critical situation might arise in which Russia, if strong in Europe, might be the arbiter of peace" and that therefore Anglo-Russian relations should be as cordial as those between Britain and France, the Russian Foreign Minister informed him that:

It was imperative that Russia should act with the greatest prudence towards Germany, and give the latter Power no cause for complaint that the improvement of the relations of Russia and England had entailed a corresponding deterioration of the relations of Russia with Germany.<sup>5</sup>

And soon afterwards Izvolsky told Georges Clemenceau, the French Premier, that there could be no question of an Anglo-French-Russian agreement.<sup>6</sup>

Sir Arthur Nicolson, British Ambassador to St. Petersburg and one of the strongest supporters of the agreement with Russia, warned Grey in July 1908 of the weakness of the entente:

The understanding with Russia is in its early infancy and will require, for reasons which I need not explain, careful nurture and treatment. Any serious check to this infant growth may kill it before it has advanced in years, and its disappearance would doubtless eventually react upon our relations with France.<sup>7</sup>

Grey no doubt took this warning to heart, for he had been as anxious as Nicolson for the conclusion of an agreement with Russia and, like the latter, nourished hopes that it

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Clemenceau to Stephen Pichon [French Foreign Minister], September 2, 1908, D.D.F., 2<sup>e</sup>, XI, 441.

<sup>7</sup>Nicolson to Grey, July 19, 1908. Quoted in Nicolson, p. 262. (Not in B.D.)

would herald the beginning of a new period of Anglo-Russian friendship and diplomatic co-operation and eventually lead to an Anglo-French-Russian alignment that could act as a counterpoise to the Triple Alliance. The Russians, however, and many people in Britain, particularly those on the left of the political spectrum, did not share these hopes.<sup>8</sup> Then in October 1908 Austria precipitated a European crisis that profoundly influenced Anglo-Russian relations.

On October 7, 1908 Aehrenthal, the Austrian Foreign Minister, announced Austria's annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the two Turkish provinces which she had occupied and administered since the Congress of Berlin in 1878. All of Europe was taken aback, but no one more than Izvolsky, who the previous month in a meeting with Aehrenthal at Buchlau, in Moravia, had apparently agreed not to oppose the annexation in return for a promise of Austrian compliance in the opening of the Straits to Russian warships. Aehrenthal had

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<sup>8</sup>There was considerable debate in the House of Commons over the Reval visit. The Radicals' objections to the visit were based upon the same grounds as their objections to the Anglo-Russian convention, namely that Britain was thereby sanctioning the repressive Russian autocracy. Grey's reply was that the visit would have no relation whatsoever to internal affairs in either country or any effect upon them. A policy of refusing to associate with Russia because Britain disapproved of her domestic policies would be disastrous, leading sooner or later to war. "We have chosen", Grey explained, "the policy of agreement in order not only to secure peace, but in order to avoid what some day must have been the danger of conflict." (Parliamentary Debates [Commons], 4th series, Vol. 190, June 4, 1908, p. 237)

executed his coup before Izvolsky could even sound out the other signatories of the Treaty of Berlin about the Straits. And two days earlier Bulgaria, in collaboration with Austria, had proclaimed her independence from Turkey.

Grey's first reaction to the Austrian and Bulgarian action was to appeal to the principle of the sanctity of treaties:

We cannot admit the rights of any Power to alter an international Treaty without the consent of the other parties to it: ... we shall therefore refuse to recognize what has been done till the views of the other Powers are known especially to Turkey, who is more concerned than anyone else ... if Turkey protested and eventually asked for compensation we should support any proposals which seemed fair consideration for her.<sup>9</sup>

Grey was not opposed in principle to the territorial changes; he objected only to the arbitrary way in which they had been accomplished. His first aim was therefore to see to it that a precedent was not set whereby international law lost all binding force on the European powers.

Secondly, Grey intended to see that Turkey got the best compensation possible from Austria and Bulgaria. In July 1908 the Young Turk Revolution had ousted from power the tyrannous Abdul Hamid, and Great Britain, the home of constitutional government, had suddenly become as popular in Turkey

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<sup>9</sup>Grey to Sir G. Lowther [British Ambassador to Constantinople], October 5, 1908, B.D. V, 296. Britain and France were informed on October 3 of Austria's impending action.

as she had previously been suspect. At the same time, German influence, predominant in the counsels of the Porte for the last decade, seemed to collapse overnight. The Austrian and Bulgarian action dealt a severe blow to the young Turk regime, and Grey was determined to do all that he could to see that the new liberal experiment did not fail. He informed the British Ambassador at Constantinople: "We shall do our utmost at any Conference to ensure that Turkey shall get as much substance as possible."<sup>10</sup>

The second of Grey's aims during the Bosnian Crisis came into conflict with his third aim -- to maintain, and if possible strengthen, the ties of friendship with Russia. For Russia's designs on the Straits, like Austria's on Bosnia and Herzegovina, would involve a loss to Turkey at least of prestige if not of material strength that would be damaging to the Young Turk regime. "Simultaneously to humour Russia and to protect Turkey from both Russia and Austria would require all the resources of a skillful diplomacy."<sup>11</sup>

And all of these aims could conceivably conflict with Grey's fourth aim -- the maintenance of peace of Europe. How far would Grey go in upholding the first three aims at the risk of war? Most important, how far would he go in his support of Russia and of the entente which he had worked so

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<sup>10</sup>Grey to Lowther, October 16, 1908, ibid., 388.

<sup>11</sup>Schmitt, p. 38.

hard to obtain and for which he held such high hopes?

Immediately upon the announcement of Aehrenthal's coup, Izvolsky hurried from Paris to London to try to obtain Grey's support for opening the Straits. Here at the very beginning of the Near Eastern crisis the Anglo-Russian entente was put to the test. Izvolsky was willing to agree that the Straits question not be raised at a European conference, but he urged Grey to agree that if Russia could get Turkey to acquiesce in the desired concession, Britain should not oppose it. Grey had promised the Russians during the negotiations for the convention that he would support them in this matter at a later date when Anglo-Russian co-operation in international affairs had made public opinion in Britain more receptive. Izvolsky now confronted him with that promise, as Grey explains in his memoirs:

M. Izvolsky went on to say that the present was a most critical moment. It might either consolidate and strengthen the good relations between England and Russia, or it might upset them altogether. His own position was at stake for he was entirely bound up with the policy of a good understanding with England which he had advocated against all opposition.<sup>12</sup>

This was a clear warning to Grey that the Anglo-Russian entente would be jeopardized if he refused to back up Russian aims at the Straits. But despite this pressure he would not agree:

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<sup>12</sup>Grey, Twenty-five Years, I, p. 184.

I fear public opinion here is not prepared for so one-sided an arrangement and will expect reciprocal rights at any rate in time of war. Otherwise cruisers from the Black Sea could harry commerce in Mediterranean, could take refuge in Straits or Black Sea and could not be followed. We also feel that to raise question now is inopportune and will expose Russia here to the charge of having made a deal with Austria and taken advantage of the situation.<sup>13</sup>

More time would be required, Grey explained to Izvolsky, for the British people's inborn suspicion of Russia to disappear and for confidence to take its place.

Because of the expected hostility of public opinion and parliament, the cabinet strongly opposed concessions to Russia regarding the Straits although Grey and Asquith argued strongly for them. British public opinion expected reciprocity -- an opening of the Straits to all powers. But it did not understand, as the British government did, that this would be of no strategical advantage to Britain since the British navy had made it a settled principle of naval warfare that it would not enter the Straits unless Turkey were Britain's ally.<sup>14</sup> Russia, however, would rather have the Straits remain closed than have them opened to all powers. There was thus a fundamental difference of opinion between Britain and Russia which prevented Grey from agreeing to Izvolsky's plans regarding the Straits.

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<sup>13</sup>Grey to Nicolson, October 12, 1908, B.D. V, 358.

<sup>14</sup>Hardinge to Nicolson, October 18, 1908, ibid., 372.

But even had British public opinion and parliament not been hostile to Russian ambitions at the Straits, other considerations were holding Grey back. As stated above, he was trying to balance two conflicting policies -- support of Russia and support of Turkey. Russia's friendship was no doubt of greater importance to him, in view of the European balance of power, but in this case he believed that he had enough reasons to offer Izvolsky for not being able to support him. It was not an outright refusal of British support, just a postponement. Izvolsky did not press the point any further, and the Straits question was not raised again during the crisis after the middle of October.

Thus Grey refused Russia support over the question upon which she felt most strongly. But one cannot conclude from this incident that the Russian entente was not of great importance to him and his foreign policy. He had calculated the risks and believed that his refusal to support Izvolsky would not seriously hurt the entente. Was he correct? Undoubtedly Izvolsky was disappointed and probably began to have doubts over the utility of friendship with Britain. But Grey had kept hope alive for the future -- although this would not wipe out the humiliation Izvolsky now had to face as a result of having been outwitted by the hated Aehrenthal. Thus Schmitt is probably too sanguine when he comments upon Grey's handling of the Straits question:

Grey certainly played his cards with skill. He both evaded a Russian proposal which, in the form presented, was unsatisfactory, and strengthened his own position with Turkey; at the same time he convinced Izvolsky of his goodwill and kept the Anglo-Russian entente in being.<sup>15</sup>

Immediately upon learning of Austria's intention to annex Bosnia and Herzegovina, Russia proposed a conference of the signatories of the Treaty of Berlin. But while all powers agreed in principle to a conference, they could not agree as to what should be discussed there. Austria would only allow the conference to ratify her fait accompli but not to discuss it, and she had the backing of Germany although Bülow had not been forewarned of his ally's impending coup. Russia, on the other hand, would not attend a conference unless the annexation were discussed. As a result no conference was ever held.

Grey greeted the idea of a conference favourably, but insisted that there be a preliminary agreement as to what subjects should be discussed and how they should be dealt with to ensure that when the powers did meet together they would not reach an irresolvable deadlock.<sup>16</sup> Yet while at first he did not believe that there could be any peaceful solution of the crisis other than a conference,<sup>17</sup> before

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<sup>15</sup>Schmitt, p. 54.

<sup>16</sup>B.D. V, 303, 314 and others.

<sup>17</sup>Grey to Bertie, October 6, 1908, ibid., 321.

long he was intimating that he did not regard a conference as necessarily the best way to deal with the situation: "I am not at all wedded to a Conference about the Near East if any other solution is easier later on, and acceptable to France and Russia."<sup>18</sup> And were one held, he was willing to agree that it should only ratify the annexation and not discuss it -- so long as satisfaction could be found for Turkey.

Although the idea of a conference had been Russia's originally, Izvolsky himself was not very enthusiastic about it, as Nicolson reported to Grey in November:

M[inister for] F[oreign] A[ffairs] is, I see, doubtful if it will be possible to induce Austria to go to a Conference on the conditions on which Russia can only take part in it, and I believe he is prepared to see the proposal for a Conference fall through. I do not think that he would much regret this in view of public opinion here.<sup>19</sup>

Thus on this point the Russians certainly had no cause for complaint that the British did not support them.

While the great powers were wrangling over the details of the proposed conference and making no headway, the two aggressors, Austria and Bulgaria, were successfully negotiating with Turkey. The two questions involving compensation of Turkey for the alteration of the Treaty of Berlin were

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<sup>18</sup>Grey to Nicolson, October 26, 1908, ibid., 409(b)

<sup>19</sup>November 27, 1908, ibid., 467.

early disposed of by private negotiations.<sup>20</sup> But the European crisis was not thereby solved. Indeed it had not yet reached its most acute stage. With Turkey compensated and one aim of Grey's policy achieved, Serbia, supported by Russia, had the full European stage to put forward her demands for compensation. The result was a crisis in Austro-Serbian and Austro-Russian relations that threatened to provoke a European war.

In October, at the beginning of the Bosnian Crisis, Grey told Nicolson:

I have not, myself, much sympathy with the clamour of Servia and Montenegro for territorial compensation. If they are afraid of the Austrian advance, they had better sit still, put their own houses in order, make friends with Turkey, and hope that she will get strong under the new regime.

But I do not want to cold-shoulder Izvolsky on the Servian question, if the Russians are keen about it, and I will do my best to support him.<sup>21</sup>

And to the Serbian Minister for Foreign Affairs:

I told him that we should give our diplomatic support to Russia in her attitude about the Servian demands, and laid stress upon this but

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<sup>20</sup>On February 26, 1909 an Austro-Turkish agreement was signed by which Turkey recognized the Austrian annexation in return for a large cash payment. On March 15 a Turko-Bulgarian settlement was reached whereby Russia agreed to lend Bulgaria the money with which to pay Turkey for her independence. Russia could be pleased with both these settlements as Austria had had no intention of paying Turkey anything, and the Bulgarian agreement was brought about by Russia and Bulgaria won over to the Russian camp from her previous position in the Austrian sphere of influence.

<sup>21</sup>October 27, 1908, B.D. V, 412.

that it must not be expected that we should push matters to the point of provoking a conflict.<sup>22</sup>

The Russians were informed of Grey's promise of diplomatic support for Serbian demands -- with no stipulation that they be limited to economic or commercial compensations.<sup>23</sup>

Grey's desire, therefore, was to support Russia over the Serbian demands since he had not been able to support her over the Straits. The actual issue at stake -- Serbia's claim to compensation -- was not important to him, but he did not think that Britain could afford to oppose Russia again. Although he, like Hardinge, realized that "the Russian position towards the annexation is weak owing to previous arrangements with Austria and also to Izvolsky's attitude at Beuchlau [sic]",<sup>24</sup> like Hardinge, he also thought: "It is evident that we must do our best to support him [Izvolsky] such as he is."<sup>25</sup> This sounds very much like Grey's at first reluctant support of France at Algeciras.

<sup>22</sup>Grey to Nicolson, October 29, 1908, ibid., 416.

<sup>23</sup>In his memoirs Grey says: "We thought a demand by Serbia for territory would not be reasonable, but that some economic concessions to facilitate the transport of Serbian exports to the Adriatic might provide an innocent solution." (Grey, Twenty-five Years, I, p. 186.) But B.D. V shows that he had in October 1908 promised Russia diplomatic support for Serbian demands, with no stipulation that they should not be demands for territorial compensation, so long as that compensation was not at the expense of Turkey.

<sup>24</sup>Hardinge to Nicolson, December 6, 1908, B.D. V, 476.

<sup>25</sup>Hardinge to Nicolson, October 13, 1908, ibid., 372.

When Izvolsky became alarmed by official German communiqués regarding King Edward's February visit to Berlin, intimating a complete Anglo-German understanding, and concluded that Russia had been deserted by the British, Grey instructed Nicolson to reassure the Russian Foreign Minister that "there will be no modification whatever in the policy of H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernmen]t which is based on close co-operation with Russia and ... they will continue to give him their full diplomatic support in assuring a peaceful solution of the Balkan questions."<sup>26</sup>

But when in February Austria and Serbia continued to prepare for war and Germany refused to counsel moderation at Vienna, Grey capitulated and withdrew his diplomatic support of Serbian demands for territorial compensation, advising Russia to do likewise as "the only way to avoid war".<sup>27</sup> He informed Nicolson:

Nothing except economic concessions can be obtained for Servia without a successful war. Unless Servia renounces territorial claims there will be war. I understood from M. Izvolsky in October that these claims would probably have to be abandoned in the end: I made it clear that we would support Russia in getting what could be obtained by diplomatic support, but that we could not press things to the point of war.... We are of opinion that to risk for Servian claims a war which might eventually involve the greater part of the continent of Europe must even from the Russian point of view be out of all proportion to the interests at stake.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>February 14, 1909, ibid., 568.

<sup>27</sup>Grey to Bertie, February 25, 1909, ibid., 611.

<sup>28</sup>Grey to Nicolson, February 27, 1909, ibid., 621.

Why did Grey abandon the position he had maintained since October? As he pointed out in the quotation above, he had only promised diplomatic support. He would support Serbian territorial demands so long as a peaceful solution was possible. But by mid-February Grey was becoming more and more convinced that Austria, feeling strong because of German support, was not going to yield, and that she would not hesitate to crush the Serbs by force if they did not give up their territorial claims. Strong Pan-Slav feeling in Russia would probably force the Russian government to go to the aid of the Serbs, and a European war would soon be raging. It was one of Grey's main aims to see that peace was maintained. But although he had a great horror of war and was ever anxious to prevent a European *mêlée*, it will be recalled that during the First Moroccan Crisis he had decided that he would support France at all costs, even if it meant war with Germany. He was therefore not unwilling to go to war as a last resort if he felt it was absolutely necessary.

When Grey said that a war for Serbian claims was not worthwhile "even from a Russian point of view", he was estimating correctly Russian calculations. Throughout February Nicolson warned Grey that Russia would intervene in an Austro-Serbian conflict.<sup>29</sup> But it turned out to be just

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 571, 572, 581, 605 and others.

bluff on Izvolsky's part. Russia was neither militarily prepared for war,<sup>30</sup> not having yet fully recovered from her defeat by Japan, nor willing to risk a renewal of revolutionary turmoil that might accompany a new war. And she did not feel that she could depend upon her French ally to join her in a Balkan quarrel, while her British friend had repeatedly made it clear that her aid could be no more than diplomatic. Therefore, by the middle of March Nicolson was reporting that Izvolsky would "leave no stone unturned to prevent hostilities if possible"<sup>31</sup> and that he "would be prepared for Serbia making a complete submission to Austria-Hungary."<sup>32</sup> While it was only after Britain had renounced her support of Serbian demands that Izvolsky made known to Grey his decision to back down, he actually had no intention of going to war over this issue at the present time. In November 1908 the Russian government had informed Britain that the Serbs had been told that Russia would give them diplomatic support, but that they should not count on armed support.<sup>33</sup> This was just what Grey had promised Serbia on Britain's behalf. Izvolsky was no more anxious than Grey to risk a war over the Serbian demands.

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<sup>30</sup>The Russian General Staff informed Izvolsky, in reply to an enquiry, that Russia could not win a war against both Austria and Germany. (Schmitt, pp. 83-84.)

<sup>31</sup>Nicolson to Grey, March 14, 1909, B.D. V, 682.

<sup>32</sup>Nicolson to Grey, March 15, 1909, ibid., 690.

<sup>33</sup>Grey to Nicolson, November 17, 1908, ibid., 452.

And the French were even less willing than Grey to get involved in a Balkan quarrel. They had not hesitated to warn the Russians not to count on them for armed support. Even before Grey counselled Russia to drop her support of Serbian territorial claims, France had urged the same course upon her ally, explaining that the Bosnian affair was "a question in which the vital interests of Russia are not involved" and that "French public opinion would be unable to comprehend that such a question could lead to a war in which the French and Russian armies would have to take part."<sup>34</sup> If France did not think that it was essential to support her ally in this question, it was almost certain that no British government would be able to justify to the satisfaction of British public opinion Britain's going to war, or even risking war over a Balkan squabble.

Thus while desiring to maintain and to strengthen the entente with Russia by supporting her in this crisis, Grey did not think that the issues justified the risk of a European war. The final stage of the Bosnian Crisis confirms this interpretation of Grey's policy. Having persuaded Russia to abandon her support of Serbian territorial demands, Grey was firm in backing Russia in her insistence that negotiations over Austrian economic concessions to Serbia be

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<sup>34</sup>M. Pichon [French Foreign Minister] to Vice-Admiral Touchard [French Ambassador to St. Petersburg], February 25, 1909, D.D.F., 2e, XII, 55. Also reported in Nicolson to Grey, February 26, 1909, B.D. V, 612.

discussed among all the powers and not à deux. He told Nicolson: "I feel strongly that Russia having done her part for peace, Austria should respond by being equally conciliatory."<sup>35</sup> When Austria refused an international discussion of the question, Bülow proposed instead a separate exchange of notes between the powers.<sup>36</sup> The German proposal elicited favourable comment from the British Foreign Office. However, Grey added his initials to Hardinge's minute which cautioned: "It is not very likely that M. Izvolsky will accept Prince Bülow's suggestion which is made in the interest of Baron Aehrenthal, but our attitude must depend entirely on that of M. Izvolsky."<sup>37</sup>

Grey then began negotiations with Austria in an effort to find a formula for a Serbian declaration that would be acceptable to both Austria and Russia. After both he and Aehrenthal had rejected each other's drafts, Grey on March 22 communicated what he thought was the limit to which Serbia and the powers associated with her could go:

If Austria cannot accept this the responsibility for disappointing all these hopes must be with her. We shall have done all we can, our part will be finished and if peace is sacrificed we shall have no course but to justify to Parliament here

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<sup>35</sup>March 2, 1909, B.D. V, 637.

<sup>36</sup>Sir Fairfax Cartwright [British Ambassador to Vienna] to Grey, March 17, 1909, ibid., 700.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

the part we have played by explaining what we have done to secure peace and how it came to fail.<sup>38</sup>

But four days later he was ready to agree in the interests of peace to the Austrian draft, albeit reluctantly, fearing that otherwise an Austrian ultimatum would be sent to the Serbs, followed by an attack.<sup>39</sup> On March 30 a collective démarche was made at Belgrade by Britain, France, Russia, Italy, and Germany, urging the Serbs to address the desired note to the Austrian government verbatim and immediately. The Serbs complied on March 31 and, except for the settlement of Montenegro's claims, the crisis was over.<sup>40</sup>

Here again Grey showed his great desire to avoid a war in which Britain's vital interests, as he interpreted them, were not at stake. As in the First Moroccan Crisis, his policy in the Bosnian Crisis was marked by vacillation. But while towards the end of the earlier crisis he had taken a firm stand in defence of France and inflicted a diplomatic defeat upon Germany, in this crisis it was the central powers who carried off the laurels of victory. But again in the last phase of the Bosnian Crisis as in the earlier phase,

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<sup>38</sup> Grey to Cartwright, March 22, 1909, ibid., 739.

<sup>39</sup> Grey to Nicolson, March 26, 1909, ibid., 771.

<sup>40</sup> Britain would consent to acknowledge the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina only after Montenegro's claims had been settled. The British recognition of the annexation was made on April 17, 1909.

Russia showed that she was not prepared to take a firm stand towards Germany and Austria. On March 21 Germany presented an "ultimatum" to the Russians, threatening that if they did not agree to Austrian terms regarding Serbia, Germany would not restrain her ally who in that case would probably attack the Serbs.<sup>41</sup> Izvolsky gave in on March 23 without even consulting Britain or France. And capitulating even further, on March 24 the Russians advised Grey that they preferred the Austrian draft formula to Grey's. Two days later Grey accepted the Austrian draft, realizing that it would be absurd to be more Russian than the Russians. Schmitt concludes: "Grey thus admitted his diplomatic defeat, but no other course was open since the Powers of the Triple Entente were not prepared to go to war and surrender was the only means to prevent an Austrian invasion of Serbia."<sup>42</sup>

The most radical element in Monger's interpretation of Grey's foreign policy is his assertion that it was anti-German. It has been shown in the two preceding chapters that fear and suspicion of Germany pervaded Grey's policy during the first two years of his Foreign Secretaryship. Unfortunately there is very little material in the printed British Documents relating specifically to Grey's attitude towards

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<sup>41</sup>Izvolsky was also subjected to the Austrian threat of publication of the details of the Buchlau Bargain.

<sup>42</sup>Schmitt, p. 220.

Germany during the Bosnian Crisis, although in early 1909 while the Bosnian Crisis was in its most dangerous stages a naval panic broke loose in Britain, inspired by fear of the German naval rivalry.

At first Russia seemed to be more suspicious of German aims than Grey. This was the reverse of the situation that existed when the Anglo-Russian convention was being negotiated. Izvolsky was alarmed that Britain might have deserted him for an agreement with Germany at the time of King Edward's visit to Berlin in February 1909. Grey advised Nicolson to inform the Russian government that:

Prince Bülow showed clearly that, while withholding his approval of Baron Aehrenthal's mode of procedure in recent events, he is sincerely anxious for the preservation of peace in the Balkans and that he had already some weeks ago given moderating advice at Vienna in this sense.<sup>43</sup>

Izvolsky, however, did not believe that Germany would try to restrain her ally. He threatened to abandon the alliance with France and the entente with Britain and to seek better terms from Germany.<sup>44</sup> Grey was now roused to action. "Since from the beginning of the crisis it had been British policy to maintain the entente with Russia, the time had now come to act. Moreover, inasmuch as Bülow had expressed to Hardinge his desire that England, France and Germany should co-operate in the Near East, there was a chance to test the value of his

<sup>43</sup>February 14, 1909, B.D. V, 568.

<sup>44</sup>Nicolson to Grey, February 15, 1909, ibid., 572.

professions."<sup>45</sup> As Hardinge told Nicolson: "If Bülow should refuse to join with France and ourselves, then we shall know exactly where we are."<sup>46</sup> Grey decided that if Germany was really determined to pursue a friendly foreign policy, then Britain "should assist her to display a façade d'amitié"<sup>47</sup> by inviting her to join a proposed démarche at Vienna. But Germany failed Grey's test, insisting that any démarche must be made at Belgrade rather than at Vienna. Only a few days later Grey abandoned his support of Serbian territorial claims.

What conclusions did Grey draw from this failure of Germany to help solve the Bosnian Crisis by using her influence at Vienna? The printed British Documents do not offer a definite answer. But Grey knew that Austria would not have been so bold had Germany not been backing her up with a promise of more than just diplomatic support. The humiliation inflicted upon Russia, especially in the light of the German "ultimatum", could thus be seen as Germany's rather than Austria's responsibility. It seems logical that Grey would have concluded that since Germany had not used her position as Austria's ally to prevent a Balkan clash over

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<sup>45</sup>Schmitt, p. 150.

<sup>46</sup>February 16, 1909, B.D. V, unnumbered, p. 597.

<sup>47</sup>Grey to Bertie, February 16, 1909, ibid., 574.

Bosnia, she was not that anxious that peace be maintained. Of course, when he himself had been placed in a similar position at Algeciras with respect to France, who was not even Britain's ally, he had felt it necessary to support her at all costs, even though he really thought she should make concessions to Germany to avoid the risk of an armed clash. But France had not provoked the First Moroccan Crisis as Austria had the Bosnian Crisis.

Grey's advisors played an important role during this crisis. The two persons who besides him figured most prominently in the negotiations were Nicolson at St. Petersburg and Hardinge at the Foreign Office. Again there are no minutes in the printed British Documents by the violently anti-German Crowe. Both Hardinge and Nicolson, while suspicious of Germany,<sup>48</sup> were less prejudiced against her and more open to alternate lines of action than Crowe. Nicolson was more obsessed with the "German menace" than Hardinge, who put less emphasis on the balance of power theory and thus remained somewhat aloof from the extreme anti-German group. But the two men kept up a regular private correspondence in which

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<sup>48</sup>For example, when Izvolsky invited Germany to participate in the joint demarche to Serbia on March 30 (see above, p. 114), Hardinge commented to Nicolson: "I do not like the intrusion of Germany in this affair, as it is impossible to say whether they [sic] may not in the end create a hitch in the proceedings, although I can understand that it would give great pleasure to the Germans to dragoon a wretched lot like the Servians." (March 30, 1909, ibid., unnumbered, p. 764.)

they confided to each other their personal opinions on the international situation. This correspondence continued after Nicolson had succeeded Hardinge as Permanent Under-Secretary in 1910 and leads one to believe that both men held quite similar views. In the British Documents on the Bosnian Crisis it is Hardinge, not Grey, who has written the long minutes showing how the detailed question of the moment fitted into the broader framework of British foreign policy, and Grey in most cases initialled Hardinge's minutes as agreeing with them. To determine what the motives behind Grey's policy were in this crisis it has been necessary to assume that the opinions expressed by Nicolson and Hardinge in documents that Grey initialled were also Grey's if he did not explicitly deny or contradict them.

But while Grey, Hardinge and Nicolson usually agreed on the general lines of British policy, they sometimes disagreed on the particulars of tactics. In March 1909 Nicolson began to advocate that the entente with Russia be turned into an alliance because:

When we have passed through the present 'Sturm und Drang' period, I should not be surprised if we were to find both France and Russia gravitating rapidly towards the Central Powers, as neither of the former, distrustful of each other, feels that she can stand alone against the power of the central combination.

Our entente, I much fear, will languish, and possibly die. If it were possible to extend and strengthen it by bringing it nearer to the nature

of an alliance, it would then be possible to deter Russia from moving towards Berlin.<sup>49</sup>

Hardinge believed that Britain would thus be left isolated while Germany established hegemony on the continent and then turned to challenge British maritime supremacy.

However Grey vetoed the idea of an alliance with Russia:

I do not think that it is practicable to change our agreements into alliances: the feeling here about definite commitment to a Continental war on unforeseeable conditions would be too dubious to permit us to make an alliance. Russia too must make her internal Government less reactionary -- till she does, liberal sentiment here will remain very cool and even those who are not sentimental will not believe that Russia can purge her administration sufficiently to become a strong and reliable Power,

Meantime, let us keep an entente with Russia in the sense of keeping in touch so that our diplomatic action may be in accord and in mutual support.<sup>50</sup>

Grey did not think that it was likely that Russia would desert France and Britain for the central powers in the near future:

We can only wait and see. There is no doubt that the idea of a revival of the 'Dreikaiserbund' has for some years past found many supporters in Russia, but I doubt very much whether the Emperor Nicholas would ever agree to it. Although the rival aims of Austria v. Russia may find a temporary solution as was the case with the Murzsteg programme,<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Nicolson to Grey, March 24, 1909, ibid., 764.

<sup>50</sup> Grey to Nicolson, April 2, 1909, ibid., 823.

<sup>51</sup> The Murzsteg program was one of several programs for reforms in Macedonia. It was drawn up jointly by Austria and Russia in October 1903.

there is no doubt that the rivalry between the two States in the Balkans is too deep rooted to make any co-operation real and friendly.<sup>52</sup>

Grey did not say that he was absolutely opposed to an alliance with Russia, but only that at the present time it would not be practicable to commit Britain definitely. The argument he used was that British public opinion would not look favourably on continental entanglements. Liberal opinion especially would remain cool towards Russia and suspicious of her policy as long as her government remained autocratic. This line of argument would seem to have been more of an excuse than an explanation since Grey had already sanctioned military conversations with the French which went a long way towards committing Britain without consulting the whole cabinet, knowing that his Radical colleagues would never have approved had they been aware of what he was doing. But an alliance was a different matter. Grey honestly believed that the military conversations did not commit Britain, and thus he justified his failure to inform the cabinet. An alliance, however, would mean a definite commitment. Grey would not conclude an alliance on his own authority and there was no conceivable possibility that cabinet approval could have been secured for one -- especially not for an alliance with Czarist Russia.

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<sup>52</sup>Minute by Hardinge, initialled by Grey, on Nicolson to Grey, March 17, 1909, B.D. V, 701.

In a memorandum written in April 1909 Hardinge pointed out that public opinion in Britain was not ready for an alliance with Russia, and far from advising Grey, like Nicolson did, to conclude one anyhow, he stated:

Although from time to time there may be a reactionary wave in Russia the Russia of the future will be liberal and not reactionary, and it would be a mistake to prejudice future Anglo-Russian relations by an alliance between England and a reactionary Gov[ernmen]t in Russia which would not be regarded with sympathy in either country while the position of the necessity for a strong combination of Powers a few years hence to resist an attempt to create the permanent hegemony of Germany in Europe overshadows the general political situation.<sup>53</sup>

Here was sympathy for Grey's parliamentary difficulties as well as agreement with his belief that an alliance with Russia was not really necessary -- or even desirable -- at the present time. But the spectre of a German bid for hegemony was as menacing as ever in Grey's, as in the Foreign Office's, opinion, and it was not unlikely that a more definite agreement with Russia, relating to the general European situation, would be necessary sometime in the future. And it was possible that by that time the "liberal sentiment" which in 1909 prevented Grey from negotiating a more binding agreement with Russia would have, like him, become sufficiently suspicious and afraid of Germany to drop its opposition to continental commitments for Britain.

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<sup>53</sup>"Memorandum by Sir Charles Hardinge on the Possibility of War", April 1909, ibid., Appendix III.

Nicolson was extremely disappointed by Grey's refusal to conclude an alliance with Russia, for he believed that a critical time for Britain was approaching and that unless her relations with France and Russia were openly and accurately defined, Germany would be encouraged to try for a third time to break up the British-French-Russian alignment. He confided to his wife:

I shall be glad of a change of Government. I am afraid we are not likely with the present people to have a well defined firm foreign policy. We shall drift on amicably from day to day. I shall not continue to plead for an alliance with Russia, as it is clearly useless to do so.<sup>54</sup>

Nicolson was wrong in labelling Grey's foreign policy one of drift. It was not that, as Nicolson himself had seen demonstrated at Algeciras and during the negotiations for the Anglo-Russian convention. Grey's policy was not a strong one. He was too much a man of peace, too anxious to conciliate and mediate whenever possible, to be willing to push his policy in the face of all opposition. This was especially so during the Bosnian Crisis. But it was a policy based upon definite principles. Central were the ententes, especially the French entente. Grey believed that the defence of France was a vital British interest and he would go to war if necessary to defend what France considered essential to her position as a great power. Russian friendship was also an important part of Grey's policy.

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<sup>54</sup> May 3, 1909. Quoted in Nicolson, pp. 307-08.

But Anglo-Russian ties were not as close as Anglo-French ties. The tie between France and Russia was the determining one in Grey's estimate of Britain's relationship with Russia. If France went to the aid of her ally in the belief that it was necessary for the maintenance of her own position as a great power to defend that of Russia, Grey would see it as a vital interest of Britain to come to France's aid. He was not really interested in the Balkans or in Russian interests there, but rather in the European balance of power.

In the First Moroccan Crisis, Grey was ready to go to war to support France against Germany although he was only pledged by the 1904 entente agreement to give her diplomatic support over Morocco. France was prepared to stand up to Germany all the way for what she considered were her vital interests, and Grey would not stand by and see the French entente weakened or broken up and perhaps a Franco-German alignment taking its place. But in the Bosnian Crisis, Russia was not prepared to go to war and France was not willing to aid her. Grey desired to strengthen the Russian entente which was none too strong before the crisis, but during the crisis he saw that there was no real risk in the near future of Russia deserting Britain and France should they not offer her the fullest support. Germany and Austria were too hated in Russia after the humiliation of Izvolsky.<sup>55</sup> Grey agreed

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<sup>55</sup>Nicolson, of course, dissented from Grey's belief that a Russo-German rapprochement was impossible in the near future.

with Louis Mallet, formerly his Private Secretary and a Clerk in the Foreign Office and now an Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, that: "It is not the right deduction to say that the Triple Entente was too weak to resist the Central Powers in this matter. It was not worth their while to do so."<sup>56</sup>

It is interesting to note that while Grey based his policy upon an Anglo-French-Russian diplomatic alignment, he disliked the term "Triple Entente" which Nicolson especially was prone to use. In April 1909 Grey requested that the use of this term in official dispatches and telegrams be discontinued:

The expression is one which is no doubt convenient, but if it appeared in a parliamentary Blue Book, it would be assumed to have some special official meaning and might provoke inconvenient comment or enquiry.<sup>57</sup>

This is a good indication of how Grey tried to keep much of his diplomacy secret in order to avoid criticism from the Radicals in his party and in the cabinet.

Grey was thus acting in accordance with the principles evolved in 1906 and 1907 in not consistently standing firm against Austria and Germany during the Bosnian Crisis. Monger's thesis<sup>58</sup> holds true in this crisis, although it is

<sup>56</sup>Minute by Mallet on Nicolson to Grey, March 29, 1909, B.D. V, 801. Grey's minute agreed with Mallet.

<sup>57</sup>Hardinge to Nicolson, April 7, 1909, B.D. IX (1), 7.

<sup>58</sup>See above, Preface, pp. iv-v.

not as obvious as in the two previous episodes studied. First, the defence of France was the foundation of Grey's foreign policy. France did not believe that her vital interests were at stake here, and Grey thus did not feel obliged to obtain a victory over the central powers. Secondly, Grey's suspicions of Germany were increased by her refusal to counsel moderation to her Austrian ally which Britain and France counselled to Russia.

Thirdly, Grey's foreign policy continued to be based upon the doctrine of the European balance of power. The Balkans, like Morocco, were of importance to him as clashes between the great powers over these areas affected that balance. In the Bosnian Crisis France and Russia had not been willing to risk a war, and Grey had gone along with them in allowing the central powers a diplomatic victory. But another Balkan crisis was likely before long. With the precedent of German support, Austria would no doubt continue her Balkan exploits. And as soon as the Bosnian Crisis was over, Russia began to prepare for her revenge, reorganizing her army on a grand scale, arranging an alliance between the Balkan states, and concluding an agreement with Italy over the Near East.<sup>59</sup> With a Russia militarily stronger and bent on revenge and possibly a less pacifistic French government, the situation in the case of a new Balkan crisis would be entirely different for Grey. Because Grey capitulated to Germany and Austria

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<sup>59</sup>The Racconigi Agreement of October 1909.

over the Balkans in 1909, there was no reason to believe that he would do so again.

Finally, one cannot leave out of account yet another principle of Grey's foreign policy -- his great desire to preserve peace. How profound an impact it would have upon his policy in any future crisis could not be predicted in advance. Schmitt gives Grey credit for having wisely put into practice this principle during the Bosnian Crisis, saying that he "deserves much credit for the successful ending of the long crisis without recourse to war."<sup>60</sup>

The Anglo-Russian entente was strengthened as a result of the Bosnian Crisis. The Councillor of the British Embassy at St. Petersburg reported to Grey in August:

I must say that conversations which I have had with many different sorts of people have tended to confirm the impression which one derives from the press comments that the Anglo-Russian entente has made its way considerably in Russian public opinion during the past twelve months.<sup>61</sup>

Anglo-Russian relations were also improved by the visit of the Czar to Cowes in the summer of 1909 and by a visit of a delegation from the Russian duma to England which was warmly received.

Yet despite the German "ultimatum" to Russia, the

<sup>60</sup>Schmitt, p. 222.

<sup>61</sup>H. J. O'Beirne to Grey, August 7, 1909, B.D. V, 865.

possibility of a Russo-German agreement could not be discounted. For while the Russians were irritated with Germany, they were also impressed by her strength. Perhaps they would conclude from their defeat, as Nicolson suggested, that their present diplomatic alignment was not adequate. While Izvolsky remained Foreign Minister, there was not much danger of a Russian rapprochement with either of the powers who had humiliated him in front of his countrymen. However in September 1910 Izvolsky moved to the Paris embassy as Russian Ambassador. Sergei Sazonov took his place at St. Petersburg.

In November 1910 when Sazonov and Nicholas II met with the Kaiser at Potsdam to negotiate a Russo-German agreement regarding Persia and the Berlin-Bagdad Railway it appeared that the feared reorientation in Russian policy was taking place. What the Germans really wanted was a Russian declaration of neutrality in the event of an Anglo-German war. Rumours circulated in London and Paris that Russia was about to agree to, or had already agreed to, such a declaration which would break up the "Triple Entente". Sir George Buchanan, the new British Ambassador to St. Petersburg, sent home repeated warnings that Sazonov was up to no good and even envisaged the possibility of an Austro-Russian understanding over the Balkans to supplement the projected Russo-German agreement.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Buchanan to Grey, December 26, 1910, B.D. X (1), 630. Also 620, 624 and others.

Grey, however, had faith in Sazonov and decided that it would be unwise to question him about the rumours for fear of damaging the entente.<sup>63</sup> He told Buchanan in a private letter: "I have no doubt that the Russians have been acting in good faith with Germany."<sup>64</sup> By January 1911 Buchanan was also convinced of Sazonov's loyalty to Britain although he lamented his naivety in failing to reflect upon the consequences of his actions.<sup>65</sup> The agreement which was concluded between Russia and Germany on August 19, 1911 was a diplomatic success for Germany. But the Germans had not achieved their real aim of detaching Russia from the Anglo-French entente. Buchanan advised that Sazonov had been disillusioned in his dealings with the Germans,<sup>66</sup> and he was glad to be able to say that although Sazonov's actions had caused Britain some anxiety: "Fortunately those fears proved unfounded; for, despite his occasional back-slidings, Monsieur Sazonov was at heart a firm advocate of the maintenance of that understanding."<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>Minutes by Nicolson and Grey on Buchanan to Grey, December 13, 1909, ibid., 620.

<sup>64</sup>January 7, 1911, ibid., 639.

<sup>65</sup>Buchanan to Grey, January 26, 1911, ibid., 661.

<sup>66</sup>Buchanan to Nicolson, January 12, 1911, ibid., 644.

<sup>67</sup>Buchanan to Grey, August 23, 1911, ibid., 741.

Taylor says that the British exaggerated the danger of an agreement between Germany and Russia.<sup>68</sup> A stepped-up German forward policy in Turkey could not be regarded by Russia as anything but a serious threat to one of her most vital interests -- the Straits. And in November 1913 the Liman von Sanders Mission led to a crisis in Russo-German relations.<sup>69</sup> The crisis was settled peacefully by January 1914, but the underlying Russo-German rivalry remained.

In view of the German threat in the Near East and the cool support she had been receiving from her entente partners, early in 1914 Russia made an attempt to strengthen the Anglo-French-Russian grouping. In April she made overtures for an Anglo-Russian defensive alliance. Nicolson was still as insistent as ever on the need for an alliance with Russia,<sup>70</sup> and he was joined by Buchanan, who warned Grey: "There is, I regret to say, a growing tendency in this country to regard

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<sup>68</sup>Taylor, p. 506.

<sup>69</sup>In May 1913 the Turks asked for a German military mission to reorganize their armed forces. The Russians were alarmed when in November Liman von Sanders was put in charge of the Turkish army in addition to taking command at Constantinople. They appealed to Britain and France for support, which was rather reluctantly given. (Britain was in the embarrassing position that a British admiral was reorganizing the Turkish navy.) The Germans, however, backed down in January 1914, promoting Liman von Sanders and releasing him from command at Constantinople.

<sup>70</sup>Nicolson to Sir Maurice de Bunsen [British Ambassador to Vienna], April 27, 1914, B.D. X (2);

England as a fair-weather friend who cannot be depended on to stand by Russia should the storm burst."<sup>71</sup> Grey would no doubt have desired a more definite agreement with Russia. He had concluded the convention with Russia in 1907 as part of his policy of constructing a strong bulwark to guard against the "German menace". Buchanan's warnings from St. Petersburg that Russia was losing faith in her British partner could not have failed to impress him. And like Nicolson, Buchanan, and the Germans he greatly exaggerated Russia's military strength, and thus was even more fearful of the consequences should she fall into the German camp. Unlike his Radical colleagues, dislike of Russia's domestic policy was not for him a valid argument against Anglo-Russian co-operation in foreign affairs; nor was he adverse to continental commitments. Benckendorff gave Sazonov his opinion when the latter mooted the idea of an Anglo-Russian alliance: "I am convinced Grey would do so tomorrow, if he could."<sup>72</sup>

However an alliance with Russia was as much an impossibility in 1914 as it was when Nicolson had urged it in 1909. Grey had had to refuse French overtures for an alliance in 1912<sup>73</sup> because the cabinet and parliament would not have sanctioned such a commitment. Any closer alignment with Russia

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<sup>71</sup>March 31, 1914, ibid., 536.

<sup>72</sup>Quoted in Luigi Albertini, The Origins of the War of 1914, Vol. I (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 572.

<sup>73</sup>See below Chapter V, pp. 167-69.

was simply out of the question. Grey had therefore to fall back upon half-measures. When the Russians next proposed Anglo-Russian naval co-operation and the French urged that Grey not offend their ally by turning down this compromise solution, he agreed. The cabinet consented in May to naval conversations, but war broke out before they were completed. Strategically they could be of little value since Britain would not be able to send even a part of her fleet to the Baltic in the case of a war with Germany. But Grey points out in his memoirs:

The difficulty of refusing was obvious. To refuse would offend Russia by giving the impression that she was not treated on equal terms with France; it might even give her the impression that, since we first agreed to military conversations with France, we had closed our minds against participation in a war. To give this impression might have unsettling consequences, as well as being untrue.<sup>74</sup>

This last statement reveals how Grey felt about the Russian entente. It was much more to him than a mere settlement of imperial difficulties as the actual 1907 convention implied. He put up with Russian violations of the terms of the convention which had by the outbreak of war made Northern Persia to all intents and purposes a Russian province. Indeed, Anglo-Russian relations were severely strained by friction in Persia. Nevertheless, the convention had by 1914 become

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<sup>74</sup>Grey, Twenty-five Years, I, p. 284.

much more of an entente than it had been prior to the Bosnian Crisis. It was still not so important to Grey as the French entente. He would not go to war to support Russian interests in the Balkans unless France joined in, for France, not Russia, was the determining factor, the keystone in his policy. But Russia was important to him as part of the framework he had constructed as a counterpoise to the suspected German bid for hegemony. Sazanov's estimate of the importance of the convention for Britain was the following:

The London Cabinet looks upon the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 as being important to the Asiatic interests of England; but this Convention possesses a still greater importance for England from the viewpoint of the policy which is being pursued by England in Europe.<sup>75</sup>

But Grey, unlike the cabinet as a whole, was fully aware that it was in Europe, not in Asia, that the Anglo-Russian convention was serving its real purpose.

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<sup>75</sup>Sazonov to the Russian Ambassador to Teheran, October 1910. Quoted in Fay, I, p. 222.

CHAPTER V  
THE AGADIR CRISIS

In 1911 Europe was shaken by a Second Moroccan Crisis -- another test of the British-French entente agreement of 1904 and of the new interpretation which Grey had given it during the First Moroccan Crisis. Would Grey again support France at all costs, even at the risk of war? Was there any modification by 1911 in this main principle of his foreign policy laid down during his first year in office? To what extent does Monger's thesis<sup>1</sup> still hold true? It will be the purpose of this chapter to try to answer these questions. One is aided by the fact that this crisis is quite fully documented. As the editors of the British Documents point out: "For the first time the policy of the British Foreign Office during the most dangerous moments of the last decade of peace is revealed almost day by day."<sup>2</sup>

By the Act of Algeciras of 1906 France and Spain had been left with "spheres of influence" in Morocco under the supervision, through a neutral inspector, of all the signatory powers. But this proved to be only a temporary expedient. In March 1908 Grey agreed with Hardinge that: "The

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<sup>1</sup>See above, Preface, pp. iv-v.

<sup>2</sup>B. D. VII, p. vii.

Moroccan question still weighs heavily on the political situation, and the tone of the German press shows that it might at any moment again assume an acute form."<sup>3</sup> In July 1907 there had been a native uprising which caused the French to send a cruiser to Morocco, followed by a dispute between France and Germany regarding the Sultan who would be recognized.<sup>4</sup> In September 1908 the Casablanca incident began with a serious Franco-German confrontation.<sup>5</sup> Grey favoured arbitration at the Hague Tribunal,<sup>6</sup> but strongly supported France, going so far as to advise the Admiralty to be ready to make preparations for war in case Germany should send France an ultimatum and the cabinet should decide to assist the French.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Minute by Hardinge initialled by Grey, on Cartwright to Grey, March 28, 1908, B.D. VI, 92.

<sup>4</sup>France supported the incumbent, Abdul Aziz, Germany his brother, Mulai Hafid. The latter could not be kept from the throne and was proclaimed the new Sultan on November 24, 1908.

<sup>5</sup>On September 25, 1908 six deserters from the French army, three of whom were Germans, were being helped by the German consul at Casablanca to escape when a French officer discovered them and threatened the German consul with a pistol. Germany demanded an apology; France said that the whole matter must be settled by arbitration, with apologies due on both sides.

<sup>6</sup>Minute by Grey on Bertie to Grey, November 4, 1908, B.D. VII, 129.

<sup>7</sup>Grey to McKenna, November 5, 1908, ibid., 132.

But Germany gave in<sup>8</sup> and an arbitration agreement was signed on November 24, 1908.<sup>9</sup>

As a result of the Casablanca incident which brought Franco-German friction in Morocco to a dangerous head, the two powers decided to try a new policy of conciliation. On February 8, 1909 they reached an understanding by which France agreed to safeguard German economic interests in Morocco in return for Germany's recognition of French political interests and her disavowal of any political interest of her own there.<sup>10</sup> Grey welcomed the agreement, despite some doubts as to its possible violation of the open door principle, believing that "politically the effect should be excellent"<sup>11</sup> since her obligations to France by the 1904 agreement would also involve Britain in any Franco-German conflict over Morocco.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Germany's decision to back down was probably to no small extent determined by the cool support she received from Austria. For Austria was embroiled with Russia over the Bosnian affair and furthermore, as in the recognition of Mulai Hafid, she was more in sympathy with the French than the German position. Also the domestic uproar over the Daily Telegraph interview made the German Foreign Office anxious to present a peace offering to its critics.

<sup>9</sup>The Hague Tribunal brought down its decision on May 22, 1909 in favour of France, but with qualifications so as not to offend Germany.

<sup>10</sup>A Franco-Moorish convention was signed in March 1910 and a Hispano-Moorish convention in November 1910.

<sup>11</sup>Minute by Grey, February 11, 1909. B.D. VII, unnumbered, p. 140.

<sup>12</sup>Grey to Bertie, February 16, 1909, ibid., 158.

However, like the Act of Algeciras, the Franco-German agreement of 1909 did not solve the Moroccan question.<sup>13</sup> The conflict over Morocco continued until the Agadir Crisis of 1911 ended it -- but not until the great powers had been brought to the verge of European war.

In May 1911 France felt compelled to occupy Fez in order to protect European and French interests in Morocco, both of which were threatened by renewed Moroccan revolts. Germany was advised of the intended French action and did not object, but she warned that it would be difficult for the French troops to withdraw from Fez in a short time and were they to remain there long, Germany would regard the Algeciras Act as having been torn up and her entire freedom of action in Morocco restored. Grey warned France of the danger of allowing the Germans to take advantage of a French military expedition and thus giving them a chance to reopen the whole Moroccan question,<sup>14</sup> but his warnings went unheeded. He could not protest vigorously against a French action to which Germany had granted France the right in 1909. Nor did he want to antagonize Britain's entente partner over a question in which

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<sup>13</sup>In the words of Ima Christina Barlow in her book, The Agadir Crisis (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1940): "As future events were to show, the change was one of tactics and not a fundamental alteration of policy." (p. 76). The agreement was too vague. Economic and political interests could not be so clearly defined as intimated in the treaty, and thus each power interpreted the terms differently.

<sup>14</sup>Bertie to Grey, April 8, 1911, B.D. VII, 204 and Bertie to Grey, April 25, 1911, ibid., 216.

he was bound by treaty to support her. Besides, at the present moment a greater danger seemed to be that Germany would win over Spain, who greatly feared that through her expedition to Fez France would gain undue advantages in Morocco. Grey endeavoured to restrain Spain from her threats of taking similar action in Morocco and at the same time urged France to make whatever concessions she could to avoid throwing Spain into Germany's arms. Nevertheless, on June 8 Spanish troops landed at Laraiiche and Alcazar.

Grey's policy up to this point was thus first to try to restrain France from marching to Fez, and, when that failed, to try to prevent a European crisis from breaking out, realizing that in such a case he would have to repeat his policy at Algeciras of supporting France at all costs. He was not very optimistic, writing to Bertie on June 9:

I am afraid the French have got too deeply in to get out and they will have to go through with a partition of Morocco, in which there will be some difficult and rough water to navigate and some price to pay. But if the disagreeable day can be put off so much the better.<sup>15</sup>

Without warning, on July 1, 1911 the German warship, the Panther, arrived at the closed Moroccan port of Agadir. With this carefully planned coup of the German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Alfred von Kiderlen-Waechter, a tense European crisis began. The official German explanation was that the ship had been sent to protect German nationals and economic interests in that area. But it was well known, that there were few German nationals there and that German

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 314.

economic interests were of less importance than those of Britain. Obviously Germany was after something more significant -- either a slice of Morocco, colonial concessions elsewhere, or, of especial concern to Grey, destruction of the Anglo-French entente and a tipping of the European balance of power in Germany's favour. Kiderlen later admitted that the last explanation had been his real aim, but that his policy failed because he had miscalculated in believing that Britain would disinterest herself in the Moroccan question.<sup>16</sup> Barlow says: "The ultimate success of Kiderlen's plan depended to a large degree upon the skillful use of tactics designed to hold England aloof; for if she were to enter the fray, the balance would be tilted in favour of France."<sup>17</sup> Thus Grey's policy was of great importance in determining the outcome of the crisis, and, beyond that, the power groupings in Europe during the next years.

Grey informed the Germans right from the beginning of the Agadir Crisis that Britain could not be ignored in its settlement. Germany would not be allowed to deal with France separately and thus overwhelm her with her power. On July 3

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<sup>16</sup>Kiderlen confided to a friend in November 1911 what his policy had been in the Agadir Crisis. The friend informed H. A. Gwynne, editor of the Morning Post. Gwynne writes: "The main object of the Agadir move, according to Herr von Kiderlen-Waechter, was not war at all.... The main idea underlying this vigorous act of policy was to test the sincerity of the Anglo-French Entente." (Memorandum by Gwynne, July 25, 1910, ibid., unnumbered, p. 795.)

<sup>17</sup>Barlow, p. 272.

Grey told Metternich: "We could not remain passive spectators of a new settlement between Germany, France and Spain to take the place of the Act of Algeciras. We must take part in such a discussion."<sup>18</sup> He contemplated sending a British ship to Morocco in conjunction with a French one to protect British interests.<sup>19</sup> The cabinet vetoed such a strong action, although it "empowered Grey to make a very stiff communication to the German Government."<sup>20</sup> Grey thus on July 4 warned Metternich that Britain would act in accordance not only with her own interests in Morocco but with her treaty obligations to France, and that she would recognize no arrangement that might be made without consultation with her.<sup>21</sup> And on the same day he told Cambon that "our attitude would be to fulfill our Treaty obligations to France in the diplomatic discussions which were now inevitable, and which, in our opinion, must be discussions, à quatre, between France, Germany, Spain and ourselves, and not à trois without us." He therefore requested to know what France would consider a reasonable and practicable solution from her point of view.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Grey to Count de Salis [Councillor of the British Embassy at Berlin], July 3, 1911, B.D. VII, 347.

<sup>19</sup>Grey to Bertie, July 3, 1911, ibid., 351.

<sup>20</sup>Nicolson to Hardinge, July 5, 1911, ibid., 359.

<sup>21</sup>Grey to de Salis, July 4, 1911, ibid., 356.

<sup>22</sup>Grey to Bertie, July 4, 1911, ibid., 355.

In deciding what his policy would be, Grey was pulled in two opposite directions as he had been on previous occasions. On the one hand were the cabinet and the other Liberal members of parliament, most of whom did not believe in the doctrine of the balance of power or in the principle that France must be supported at all costs in order to thwart the German bid for hegemony. Many of them viewed the crisis as nothing more than a question of safeguarding British imperial and commercial interests and believed the greatest danger for Britain to be the possibility of Germany's establishing a naval base across British trade routes. Grey, however, as at Algeciras, would have been willing to give the Germans a Moroccan port if it would settle the crisis,<sup>23</sup> and he had the backing of the Admiralty who advised that there was no place that could easily be made into a naval base -- although it must be a west coast port, for on no account, in the opinion of First Sea Lord, Sir Arthur Wilson, must Germany get a footing in the Mediterranean.<sup>24</sup> On this point Grey was also at odds with the Foreign Office who accepted the French view that Germany must not be allowed to get a permanent foothold anywhere in Morocco.

Grey also differed from his cabinet colleagues over the question of a conference. The Radicals were determined

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<sup>23</sup>Grey to Bertie, July 6, 1911, ibid., 363.

<sup>24</sup>Grey to Bertie, July 12, 1911, ibid., 375.

that Britain should not be dragged into a war against Germany and insisted that France be forced to argue her case before all the European powers as at Algeciras. But Grey preferred private Franco-German negotiations, as did France and the Foreign Office, so long as Britain was kept informed of their progress. He was opting for the balance of power rather than the concert of Europe as he had during the Bosnian Crisis. He told Benckendorff on July 5 that the four most interested powers should come to an understanding before any conference met: "But France was the Power which had the greatest interest in this question, and I should not propose a Conference or anything of that sort, but leave it to her to say what she wished in that respect."<sup>25</sup>

Grey, unlike many of his colleagues, would, and did, leave it up to France to decide in what manner the crisis would be settled. He told Cambon<sup>26</sup> there were three alternatives: either France must allow Germany a foothold in Morocco; she must return to the Algeciras Act status quo; or she could bargain with Germany for recognition of the same French position in Morocco as Britain had recognized in 1904 in return for colonial compensations to the Germans. The first alternative the French absolutely ruled out. The second would be difficult and no real solution to the Moroccan question.

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<sup>25</sup>Grey to Buchanan, July 5, 1911, ibid., 357.

<sup>26</sup>Grey to Bertie, July 10, 1911, ibid., 368.

Therefore it was by the third method that the crisis was eventually resolved.

On the other hand, Grey was subjected to the influence of the Foreign Office and the ambassadors, especially of Nicolson, Hardinge's successor in 1910 as Permanent Under-Secretary, Crowe, and Bertie, who were all extremely suspicious of Germany and extremely pro-entente. It was their opinions and advice that Grey was continually receiving rather than those of his fellow cabinet ministers. They warned him that Germany was trying to detach Britain from France and that Britain must therefore remain loyal to her obligations to the French.<sup>27</sup> Grey's initials on their minutes, and, more important, his policy during the crisis show that he agreed with them that more than just Morocco was at stake. In his memoirs he makes out a case for Germany having attempted to break up the entente, even at the risk of war, although he adds that he cannot prove whether this theory is correct.<sup>28</sup> Barlow states that from the moment the Panther sprang, Bertie, Nicolson, and Crowe watched every German move with increasing apprehension, and "Sir Edward Grey, more and more convinced of the danger, gradually became converted to their views."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 343, 352, 354, and others.

<sup>28</sup>Grey, Twenty-five Years, I, pp. 239-40.

<sup>29</sup>Barlow, p. 295.

Grey, however, was never as suspicious of Germany as these three men. For example, he was prepared to cede Germany a Moroccan port although Crowe and the others thought that this would just encourage the Germans in their old policy of blackmail -- now with France, rather than Britain, as the victim<sup>30</sup> -- and assumed that Germany would turn any port granted her for purely commercial purposes into a naval base.<sup>31</sup> Nor is there any indication that Grey hoped that the Agadir Crisis would compromise the Anglo-German negotiations for an agreement as did Nicolson, who wrote to Hardinge:

I am not at all sorry that the incident has occurred as I think it will open the eyes of all those who have been so clamorous of late for an understanding with Germany and I hope that it will postpone indefinitely any further negotiations for a political understanding with that country.<sup>32</sup>

Perhaps the influence of Grey's Private Secretary had something to do with the fact that his views were more moderate than those of his chief Foreign Office advisors. The extremely anti-German Mallet had been replaced in 1907 by the more open-minded Sir William Tyrrell, who was "an absolute realist, well aware that France and Russia could twist the proud British lion's tail if they got much more power" and therefore

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<sup>30</sup>Minute by Crowe on Bertie to Grey, July 11, 1911, B.D. VII, 369.

<sup>31</sup>Nicolson to Goschen, July 18, 1911, ibid., 395.

<sup>32</sup>July 5, 1911, ibid., 359.

in favor of a rapprochement with Germany to complement the ententes.<sup>33</sup>

It is often hard to determine what Grey's ideas on foreign policy really were, as he was continually equivocating, using vague phrases to avoid committing himself, and saying one thing to one person and something seemingly contradictory to another. This was no doubt partly the result of his desire to avoid conflicts -- to be a conciliatory force in European politics -- and partly the result of his difficult position as a Liberal Imperialist in a government with a large number of left-wing, often pacifist-inclined supporters. Nor was Grey one to take a firm stand and defend it to the bitter end -- at least not publicly. Thus a large amount of foreign policy was conducted secretly. Thus, too, there was often a discrepancy between his dispatches and his minutes or the minutes which he initialled. It is in

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<sup>33</sup>Edward F. Willis, Prince Lichnowsky Ambassador of Peace: A Study of Prewar Diplomacy, 1912-1914 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1942), p. 69. Willis says that Tyrrell was "the axis of the Foreign Office. His influence with Grey was virtually decisive." (Ibid.) Prince Lichnowsky, the last pre-war German Ambassador to London, states in his memoirs: "Sir W. Tyrrell, Sir Edward Grey's private secretary, possessed far greater influence than the Permanent Under-Secretary." (Prince Lichnowsky, My Mission to London, 1912-1914 [Toronto: Cassell and Company Limited, 1918], p. 29).

This is hard to believe in the light of Grey's many statements in favour of a strong entente policy, his decision to support France at all costs in 1906 and again in 1911, and his unwillingness to conclude an agreement with Germany for fear of alienating the French and destroying the "Triple Entente" (See below, Chapter VI).

the minutes that one usually detects his support of a strong pro-entente policy, a policy at least highly suspicious of Germany, if it was not actually anti-German like many of his Foreign Office advisors.

For example, on July 19 Grey told Bertie: "H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernmen]t do not consider it vital to their interests to exclude Germany from getting any foothold in Morocco provided satisfactory conditions are obtained from her. They cannot therefore make any admission of Germany into Morocco a casus belli unconditionally." But he added the qualifications: "... though they could not suggest it or deal with it except in concert with France and on conditions satisfactory to France."<sup>34</sup> Grey might not have regarded the exclusion of Germany from Morocco as a vital British interest, but he did regard the defence of France as such, and if France believed it was one of her vital interests to keep Germany from Morocco, Grey would support her. In referring to the support Britain would give the French he told Bertie on July 20:

We are bound and prepared to give them diplomatic support, but we cannot go to war in order to set aside the Algeciras Act and put France in virtual possession of Morocco. If she can get that for herself we are bound not to stand in her way or to claim more rights than we are entitled to under the Anglo-French Agreement of 1904; but if we go to war it must be in defence of British interests. An attempt by Germany to humiliate France might affect

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<sup>34</sup>B.D. VII, 397.

British interests so seriously that we should have to resist it, but there is no case for that at present.<sup>35</sup>

Here Grey said that Britain could give France no more than the diplomatic support promised by the 1904 entente agreement, yet again he indicated that Britain could not stand aside and see her humiliated by Germany.

In both of these dispatches to Bertie on July 19 and 20 Grey was being very cautious to avoid saying outright that Britain was committed to France, that she had to support France at all costs. Of course Bertie as one of the main exponents of such a policy knew what Grey really meant. What he really did mean was more clearly indicated the next day, July 21, when Grey initialled a minute by Nicolson which said in part:

We should not ... give France any grounds for believing that our adhesion to the Triple Entente is in any way weakening. Were she to come to distrust us, she would probably try to make terms with Germany, irrespective of us, while Germany who would soon detect our hesitation would be inclined to impose far harder terms than may be the case at present. In any case France would never forgive us for having failed her, and the whole Triple Entente would be broken up. This would mean that we should have a triumphant Germany, and an unfriendly France and Russia and our policy since 1904 of preserving the equilibrium and consequently the peace in Europe would be wrecked.

Britain must therefore look "rather at the wider than at the more limited questions".<sup>36</sup> In other words, Grey had made

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 405.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 409.

the maintenance of the "Triple Entente", based upon the theory of the balance of power, the basis of his policy during the Agadir Crisis even before Lloyd George's famous Mansion House Speech.

After Grey informed Metternich on July 4 that Britain could not remain disinterested in the Moroccan question, there was no further communication from the German Foreign Office except for Nicolson's "curious conversation" with the German Ambassador on July 12 in which the latter discoursed upon the historical fact that Germany had consistently been cheated out of colonial acquisitions during the past forty years.<sup>37</sup> In the meantime, British suspicion of German motives increased. Cambon and Kiderlen had been negotiating in Berlin regarding French colonial concessions to Germany in return for German recognition of a French carte blanche in Morocco, but the original German proposal of a rectification of the frontier of the French Congo had soon become a demand for practically the whole French Congo. By July 19 Grey had decided that some more definite information must be secured from Germany to allay suspicion of her motives, and that the silence which was allowing the situation to drift out of control must be broken.<sup>38</sup> Therefore on July 21 Grey warned Metternich that it would obviously be impossible for France to agree to

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<sup>37</sup>Nicolson to Goschen, July 18, 1911, ibid., 395.

<sup>38</sup>Grey to Asquith, July 19, 1911, ibid., 399.

the most recent German demands for cession of the entire French Congo and were negotiations to break down, British interests would definitely be involved and Britain would demand that she be admitted as a party to the discussion.<sup>39</sup>

On July 21, too, Lloyd George delivered his Mansion House Speech with the approval of Grey and Asquith, saying in part:

If a situation were to be forced upon us in which peace could only be preserved by the surrender of the great and beneficent position Britain has won by centuries of heroism and achievement, by allowing Britain to be treated where her interests were vitally affected as if she were of no account in the Cabinet of nations, then I say emphatically that peace at that price would be a humiliation intolerable for a great country like ours to endure.<sup>40</sup>

The immediate result of the speech was to inflame the presses of Germany, France and Britain. Metternich in his official protest to Grey<sup>41</sup> objected more to British and French press comments on the speech than to the speech itself which had not specifically mentioned Germany or the crisis at all, although there could be no doubt what Lloyd George as the spokesman of the British government meant to convey.

The speech would have been important no matter which British cabinet minister had delivered it, but coming from the lips of Lloyd George it was doubly effectual. As Grey

<sup>39</sup>Grey to Goschen, July 21, 1911, ibid., 411.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 412.

<sup>41</sup>Grey to Goschen, July 25, 1911, ibid., 419.

explains in his memoirs:

Lloyd George was closely associated with what was supposed to be a pro-German element in the Liberal Government and in the House of Commons. Therefore, when he spoke out, the Germans knew that the whole Government and House of Commons had to be reckoned with.<sup>42</sup>

If Germany had previously been in doubt as to Britain's position and had engaged in wishful thinking that she would stand aside and leave Germany to deal with France alone, she knew now that Grey had meant what he told Metternich on July 3 and 4 and that the German coup had not shattered, or even weakened, the Anglo-French entente.

The Mansion House Speech also had a significant impact upon Grey's position as architect of British foreign policy. The leader of the Radicals in the cabinet, who as a group had consistently opposed Grey's policy of ententes, obligations and naval expenditure, had declared, in effect, that Britain could not remain aloof from the European situation, that even peace, desirable as it was, was not worth the price of allowing her hard-won reputation as a defender of "the cause of human liberty"<sup>43</sup> to be trampled under foot. Upon delivering his Mansion House Speech Lloyd George did not abandon his basically Radical position, but the strength of the Radical opposition within the cabinet had been weakened,

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<sup>42</sup>Grey, Twenty-five Years, I, p. 225.

<sup>43</sup>The Mansion House Speech, B.D. VII, 412.

and Grey and the Foreign Office were left in an even stronger position than before in formulating British foreign policy.

What impact did the Mansion House Speech have upon the crisis? Grey says:

It was my opinion then, and it is so still, that the speech had much to do with preserving the peace in 1911. It created a great explosion of words in Germany, but it made Chauvinists there doubt whether it would be wise to fire the guns.<sup>44</sup>

And Lloyd George in his memoirs agrees that "the effect of the speech was unquestionably to clear the air, and avert any danger of Europe drifting unawares into war."<sup>45</sup> The crisis was eventually settled peacefully, but not before Europe had been brought to the brink of war. One must agree with Barlow that "the immediate effect of the Mansion House Speech was to increase international tension, to make intercourse between the powers difficult, and to prolong the delay in effecting a settlement."<sup>46</sup> Barlow compares the Mansion House Speech with the Panther coup as acts of mailed-fist diplomacy and states:

Such a method can be justified only on the grounds that Grey and his associates believed that a critical stage had been arrived where British

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<sup>44</sup>Grey, Twenty-five Years, I, pp. 225-26.

<sup>45</sup>Lloyd George, p. 42.

<sup>46</sup>Barlow, p. 307.

position must be clearly defined or Germany might become overconfident and precipitate war. This seems to have been the state of mind of the British government of July 21.<sup>47</sup>

And the whole cabinet was not even informed of the intended move. It could not have been because Grey thought it unimportant. He thought it extremely important that Germany should know that Britain was not disinterested in the Moroccan question. Rather he was again afraid that some of his colleagues would object to his policy of involvement in continental affairs.

Grey's authorization of the Mansion House Speech was a carefully calculated risk, a risk as to how Germany would react, a risk of precipitating a war which he dreaded. But he had already made it his policy to support France, and the long German silence provoked him to warn Germany again. The Germans were angered. The crisis became more acute for a time. But eventually Kiderlen yielded and modified his demands on the French, who because of Grey's firmness, paid less than they would have been forced to pay had they had to deal with Germany alone. Grey could therefore claim credit for a French -- and an entente -- diplomatic victory. The risk paid off. The entente was maintained, even strengthened, and peace was preserved.

Although he had warned Germany that Britain's policy was not "peace at any price", Grey was sincerely anxious that the crisis should be settled without recourse to war.

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., pp. 302-03.

Franco-German negotiations continued, and Grey urged the French to make as generous concessions as possible: "To get Morocco as she has Tunis would be a great step for France. It is worth her while to pay a good price for it."<sup>48</sup> In August France, foreseeing the failure of negotiations and Germany's staying at Agadir and landing troops there, planned to send ships and a military force to Morocco. But Grey insisted that in the eventuality of negotiations reaching a stalemate, a conference should be proposed first, and in the last resort, he would suggest that President Taft's offer to arbitrate be taken up.<sup>49</sup> He knew, however, that Germany was not likely to agree to a conference. And he advised France that it should be Germany, not she, who broke off negotiations.<sup>50</sup> In both cases Germany would "place herself in the wrong in the public opinion of Europe, which would be advantageous to France."<sup>51</sup> Although he hoped the French would make

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<sup>48</sup>Grey to Bertie, July 28, 1911, B.D. VII, 434.

Grey was encouraged in his belief that France should make concessions to Germany by Goschen, Lascelles' successor at Berlin, who had very pro-entente outlooks. Goschen wrote in September when the crisis had again become acute: "Nobody could be a stronger supporter of the entente than I, but I confess I should be sorry to see British lives and money sacrificed in the interests of a few French financiers and people who are so short sighted that they cannot see the handsome way in which their bread has been buttered in Morocco. (Goschen to Nicolson, September 28, 1911, ibid., 570.)

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 511, 512, 540.

<sup>50</sup>Grey to Bertie, July 31, 1911, ibid., 444.

<sup>51</sup>Bertie to Grey, July 29, 1911, ibid., 441.

a real effort to conciliate Germany, he was afraid to push her too far. In September he admitted: "I daren't press the French more about the Congo. If I do so we may eventually get the odium in France for an unpopular concession and the whole entente may go."<sup>52</sup> Grey would not let the entente go if he could at all prevent it.

Finally on November 4, 1911 the Franco-German convention regarding Morocco was concluded. Germany agreed to a virtual French protectorate over Morocco while Germany acquired two strips of territory in the French Congo. Public opinion in both countries was indignant. There was no question, however, that Germany had suffered a diplomatic defeat at the hands of the Anglo-French entente. It was not until November 14, 1912 that France and Spain came to an agreement. But in the meantime the work of consolidating the French position in Morocco was already well advanced.<sup>53</sup> The Moroccan question had been removed from the list of danger spots in international relations.

Grey says in his memoirs that after Agadir he was accused of having been more French than the French. He states in his defence:

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<sup>52</sup>Grey to Goschen, September 27, 1911, ibid., unnumbered, p. 545.

<sup>53</sup>A Franco-Moroccan treaty establishing a virtual French protectorate over Morocco was signed on March 30, 1912.

All my effort was to get Germany to modify her demands as much as she could and to get France to go as far as she could in increasing her offers. Whatever influence we had was used in this way to promote a peaceful settlement.<sup>54</sup>

He is not really correct, however, for while he did urge France to be as conciliatory as possible and while there is no doubt but that he desired a peaceful settlement, the French knew that he would not allow Germany to humiliate them and thus were encouraged to stand up to Kiderlen.

At times, however, Grey seemed to be taking a stronger line than France, for the French government was split. Four days before the Panther's spring, the leading advocate of a Franco-German reconciliation, M. J. Caillaux, had become Prime Minister with hopes of making the 1909 Moroccan agreement the beginning of a new diplomatic alignment for France. While the French Foreign Minister, Justin de Selves, and the French Ambassador at Berlin, Jules Cambon, were trying to come to an agreement with Germany to secure France's predominant position in Morocco, Caillaux carried on secret negotiations with the Germans behind the backs of the rest of the cabinet ministers. However, it was the policy of de Selves and Cambon that triumphed, and that was one of being firm with the Germans. Thus Grey was not really more French than the French.

It is interesting, however, to compare Grey's policy during the crisis with that of France's ally. In the early

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<sup>54</sup>Grey, Twenty-five Years, I, p. 233.

stages of the crisis Russia reassured the French that they could rely upon Russian support, but later on there were indications that she thought France was being too obstinate. On September 1 Izvolsky, now Russian Ambassador to Paris, warned de Selves that it would be difficult to make Russian public opinion favourable to a war for a few kilometres of French colonial territory.<sup>55</sup> De Selves was alarmed but Georges Louis, French Ambassador to St. Petersburg, advised that Izvolsky was out of line with the opinion of the Czar, his court, and the Russian government.<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, the feeling remained that Russia was not as ardent in her support of her ally as she might have been. There is no doubt but that she was not anxious to do more for France than France had done for her during the Bosnian Crisis. Grey was thus much more ardent in his support of France than France's ally.

Grey was severely censured in parliament by members of his own party and the Labour party when it was revealed how close Britain had come to war during the Agadir Crisis.<sup>58</sup> British preparations for war were far more advanced than public opinion realized. Tension was great in late July, mid-

<sup>55</sup>Bertie to Grey, September 1, 1906, B.D. VII, 499.

<sup>56</sup>Buchanan to Grey, September 3 and 6, ibid., 501-02.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 502.

<sup>58</sup>Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th Series, Vol. 32, November 27, 1911.

August and early September and each time informed people in the armed services, the government, and the Foreign Office braced themselves for war. Churchill reports that on July 25 Grey told him and Lloyd George:

I have just received a communication from the German Ambassador so stiff that the French Fleet might be attacked at any moment. I have sent for McKenna to warn him!<sup>59</sup>

On August 23, during a parliamentary recess, an emergency meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence was called by Asquith to consider the possibility of giving armed support to France.<sup>60</sup> The Radical Lloyd George wrote to Grey on September 1:

War is by no means inevitable but it is becoming an increasing probability. It is so much in the reckoning as to render it urgently necessary for us to take every step which will render the issue of war more favourable, always provided that such a step does not increase the chance of precipitating war.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Quoted in Churchill, p. 44. Churchill says in his memoirs that during the summer of 1911 he could think of nothing but the threatening European situation, and that he went so far as to suggest to Grey on August 30 that if negotiations should break down, Britain should propose to France and Russia a triple alliance to safeguard the independence of Belgium, Holland and Denmark. (Ibid., 63-64.) At this time Churchill was Home Secretary and thus not directly involved in foreign affairs, but he was rapidly moving away from his Radical position and becoming one of Grey's strongest supporters instead of one of his strongest critics.

<sup>60</sup>The clash between the plans of Britain's military and naval authorities was shockingly revealed during this meeting. The army presented their case which was for a British expeditionary force much more convincingly, and this was the plan that came to be accepted.

<sup>61</sup>B.D. VII, 642.

On September 17 Grey wrote to Nicolson:

The negotiations with Germany may at any moment take an unfavourable turn and if they do so the Germans may act quickly -- even suddenly.

The Admiralty should remain prepared for this: it is what I have always said to McKenna. Our fleets should therefore always be in such a condition and position that they would welcome a German attack, if the Germans decided to act suddenly.<sup>62</sup>

And Grey was constantly working to make sure that France would be in the right if and when war came:

It is essential that before war comes (if it does come) it should be clear that Germany has meant war and has forced it: unless that is so, I could not be sure of what the force of public opinion here would be, and if the Government has to take a decision for war it must have the strongest case to put before Parliament.<sup>63</sup>

How far was Britain committed to France, by 1911 -- at least in Grey's view? Grey says of Agadir in Twenty-five Years:

We were bound by the Anglo-French Agreement of 1904 to give France diplomatic support. This engagement we fulfilled in letter and spirit, while doing all we could to steer for peace, not war.<sup>64</sup>

He adds:

I took the line with Metternich that if trouble came, British public opinion would side with France and that German demands on France for compensation should not be such as it was impossible for any French Government to concede.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 647.

<sup>63</sup>Grey to Bertie, September 8, 1911, ibid., 540.

<sup>64</sup>Grey, Twenty-five Years, I, p. 219.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 220.

Cambon told the French cabinet that it would be very difficult for any British government to act without the support of British public opinion. If Germany attacked France or wilfully broke off negotiations, British public opinion would side with France since history proved the instinctive British sympathy with the party attacked. But if France placed herself in the wrong, British public opinion, at least at the outset, would not be with France and no aid would be forthcoming.<sup>66</sup> This was essentially Grey's statement at the time of the Algeciras conference which he had claimed was non-committal. But both he and Cambon had known otherwise.<sup>67</sup> His support of France during the Second Moroccan Crisis, as has been seen, shows that support of France -- military if necessary -- was still at the centre of his foreign policy.

Grey was always aware that he must tread softly where parliament was concerned. The following incident is extremely enlightening regarding his conscious differentiation between what he said publicly for the benefit of parliament and what he believed privately and told the French in confidence. In March 1911 Grey denied in the House of Commons that when he had come to office there had been any commitment to aid France militarily.<sup>68</sup> Bertie reported from Paris that this statement

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<sup>66</sup>Minute by Nicolson, November 2, 1911, B.D. VII, 617.

<sup>67</sup>See above, Chapter II, pp. 41-43.

<sup>68</sup>Parliamentary Debates (Commons) 5th series, Vol. 23, March 30, 1911.

had worried the French<sup>69</sup> and Grey replied:

There w[oul]d be a row in Parl[iamen]t here if I had used words which implied the possibility of a secret engagement unknown to Parl[iamen]t all these years committing us to a European war... I purposefully worded the answer so as not to convey that the engagement of 1904 might not under certain circumstances be construed to have larger consequences than its strict letter....

... At the time of the Algeciras Conference if Germany had fastened a quarrel upon France I think the agreement of 1904 w[oul]d have been construed by public opinion here as entailing in spirit the obligation to help France. An absolute engagement on the other hand is more I think than Parl[iamen]t is prepared for.<sup>70</sup>

On November 27, 1911 Grey made a major speech on foreign policy in the House of Commons.<sup>71</sup> The main point which he emphasized was that his policy was based upon friendly understandings with France and Russia. Of course this did not preclude the desirability of good relations with Germany as well, but not at the expense of the ententes: "One does not make new friendships worth having by deserting old ones." It is interesting to note his statement: "One of the essential conditions of the friendship of ourselves with France and Russia in the last few years has been the certain knowledge that neither they nor we wish to pursue a provocative or aggressive policy." Yet in truth, neither France nor

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<sup>69</sup>Bertie to Grey, April 9, 1911, B.D. VII, 205.

<sup>70</sup>Grey to Bertie, April 10, 1911, ibid., 206.

<sup>71</sup>Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th series, Vol. 32, November 27, 1911, pp. 43-65.

Russia had shown herself willing to spurn an aggressive policy if she could by that means satisfy her national aims -- France in Morocco and Russia at the Straits, in Persia, and in the Far East. Certainly Grey must have realized this, but was willing nonetheless to give them his support so far as he felt it necessary to maintain the ententes.

Grey condemned the policy advocated by the left-wing in parliament -- a return to "splendid isolation", which he described as an avowal that in no circumstances would Britain come to the aid of a power, even a friendly one, if wantonly attacked. He said: "It would deprive us of the possibility of having a friend in Europe, and it would result in the other nations of Europe, either by choice or of necessity, being brought into the orbit of a single diplomacy from which we should be excluded." The ideal of "splendid isolation" was no longer possible for Britain, and if she were to try such a policy the result would be that in a few years she would have to face a Europe united against her. In Grey's opinion this was not even a policy, but the negation of a policy.

The Agadir Crisis had demonstrated again that Grey's basic principles of British foreign policy had not changed after six years as British Foreign Secretary.<sup>72</sup> Diplomatic and, if necessary, military support of France was the keystone

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<sup>72</sup>The volume of the D.D.F. pertinent to the Agadir Crisis, 2<sup>e</sup>, Vol. XII, did not arrive in time for this thesis.

of that policy. Grey was sincerely desirous of maintaining peace, but not at the expense of sacrificing the entente. He urged France to be conciliatory, but left her a large leeway in which to operate (and she knew it).<sup>73</sup> In addition, Grey's suspicions of Germany were increased by her rash diplomatic coup and helped along further by his anti-German advisors in the Foreign Office. His policy remained European rather than imperial-centred. And it remained based upon the balance of power -- "Triple Entente" versus Triple Alliance -- rather than the concert of Europe.

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<sup>73</sup>Grey was tough with France regarding the latter's negotiations with Spain. The French proposal was to give the basins of the rivers that flowed into the Mediterranean to Spain and the basins of those that flowed into the Atlantic to France, in which case the north-west corner of Morocco that had previously been in the Spanish zone would come under the French protectorate. Grey informed the French that Britain could not support this so-called "Regnault Projet" which would necessitate putting pressure on Spain and risk throwing her into the arms of Germany, nor could she approve of the substitution of a first class naval power for a lesser one on the Atlantic coast. (Bertie to Grey, November 2, 1911, E.D. VII, 614.) Although Caillaux warned that if Britain supported Spain against the French claims, "French public opinion would be greatly irritated and there would be a danger of France and England falling out", Bertie did not think the French foolish enough to quarrel over this minor issue. (Bertie to Grey, November 3, 1911, ibid., 618.) Grey's stand was: "We can have nothing to do with a line that is mean and dishonorable. We have got to keep France straight in this matter, or to part company with her. I wish of all things to avoid the latter alternative, but we can only do so by carrying the former. This we shall carry." (Grey to Bertie, November 8, 1911, ibid., 631.) Grey was confident that the French would give in to British wishes regarding Spain, as they indeed did, otherwise he would not have put the entente on the line. It was too important to him.

Barlow criticizes Grey's Agadir policy as follows:

British policy sacrificed to the cause of France its prime motive, preservation of peculiarly British interests. Germany gathered from her plunge into ruthless diplomacy a few acres of swampland; England reaped a harvest of malignant enmities.<sup>74</sup>

But according to the principles of Grey's foreign policy, he was not sacrificing vital British interests in supporting France for that support itself, he believed, was a vital British interest -- the most vital interest of all. As for the enmities Britain reaped from Agadir, the main -- perhaps the only -- one was that of Germany, whose high hopes of a diplomatic victory over France had been frustrated mainly because of Grey's decision to support Britain's entente partner. The Anglo-French entente had not, as Kiderlen expected, been broken up but rather was further cemented. Agadir produced a fresh bout of Anglo-German naval building, Admiral von Tirpitz making use of Germany's humiliation as a reason for Germany's need for an even larger navy. But the relations between the two powers had not been good even before the crisis as no mutually satisfactory solution to the naval rivalry could be found.<sup>75</sup>

Lord Hankey, Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence and cognizant of the state of Britain's defence

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<sup>74</sup>Barlow, p. 399.

<sup>75</sup>See below, Chapter VI.

preparations, writes in his memoirs, The Supreme Command, that the Agadir Crisis increased British apprehension of a "German menace" and increased the sense of urgency in preparing for an ever more probable conflict sometime in the not so distant future:

By their imprudent move the Germans did more than anything else to assist our preparations for defence. It provided a stimulus to Ministers and Government Departments at the precise moment when it was most needed, and which lasted until the war broke out in 1914. It greatly facilitated the task of overcoming that vis inertiae which, up to that time, had been the main difficulty. But for the Agadir incident we should have despaired of ever getting our war arrangements tuned up even to the pitch they reached by the outbreak of war.<sup>76</sup>

Discontent over Grey's foreign policy had been accumulating for some time both in and out of parliament. The debate following his speech in November 1911 offered an opportunity to protest against the general policies pursued by the Liberals since 1906. Grey was attacked for his countenance of Russian ruthlessness and bad faith in Persia, the secrecy of his diplomacy and the lack of parliamentary control over it, the general worsening of Anglo-German relations, and the turning of a friendly understanding with France into an alliance without parliamentary approval or even knowledge.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Lord Hankey, The Supreme Command, 1914-1918, Vol. I (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1961), pp. 148-49.

<sup>77</sup> Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th series, Vol. 32.

The Conservatives approved of his policy, hailing it as a continuation of Lansdowne's (which in reality it was not), and if they criticized Grey, they did so because he was not firm enough. But there was much discontent within Grey's own party and in the cabinet, aided by the press.

In November the French press published some of the secret articles of the 1904 Anglo-French entente agreement. The protests from the British press against such secret diplomacy resulted in Grey's publishing a blue book on November 24, 1911 containing the full text of the 1904 agreement including the secret articles. Three days later he gave parliament a long verbal explanation of his policy. But as F. Gosses comments in The Management of British Foreign Policy before the First World War:

However important the statement of the Foreign Secretary may have been in itself, yet it can by no means be considered as evidence of influence exercised by Parliament on foreign policy. In the first place the information was not given until after the crisis; in the second place the initiative was not taken by Parliament, but by the government, who wished to justify its policy during that crisis.<sup>78</sup>

A "Grey-must-go" campaign was started by these Liberal dissenters with the support of the Labourites. But the former were unwilling to break up the government on this issue -- which was what Grey threatened them with -- and thus his

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<sup>78</sup> F. Gosses, The Management of British Foreign Policy before the First World War, especially during the period 1880-1914, trans. E. C. Van der Gaaf (Leiden: A. W. Sijthoff's Uitgeversmaatschappij N.V., 1948), p. 91.

position as architect of British foreign policy was not seriously threatened. He was, in fact, despite these rumblings of discontent which forced him to be secretive and illusive, as secure as he had been when the Liberals first took office in December 1905.

The Franco-German treaty of November 1911 was the final settlement of the Moroccan question, but Franco-German enmity remained as a potential source of European war. The French desire for revanche -- the desire to revenge the humiliating defeat by Germany in 1870 and to regain the "lost provinces" of Alsace and Lorraine -- burned stronger than ever. The increase in revanchist feeling was in no small part due to the fact that in January 1912 Raymond Poincaré became French Premier and Minister for Foreign Affairs and subsequently President of the Republic. A nationalist revival swept the country with Poincaré, a Lorrainer, intent upon affirming the dignity and prestige of France and preparing for the coming struggle with Germany. His first task was to strengthen the "Triple Entente".

The French were extremely nervous about British negotiations with Germany for a political agreement resulting from the Haldane Mission in February 1912,<sup>79</sup> and urged on by Bertie,<sup>80</sup> they protested in London that such an agreement

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<sup>79</sup>See below, Chapter VI.

<sup>80</sup>Notes by Poincaré, March 27, 1912, D.D.F. VI, 3<sup>e</sup>, II, 266 and April 10, 1912, ibid., 319.

would seriously endanger the Anglo-French entente. When the Anglo-German negotiations appeared doomed to failure, Poincaré put forward his schemes for a closer Anglo-French understanding. In a conversation with Nicolson on April 15, Cambon reminded the Under-Secretary that in 1905 Lansdowne had proposed to him that the entente be strengthened and extended but that the fall of Delcassé and then of the Conservative government in Britain had quashed the project. The French government, he said, was now convinced that in a year or two Germany would create another incident as at Agadir, and it would probably result in war this time. France therefore wanted to know for sure if she could count on Britain. Nicolson replied that while he personally was a warm adherent of the entente and would like to see it strengthened, he doubted that the British government would be willing to tie its hands by a closer agreement which would probably also alienate Germany.<sup>81</sup> Grey approved of Nicolson's reply to Cambon and said he would also impress upon the French Ambassador that Britain could not make a definite commitment to France, adding: "I shall however impress upon him that although we cannot bind ourselves under all circumstances

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<sup>81</sup> Minute by Nicolson, April 15, 1912, B.D. VI, 576. It is interesting to note that Cambon reports Nicolson as having told him that although "this radical-socialist Cabinet will not dare ratify such an agreement ... the Cabinet will not last, it is done for, and with the Conservatives you will be able to get something precise." (Cambon to Poincaré, April 18, 1912, D.D.F. 3<sup>e</sup>, II, 363.)

to go to war with France against Germany, we shall also certainly not bind ourselves to Germany not to assist France."<sup>82</sup>

Thus despite the strong urgings of the Foreign Office (in addition to demands from the Conservative press and some Conservative statesmen)<sup>83</sup> that a more definite agreement be concluded with France to tighten up the entente, Grey refused. In the light of his policy during the Agadir Crisis there can be no doubt that it was Liberal opinion in the cabinet and the House of Commons which held him back. The cabinet simply would not have agreed to a more binding agreement than that signed in 1904. Yet this thesis has shown how Grey had changed that original agreement from a purely colonial arrangement into a diplomatic alignment -- into an undertaking to support France at all costs. This had been accomplished without the consent of the cabinet, let alone of parliament. Why then could Grey not have converted the entente into an alliance without their consent? The answer is that Grey had neither made a written agreement with the French, nor even stated definitely that Britain would give them military aid. He had left them to surmise from his actions that this aid would be forthcoming. At the same time he had continually told them that the British government could

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<sup>82</sup>Grey to Nicolson, April 21, 1912, B.D. VI, 580.

<sup>83</sup>Aime De Fleuriau [Secretary and sometimes *Chargé d' Affaires* at the French Embassy in London] to Poincaré, May 30, 1912, D.D.F., 3<sup>e</sup>, II, 363.

not limit its freedom of action by any definite commitment. In the last resort parliament must decide on war or peace. Grey knew that just because he gave his word that France could definitely count on British military aid, there would be no guarantee that a parliament, whose majority opposed involvement in continental affairs and commitments to continental powers, would abide by that promise, especially if it had been made without the consent of the cabinet which was equally opposed to such promises.

Yet if it was useless for Grey secretly to give France definite assurance that she could count on British military aid and impossible for him to get the consent of the cabinet, there were other ways in which he could bring the two powers closer together. The military conversations, begun in 1906 and still continuing, played an important part in creating this bond. In 1912 the naval situation provided an even better opportunity.

Because of the increasingly ominous naval threat from Germany, the British Admiralty, headed by Winston Churchill as First Lord, believed it necessary in 1912 to withdraw the Mediterranean fleet in order to defend home waters. Therefore in case of war with the Triple Alliance, Britain's communications with the empire would be cut by the Austrian and Italian fleets -- unless France came to Britain's assistance. At the same time the French had decided to concentrate their

battle fleet in the Mediterranean in order to guard their paramount naval interest -- maritime communications with their North African possessions. This involved exposing their Atlantic and Channel coasts to attack, but they anticipated that the British fleet would fill the vacuum. A sense of mutual reliance was thus created, and at Churchill's urging the cabinet agreed to further naval conversations with the French.<sup>84</sup> On November 22 and 23, 1912 letters were exchanged by Grey and Cambon<sup>85</sup> stating that military and naval conversations had taken place and that were either power to expect an unprovoked attack by a third power, the two governments of Britain and France would immediately discuss what, if any, joint action should be taken. It was emphasized, however, that neither government was bound to aid the other with armed force. And in the technical arrangement between the two Admiralties it was stated that the new disposals of the two fleets were completely independent of one another and had arisen from no naval agreement or convention.<sup>86</sup>

The explicit statement of non-commitment would seem to have been a victory for those members of the cabinet who

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<sup>84</sup>Naval conversations with the French had been begun by Admiral Sir John Fisher when he was First Sea Lord in 1906, but soon ended when he withdrew his support.

<sup>85</sup>B.D. X(2), 416 and 417.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., unnumbered, p. 602.

were adverse to binding Britain's freedom of action. The French had to accept either its inclusion in the Grey-Cambon letters and technical arrangement or no agreement at all. The cabinet believed the assurance of Grey and Asquith that Britain was not committed to France by the naval arrangement, but while true in theory, this assurance was not true in fact.

Churchill wrote in a minute to Asquith and Grey in August 1912:

The point I am anxious to safeguard is our freedom of choice if the occasion arises and consequent power to influence French policy beforehand. That freedom will be sensibly impaired if the French can say that they have denuded their Atlantic seaboard, and concentrated in the Mediterranean on the faith of naval arrangements made with us. This will not be true. If we did not exist, France could not make better dispositions than at present .... Neither is it true that we are relying on France to maintain our position in the Mediterranean.... If France did not exist, we should make no other disposition of our forces.<sup>87</sup>

But Churchill, like Grey, was clearly dissatisfied with such half measures and concludes the above minute by saying:

"Everyone must feel who knows the facts that we have the obligations of an alliance without its advantages, and above all without its precise definitions."<sup>88</sup> And in his memoirs he writes:

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<sup>87</sup> August 23, 1912. Quoted in Churchill, pp. 115-16.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

From the moment that the Fleets of France and Britain were disposed in this new way our common naval interests became very important. And the moral claims which France could make upon Great Britain if attacked by Germany, whatever we had stipulated to the contrary, were enormously extended.<sup>89</sup>

The 1912 naval "arrangement" thus created a moral obligation for Britain to defend the northern and western coasts of France in the case of a German attack. Grey denied that there was any commitment. Yet on the basis of his previous foreign policy one can only conclude that he would never, if he could prevent it, let Britain stand aside while the French coast was ravaged by the German navy. As in the case of the military conversations, Grey cannot be accused of lying because he was right in asserting that the final decision had to be left to parliament. But by authorizing the drawing up of plans for joint naval defence, the British cabinet was going a long way towards tipping the balance scales in the direction of intervention on the side of France when parliament did finally come to make its decision.

The decision of the French Government was quite spontaneous but it would not have been taken if they could suppose in the event of Germany making a descent on the Channel or Atlantic ports of France, England would not come to the assistance of France. If such was to be the case the conversations between the Naval Experts would be useless and the French Government must have their best ships to face Germany in the Channel.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>Ibid., pp. 114-15.

<sup>90</sup>Bertie to Grey, July 30, 1912, B.D. X(2).

Cambon called the naval arrangement "mon petit papier" and set great store by its having the required effect upon the British cabinet if France should be forced to go to war.<sup>91</sup> For despite British disavowals of any commitment, the French believed that they could count on their entente partner. To quote Poincaré again, this time in February 1913:

England is not bound to France by any definite political engagement, but the tone and the nature of the assurances given by the Cabinet of London allow the French Government in the existing political conjunctures, to count upon the armed support of England in case of conflict with Germany.<sup>92</sup>

Like the First Moroccan Crisis and the Bosnian Crisis, the Agadir affair was important in strengthening Britain's established friendships. Having sided with France in the face of the apparent German threat at Agadir, alarmed by German naval rivalry, Britain was further prepared to undertake the additional commitment of the naval "arrangement".

<sup>91</sup>Cambon was convinced that Grey really desired a more definite agreement with France but that he was held back by his Radical colleagues in the cabinet: "Sir Edward Grey is of the tradition of Lord Lansdowne and ... if his Cabinet colleagues shared his ideas, he would not be content with the exchange of letters with which we are occupying ourselves." (Cambon to Poincaré, October 31, 1912, D.D.F., 3<sup>e</sup>, IV, 301.)

<sup>92</sup>Quoted in Bernadotte Schmitt, The Coming of the War 1914, Vol. I (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), p. 51. Schmitt says that Poincaré is supposed to have said this and cites as evidence a letter of Izvolsky to Sazonov of February 27, 1913.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SEARCH FOR AN AGREEMENT WITH GERMANY

The four preceding chapters of the thesis have shown how Sir Edward Grey's foreign policy was formed and how it remained basically unchanged when tested in three major crises between 1905 and 1911. It was, as has been seen, a policy based upon the doctrine of the European balance of power. The doctrine of the balance of power presupposes two or more power groupings. In Europe in the pre-war decade there were two: the Dual Alliance of France and Russia and the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria, and Italy. It has been seen that during the period of Grey's Foreign Secretaryship British relations with the former grouping had become ever more cordial while at the same time Anglo-German relations had deteriorated. By the end of his first year in office Grey had identified Germany as the potential threat to the European balance, and successive crises confirmed and heightened his suspicions of her designs on European hegemony.

In 1909 negotiations were begun for an Anglo-German understanding. How sincere was Grey in his pursuit of an understanding with Germany? Was he really desirous of such an understanding in order to complement those with France and Russia and to allow Britain to maintain a mediatory, non-committed position of "honest broker" between the two rival power groupings, only to be frustrated by Germany's unwillingness to compromise her designs of hegemony? Or did his emphasis on the ententes and his

suspensions of Germany make an agreement of any real value with her undesirable since it might be destructive to the policy he had so carefully pursued since 1906? The purpose of this chapter will be to find out how the idea of an understanding with Germany fitted into Grey's foreign policy as a whole, and thus to complete the picture of that policy by putting to the test the main premise both of the stock interpretation of Grey's foreign policy -- that Grey really did desire and work for a rapprochement with Germany -- and of Monger's thesis -- that a rapprochement with Germany was completely antipathetic to him.

There is considerable disagreement as to the main cause of British alarm over the "German menace" in the last decade before the war. Ross J.S. Hoffman in Great Britain and the German Trade Rivalry, 1875-1914 contends that British alarm at the German trade rivalry, which had first caused widespread national alarm in the 1890's, was

the soil out of which the great questions at issue between the two nations grew. It was a source of fear for alarmists to exploit, and it gave nourishment to suspicion, jealousy, and hatred. It was a powerful excitant of Germanophobia, which inevitably made its force felt throughout the highest political circles, and therefore it may rightly be viewed as a basic cause for the anti-German orientation of British world policy.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ross J.S. Hoffman, Great Britain and the German Trade Rivalry, 1875-1914 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1933) p. 279. Hoffman admits that after 1900 the German commercial rivalry no longer caused public panic in Britain, yet he insists that nevertheless it had become even more important as a source of Anglo-German friction: "The truth seems to be that the British nation steadily grew more and more acutely, at the same time less noisily, aware of the relentless commercial struggle with Germany." (Ibid., p. 261). Hoffman believes that the naval rivalry was just one manifestation of the commercial rivalry.

Admiral von Tirpitz, the architect of the German navy, was obsessed with the idea that Anglo-German trade rivalry was the root cause of British hostility towards Germany and that therefore no German naval concessions would improve relations. The economic question was also played upon in Britain by an alarmist press. But it was discarded as a factor of great importance by most British and German statesmen including Grey. Grey gives no hint in his memoirs or in the printed British Documents that he regarded German trade rivalry as a fundamental cause of Anglo-German animosity.<sup>2</sup> No doubt it helped to heighten that animosity. Yet British manufacturers and business certainly did not welcome an Anglo-German war which would not benefit British commerce but rather impoverish Britain and ruin one of her best customers.<sup>3</sup> Arthur J. Marder, whose works on the naval rivalry are of extreme importance in the study of Anglo-German relations before the war, is probably correct in stating: "The fact is that economic competition was by the pre-war decade no longer the decisive factor in the rivalries of the nations."<sup>4</sup>

The two main factors poisoning Anglo-German relations were British anxiety regarding first, Germany's supposed quest for world hegemony and

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<sup>2</sup>Grey in his memoirs denies that British industrial and commercial rivalry with Germany was an important factor in the deterioration of Anglo-German relations. (Grey, Twenty-five Years, I, p. 335). Lichnowsky agrees (Lichnowsky, My Mission to London, p. 22).

<sup>3</sup>E. L. Woodward, Great Britain and the German Navy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), p. 46.

<sup>4</sup>Marder, From the Dreadnaught to Scapa Flow, Vol I, p. 431.

secondly, the ambitious German naval program.<sup>5</sup> Naval rivalry has usually been singled out as having been the main obstacle to an Anglo-German understanding, and it is pointed out that had a naval agreement been concluded, Anglo-German relations would have immediately improved and friendship and co-operation would have been substituted for suspicion and rivalry. Certainly the naval question formed the main point for discussion in the negotiations from 1909 on, and certainly it was the issue which aroused the greatest alarm on the part of British public opinion. But perhaps it was not the root of the trouble.

Eyre Crowe wrote in 1910:

It is not merely or even principally the question of naval armaments which is the cause of the existing estrangement. The building of the German fleet is but one of the symptoms of the disease. It is the political ambitions of the German Government and nation which are the source of the mischief.<sup>6</sup>

Hardinge, on the other hand, put great emphasis upon the naval rivalry, regarding it as the main cause of poor Anglo-German relations: "An understanding on naval matters is a primary and essential condition for the improvement of the relations between the two countries."<sup>7</sup> Grey, too, in his dispatches and memoranda often singled out the naval rivalry as the pivotal point. For example, in February 1907 he initialed a minute by Hardinge which said: "If Germany would place some limit on her naval

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<sup>5</sup>Another element in the Anglo-German rivalry was colonial rivalry. Germany believed that Britain had too many colonies and herself too few in the light of Germany's great power status. This colonial jealousy was one aspect of the commercial rivalry and not of great importance except as one of the few areas of policy where Britain and Germany were able to make an agreement. See below regarding agreements over the Berlin-Bagdad Railway and Portugese colonies, pp. 202-203.

<sup>6</sup>Memorandum by Crowe, October 20, 1910, B.D. VI, 404.

<sup>7</sup>Memorandum by Hardinge, August 25, 1909, ibid., 120.

construction scheme suspicion of Germany's intention would soon evaporate on this side of the Channel"<sup>8</sup> and in August 1908 he told the French Chargé d'Affaires that the naval question "had now become the one subject of interest to the exclusion of all other political questions between England and Germany."<sup>9</sup> But it has been seen that one of the main principles of Grey's foreign policy was the doctrine of the balance of power, enunciated most clearly and forcefully in Crowe's January 1, 1907 memorandum.<sup>10</sup> It would thus seem reasonable to surmise that while Grey often singled out the naval rivalry as the key to an Anglo-German understanding, he actually viewed it, as Crowe did, as just a manifestation of fear of German political hegemony, a manifestation of "the generally restless, explosive, and disconcerting activity of Germany in relation to all other States."<sup>11</sup>

As Marder puts it:

In the last analysis, the political factor was the true explanation of the British reaction to the expanding fleet across the North Sea, yet it is remarkable how this tended to be obscured and how the continued growth of the German Fleet had per se become as early as 1905-06 the great stumbling block and 'only obstacle' to satisfactory Anglo-German relations.<sup>12</sup>

Actually the question of the German bid for hegemony and the question of the Anglo-German naval rivalry were part of one and the same problem -- that of British security. As the naval rivalry was the pivotal point of

<sup>8</sup>February 6, 1907, ibid., 4.

<sup>9</sup>Grey to Bertie, August 26, 1908, ibid., 120.

<sup>10</sup>See above Chapter II, pp. 58-60.

<sup>11</sup>Statement by Crowe. Quoted in Marder, p. 123.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

the negotiations, it will form an important part of this chapter, but it will be examined from the point of view of its wider political ramifications, for it was from this point of view that Grey approached the question of an agreement with Germany.

The Anglo-German naval rivalry began with the German Navy Laws of 1898 and 1901 which were calculated to make Germany the second naval power in the world in the next few years. The threat to British naval supremacy was not immediately apparent to those outside the Admiralty. But between 1900 and 1905 Anglo-German relations steadily deteriorated for other reasons -- the bitterness aroused by German press attacks on Britain during the Boer War, the failure of negotiations for an alliance, the Anglo-French entente of 1904, and Germany's testing of that entente over the Moroccan question in 1905. A new orientation in British foreign policy, away from dependence on Germany, had been begun by Lansdowne, an orientation that was carried much further by Grey after December 1905. Meanwhile, by the time the Liberals took office the development of the German fleet had come to be viewed with considerable apprehension. During the last few years of the Conservative government there was a lack of interest in naval questions. But by the summer of 1906 a noticeable change was in evidence:

The change was partly due to the desire of the newly elected Liberal members to cut down the high estimates, partly to the exuberant and provocative character of Sir John Fisher who had taken office as First Sea Lord of the Admiralty in October 1904; but the main cause of the change was a sudden growth of anxiety about the intentions of Germany. The events of 1905 and the Algeiras Conference did much to produce this anxiety. Moreover the Moroccan crisis coincided with a further increase in the German navy.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Woodward, p. 94.

By the end of the nineteenth century the Royal Navy, despite its bursting pride and confidence in itself, was, in the words of Marder, "a drowsy, inefficient, moth-eaten organism."<sup>14</sup> Thanks, however, to Admiral Sir John Fisher, First Sea Lord from 1904 to 1910, the whole naval organization was revolutionized -- a timely response to Germany's new naval program. "A tornado of energy, enthusiasm, and persuasive power, a man of originality, vision, and courage, a sworn foe of all outworn traditions and customs, the greatest of British naval administrators since St. Vincent, 'Jacky' Fisher was what the lethargic Navy had been in dire need of."<sup>15</sup> His reforms were many, but most important were the redistribution of the fleet in accordance with modern requirements, the major portion being concentrated in home waters to meet the "German menace," and the introduction of the all-big-gun type of battleship and cruiser. The Dreadnought was launched in February 1906.

Fisher had set ideas on foreign policy, too. Marder calls him "one of the architects of the Triple Entente."<sup>16</sup> This is an exaggeration as Fisher had authority only with respect to naval matters, and the technical rather than the political side of those matters, with the political side handled by the First Lord of the Admiralty in the cabinet. However, his ideas were along the lines of Grey's reorientation of British foreign policy -- but more extreme. He had a violent hostility

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<sup>14</sup>Marder, p. 6.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 205-06.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

towards Germany, believed war with her inevitable, and went so far as to suggest a preventive war to destroy the German fleet.<sup>17</sup> He advocated a quadruple alliance with France, Russia, and Turkey, and he regarded the Anglo-Japanese alliance as "the very worst thing that England ever did for herself."<sup>18</sup> These ideas, along with his redistribution of the fleet making the defence of Britain against Germany rather than the defence of Britain's imperial possessions as under the Conservatives the main naval priority, marked him as a valuable source of support for Grey's European, balance-of-power-centred policy.

It must be noted, however, that while Fisher agreed with Grey in identifying Germany as the potential enemy, he disagreed as to the value of the French entente. For the Admiralty, the entente was "a temporary expedient and not, as for Grey, a permanent principle of policy."<sup>19</sup> A memorandum in February 1906 stated:

The Board of Admiralty, as the responsible naval advisers of the Government, cannot base their plans upon the shifting sands of any temporary and unofficial relationships ... "Ententes" may vanish -- battleships remain the surest pledge this country can give for the continued peace of the world.<sup>20</sup>

Fisher would not agree to naval conversations with the French on the same lines as the military conversations begun in 1906. It was not until 1912 that Anglo-French naval conversations really began. Nor was he co-operative

<sup>17</sup>In May 1907 Britain had seven dreadnoughts ready for battle, Germany none. And Britain had flotillas of submarines peculiarly adapted to the shallower German waters, Germany none. Fisher, therefore, wanted to "Copenhagen" the German fleet before it got too strong. But he was overruled. (Lord Fisher, Memories [London: Hodder and Stoughton,] 1919, p.18-19).

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>19</sup>Monger, p. 311.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 310.

with the military in their plans for sending an expeditionary force to France. His opposition to an expeditionary force was continued by his successors and set a pattern of poor army-navy relations which persisted down to the eve of war. Thus on the question of the importance of the entente with France it was the army, rather than the navy, who supported Grey. But the navy was as aware as the army, if not more so, of the "German menace."

The Liberal party was split over the naval question. The Liberal Imperialists were "big-navy" men, led by Asquith, Haldane, Grey, and later, Churchill.<sup>21</sup> Like the Admiralty, the navalist press, the Conservatives, and the Foreign Office they believed it was an urgent necessity that Britain maintain her naval supremacy by building ships even faster than the Germans. They argued that while the German navy was a luxury, as she already had the largest army in Europe, the British navy was a necessity, a purely defensive instrument, essential for the survival of an island state with far-flung colonial possessions. This was the position Grey took, the only one he could take so long as he was as convinced as he was of the "German menace." In a memorandum for the guidance of King Edward during his visit with the Kaiser at Cronberg in August 1908, Grey wrote:

If the Germans continue to execute their naval programme at a rapid speed, we shall certainly have to ask Parliament to vote a considerable increase to our expenditure: no Government of either party could avoid doing so. The justification and

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<sup>21</sup>By the time that Churchill became First Lord of the Admiralty in October 1908 he had abandoned his stand as the bitterest critic of the government's program of large naval expenditure and become its strongest supporter.

necessity for this increase, which would have to be openly avowed, would be the German expenditure. We have to take into account not only the German Navy, but also the German Army. If the German Fleet ever becomes superior to ours, the German Army can conquer this country. There is no corresponding risk of this kind to Germany: for however superior our Fleet was, no naval victory would bring us any nearer to Berlin.<sup>22</sup>

And the previous October he minuted: "It seems that a persistent policy on the part of our Admiralty in regulating our building programme by the double of that of Germany may in the end induce the German public to cry out 'Enough'."<sup>23</sup>

The Radical wing of the Liberal party were "little navy" men -- pacifists, economists, and ardent social reformers -- and remained so until the outbreak of the war. Led by the Prime Minister, Campbell-Bannerman, until his retirement and death in 1908 and with strong support from Lloyd George and from Churchill (in the early years of the Liberal period in office), they desired to cut down naval estimates in order to spend these huge sums of money, "this ruinous waste", on their cherished social reform programs, and at the same time to set an example for international reduction of armaments.

The Radicals sought in vain to achieve an international reduction in armaments at the Second Hague Conference in 1907. All that was achieved was a colourless resolution as to the desirability of the limitation of armaments. It is interesting, however, to note Grey's attitude toward the conference. In May 1906 he supported the Liberal resolution in the

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<sup>22</sup>July 31, 1908, B.D. VI, Appendix III.

<sup>23</sup>Minute by Grey on Lascelles to Grey, October 24, 1907, ibid., 39.

House of Commons that the growth of expenditure on armaments was excessive and ought to be reduced and that the government should press for the inclusion of this question on the agenda of the Hague Conference.<sup>24</sup> And press he did against the opposition not only of Germany but also of France and Russia. He wrote to President Roosevelt before the conference: "It will be a poor lame Conference if the Powers all meet there and shirk the question."<sup>25</sup>

Did Grey push the question of a reduction in armaments just to pacify his Radical colleagues? That was no doubt in his mind. But at the same time he was sincerely desirous that the armaments race should end. He loathed the prospect of a war and believed that large armaments made war more likely. He writes in Twenty-five Years:

Great armaments lead inevitably to war. If there are armaments on one side, there must be armaments on other sides. While one nation arms, other nations cannot tempt it to aggression by remaining defenceless... The enormous growth of armaments in Europe, the sense of insecurity and fears caused by them -- it was these that made war inevitable.<sup>26</sup>

He supported heavy British naval expenditures only because he felt it essential for Britain to be prepared in the face of the German naval program and what he believed were German aims of hegemony. He would thus do everything possible to see that Britain's security was not threatened. He wrote to Roosevelt: "If Germany insists upon the high line that naval expenditure concerns only herself, and won't discuss it

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<sup>24</sup>Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 4th series, Vol. 156, May 9, 1906, p. 1413-15.

<sup>25</sup>Grey to Roosevelt, February 12, 1907, B.D. VIII, 175.

<sup>26</sup>Grey, Twenty-five Years, I, p. 91-92.

with us, we are bound to go on building to keep ahead of her, and the whole world will feel the strain of increasing Navies."<sup>27</sup>

Two incidents in late 1908 and early 1909 greatly increased British suspicion of German motives, especially the suspicion of British public opinion which had previously been out of step with official policy. Grey's handling of these incidents reveals much about his policy towards Germany, and particularly towards the naval rivalry. The first episode was that of the Daily Telegraph interview published on October 28, 1908. Grey handled the situation with care and discretion. He protested the Kaiser's remarks, as he was bound to do, but he desired that the issue then be allowed to blow over quietly. He wrote to Bertie:

It isn't the attacks upon our King or anything in particular of which I deprecate the publication: if the German Emperor has said rude things I should be rather glad than otherwise that he should incur the odium of having them known; but on general grounds of policy I should be disposed to let well alone as the best chance of restoring normal relations with Germany and preventing the Emperor with his megalomania being set up again.

Never since I have been in office has opinion been so thoroughly wide awake with regard to Germany and on its guard as it is now. I haven't the faintest tremor of anxiety about that. Never has the Emperor's position been so low in the world. Why then not let well alone!<sup>28</sup>

Grey chose to avoid exacerbating Anglo-German relations by not harping upon a German indiscretion. But, at the same time, he was glad that the incident had jolted the British people into an awareness of the "German menace," and especially that those with pro-German sympathies had been shaken and shocked.

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<sup>27</sup>B.D. VIII, 175.

<sup>28</sup>December 1, 1908, B.D. VI, 142.

The second incident was the British naval scare in 1909. The refusal of the Kaiser at Cronberg in August 1908 to agree to a reduction in the German naval program and the Austrian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in September had increased official suspicions of Germany. Then early in 1909 the Admiralty came to the conclusion that through an accelerated program of shipbuilding the Germans would be able to exceed their present official schedules and soon eliminate the British margin of naval superiority. The Admiralty therefore demanded at least six ships for 1909-10, rather than the projected four,<sup>29</sup> and it was supported by armament pressure groups, the Conservative party, and the navalist and Conservative press<sup>30</sup> whose slogan "we want eight and we won't wait" resulted in a nation-wide panic. The Liberal government split, Lloyd George and Churchill leading the opposition to increased naval expenditure. The compromise worked out by Asquith was for four dreadnoughts to be laid down in the ensuing financial year and four more no later than April 1910 if the necessity were proven.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>The Cawdor Memorandum drawn up by the Conservative Ministry in December, 1905 had laid down a basis for British shipbuilding in the future of four large armoured ships (dreadnoughts and battle cruisers).

<sup>30</sup>The press played a large part in arousing public alarm about the German naval threat. The Times was especially singled out by the Germans for its anti-German, "big navy" tone. Both Britain and Germany blamed the press of the other for embittering relations. Both were guilty of scare-mongering and of failing to make an effort at least to try to understand the point of view of the other power.

<sup>31</sup>Actually only nine of the thirteen German ships which the official German schedule estimated would be completed by 1912 were finished on time, whereas the Admiralty had feared that seventeen would be ready. Nevertheless, in July 1909 (the debate on naval estimates traditionally took place each March) the government announced that the four extra "hypothetical" ships for 1909 in Asquith's compromise program would be built. Churchill comments in The World Crisis: "The Admiralty had demanded six ships; the economists offered four; and we finally compromised on eight." (p. 33).

Grey staunchly supported the "big-navy" group in the naval debate, but like Asquith he realized that a compromise was necessary in order to maintain cabinet unity. He therefore defended the government's naval program in the House of Commons against a Conservative motion of censure that the program was not sufficient to ensure the safety of the empire.<sup>32</sup> He argued that it was better for Britain to build ships as she needed them rather than to build them all at once and have them become obsolete as soon as they were completed. The Liberals would ensure that Britain's building capacity was sufficient so that extra ships could be built as soon as they were necessary. And if there were any uncertainty regarding the rate of German building, the government would always give the benefit of the doubt to the side of national safety rather than that of economy. He said that although he abhorred the present arms race and hoped that it could be ended, it would do no good for Britain alone to give up the competition: "We should cease to account for anything amongst the nations of Europe, and we should be fortunate if our liberty was left, and we did not become the conscript appendage of some stronger power." But he urged parliament to resist the exaggerated alarm regarding the present situation. In other words, he deprecated the naval rivalry and scaremongering which were poisoning Anglo-German relations and making war more likely and wished to see them end. The only way to improve Anglo-German relations was by an Anglo-German agreement for a mutual reduction of armaments. And it is to the negotiations for such an agreement that one must now turn.

The first overtures for an Anglo-German understanding came from

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<sup>32</sup>Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th series, Vol. 3, March 29, 1909, p. 52-70.

Kiderlen, Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Bülow's mouthpiece, in April 1910.<sup>33</sup> They were revived in August by Bülow's successor, Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, who was very anxious for an entente with Britain. But immediately a gulf between the British and German positions regarding an understanding made itself clear -- a gulf which was to prove to be too wide to be bridged.

Germany insisted upon a general political agreement to accompany a naval arrangement, a political agreement which would include a neutrality and non-aggression pact. This Grey could not agree to so long as his policy was based upon the French entente and the balance of power. For it would involve a British guarantee of the German possession of Alsace-Lorraine and thus seriously alienate the French; it would prevent Britain from going to the aid of France in the event of German aggression should parliament decide that vital British interests were at stake; and it would remove the greatest obstacle to what Grey believed was Germany's quest for European hegemony -- the possibility of British military support for the Dual Alliance. Nevertheless negotiations were continued in the hope that somehow a satisfactory solution could be worked out. But even in the purely naval negotiations there was a basic and unresolvable difference in position. Germany's position was that her naval program had been settled by law and could not be changed. It was, she claimed, regulated exclusively by German requirements of self-protection and therefore not affected by the number of ships Britain built. The British

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<sup>33</sup>Goschen to Grey, April 16, 1909, B.D. VI, 174.

position was that naval supremacy was essential to her defence, as Germany's was not to her defence since she was already the greatest military power. To maintain this vital supremacy she must build more ships than Germany, her program being regulated by that of her rival. Germany would go no further than agreeing to a reduction in the tempo or rate of building -- not to a reduction in the total number of ships to be built eventually. And she rejected even this modest proposal in May 1911, arguing that an adequate political understanding would render a naval agreement of any kind unnecessary.<sup>34</sup> Nor could an agreement be reached on Grey's very limited proposal that naval information be exchanged between the Admiralties. The negotiations dragged on for several years, but for all practical purposes they were dead by the beginning of the Agadir Crisis in July 1911.

The negotiations for an Anglo-German understanding failed, but did Grey really want them to succeed? If so, what sort of an agreement did he desire and would he have supported? There is no doubt but that he wanted to see the naval race ended, for not only was it ruinously wasteful, but, in Grey's opinion, it made war much more likely. Yet so long as Germany would not alter her Naval Law, there was no hope of an agreement, for Grey would not compromise British naval supremacy by a unilateral reduction. Not to have done so was no slur upon his truly peaceful intentions.

Leaving aside the naval question as best one can, although it is so intimately bound up with the whole question of Anglo-German relations,

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<sup>34</sup>Goschen to Grey, May 10, 1911, ibid., 464.

what were Grey's opinions regarding a more general agreement or entente with Germany? Did he desire such an entente to complement those with France and Russia, or was his policy based upon the French and Russian ententes to the exclusion of, and perhaps in opposition to, Germany and the Triple Alliance?

Grey always made it clear that he would not sacrifice, or even endanger, Britain's understandings with France and Russia in order to come to an understanding with Germany. For example, he wrote to Lascelles at Berlin in September 1907:

Nobody is more anxious than I am that our relations with Germany should be friendly. But they can only be so, as I have said more than once, on the distinct understanding that our friendship with Germany is not at the expense of our friendship with France.<sup>35</sup>

Britain was not, in Grey's opinion, an unaligned power. His action during the two Moroccan crises showed that he had made it Britain's policy to support France even to the length of going to war when the latter's interests were threatened by Germany. He had negotiated an agreement with the Russians in 1907 and was extremely concerned that Britain and Russia act in accord whenever possible. He minuted in August 1909:

It strikes me at first sight that if any general political understanding is to be arranged it should be one not between two Powers alone but between the two great groups of Powers, ourselves, France and Russia on one side and the Triple Alliance on the other. Whether any understanding of this sort is possible it is difficult to say, but anything short of it is sure to be regarded as invidious by those who are left out.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>September 18, 1907, *ibid.*, 48.

<sup>36</sup>Minute on Goschen to Grey, August 21, 1909, *ibid.*, 187.

In the interest of the European balance Grey placed Britain's weight on the side opposite that which he regarded as the aggressive power grouping -- the Triple Alliance. He did not believe that Britain could safely return to a policy of isolation where she would again be on bad terms with both France and Russia and dependent upon Germany for favours. But Britain had already composed her differences with the French and Russians and no longer feared an armed conflict with them. Should she therefore not now come to an agreement with Germany as well?

Grey was extremely suspicious of German political aims as the previous chapters of this thesis have already revealed. He commented to Bertie at the time of the Daily Telegraph Affair:

I am not confident about the future. We can and ought to go the length of giving Germany no excuse for saying that she is being cold-shouldered, isolated, or squeezed; but when she has recovered from the effect of the Emperor's vagaries she will resume not only her self-respect but the tendency to resent anything being done without her leave, or any friendship between other countries, in which she is not included. Then there will be trouble. She has reached that dangerous point of strength which makes her itch to dominate.<sup>37</sup>

There is a strong feeling of inevitability in this statement -- a feeling that it was inevitable that sooner or later Germany would make her bid for hegemony. In reply to a minute by G.S. Spicer, an Assistant Clerk in the Foreign Office, which said in part: "There is risk that when they [the Germans] have got their big fleet they will be strongly tempted to

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<sup>37</sup>November 12, 1908, ibid., 135. In a private letter to a family friend, Ella Pease, Grey wrote on November 8, 1908: "It is 38 years since Germany had her last war, and she is very strong and very restless, like a person whose boots are too small for him. I don't think that there will be war at present, but it will be difficult to keep the peace of Europe for another five years. (Quoted in Trevelyan, p. 155).

make somebody else pay for it", Grey added: "Yes: and it is natural that till they have a big navy they should quiet apprehensions."<sup>38</sup> In other words, Grey suspected that the German overtures to Britain were a sham, calculated to lull British suspicions, perhaps even to detach her from France and Russia, until the German navy was strong enough to crush her. For Germany to detach Britain from France and Russia would be, in Grey's opinion, as disastrous as for France and Russia to sell out to Germany (a fear that was never absent from his mind<sup>39</sup>). His past experience had taught him that Germany was not a trustworthy friend. Now that Britain had good friends he had no intention of deserting them.

As for the German leaders, Grey believed, as did Lascelle's successor at Berlin, Goschen, that Bethmann-Hollweg was sincerely desirous of maintaining peace. He writes in his memoirs of the last German Ambassador to London before the war, Prince Lichnowsky: "He came desiring to see the peace of Europe kept, and for that he worked earnestly and sincerely, till the events of 1914 overwhelmed him and everyone else who had tried to prevent war."<sup>40</sup> And the new German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs after 1913, Gottlieb von Jagow, was a welcome change from the cunning Kiderlen, who had planned the Agadir coup. Grey wrote in

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<sup>38</sup>Minutes on Mr. James Bryce [British Ambassador to Washington] to Grey, July 12, 1909, B.D. VI, 184.

<sup>39</sup>For example, Grey minuted in October 1907: "The strength of Germany's position is her power to frighten or overawe her neighbours in Europe, however well disposed they may be to us." (Minute on Nicolson to Grey, October 21, 1907, B.D. IV, 544).

<sup>40</sup>Grey, Twenty-five Years, I, p. 248.

January 1913: "If we could only have ten years of a man like Jagow to deal with, really controlling the policy of Germany, we should be on intimate terms with her at the end of the time, and on increasingly good terms all through it."<sup>41</sup> But Grey realized that German foreign policy was not formed by a single person whose actions could be predicted: "The Germans are very difficult people: one never knows with whom one is dealing; sometimes one mind and sometimes another, and they tolerate or encourage mischief makers in their service."<sup>42</sup> The amount and direction of the Kaiser's influence in any given situation could not be foreseen. When in 1910 the British Naval Attaché at Berlin reported a conversation with the Kaiser in which Wilhelm emphasized the fact that his close blood relationship with King Edward made him naturally friendly towards England, Grey agreed with Hardinge's minute that:

"The feelings of the German Emperor may at any time be swept aside by a wave of Chauvinism arising from some more or less trifling incident. In such cases one cannot count on blood relationship."<sup>43</sup>

In Grey's opinion the German military had a particularly powerful influence upon German foreign policy -- and it was not an influence on the side of peace.

Grey's suspicions of Germany prevented him from being more accommodating to her and from going further in an attempt to reach a compromise agreement. He rejected the German proposal for a political

<sup>41</sup>Grey to Sir Rennell Rodd, [British Ambassador to Rome], January 13, 1913, B.D. X (2), 455.

<sup>42</sup>Grey to Goschen, March 4, 1909, B.D. VI, 150.

<sup>43</sup>Minute on Captain Heath to Goschen (Enclosure in Goschen to Grey, March 7, 1910), ibid., 335.

agreement. Parliament would never have agreed to such a definite commitment as a non-aggression and neutrality pact which would have limited Britain's freedom of diplomatic manoeuvre -- her ability to act accordingly as her interests were affected in any given set of circumstances, not according to a pre-arranged treaty. Grey was correct in arguing: "We have no general political understanding formulated either with Russia or France; and to do with Germany what has not been done with Russia or France would look as if we were intending to change friends".<sup>44</sup> On paper the ententes with France and Russia were only settlements of specific imperial differences. Actually, however, the ententes, especially the one with France, were gradually developing into much more far-reaching agreements, into a diplomatic alignment, "The Triple Entente". Grey had done this despite parliament's traditional refusal to commit Britain. With no written agreements relating to the European situation, the good relations between Britain and France and Britain and Russia had been built on a basis of mutual trust, without which no lasting agreement can be achieved. But Grey was as suspicious of the Germans as they were of him:

An entente with Germany such as M. Kiderlen-Wächter sketches would serve to establish German hegemony in Europe and would not last long after it had served that purpose. It is in fact an invitation to help Germany to make a European combination which could be directed against us when it suited her so to use it.<sup>45</sup>

Not only did he reject Kiderlen's and Bethmann-Hollweg's formulae for an

<sup>44</sup>Grey to Goschen, September 1, 1909, ibid., 195.

<sup>45</sup>Minute by Grey on Goschen to Grey, April 16, 1909, ibid., 174.

Anglo-German political agreement, but he made no real attempt to suggest alternatives. He rejected the whole idea of an entente with Germany. He had aligned himself with France and, to a lesser degree, with Russia for the express purpose of providing a strong counterpoise to the Triple Alliance.

There is no question of which school of opinion most influenced Grey's policy towards Germany. The Radicals in the party and in the cabinet were the people most in favour of a naval agreement and an improvement in Anglo-German relations. They would not believe that there was a "German menace" and could not see why Britain's relations with Germany could not be as friendly as her relations with France and Russia. It is unlikely, however, that they would have consented to any definite political agreement with Germany. Grey knew this and used it as an argument with the Germans against such a proposal. But their arguments against a political agreement were quite different from his. The Radicals opposed commitments to any power. Grey, however, had already committed Britain to France and had aligned her diplomatically with Russia. Germany did not fit into his scheme for she was the suspected aggressor against whom his system had been built.

Once again it was from the dominant group in the Foreign Office and the embassies that Grey took his advice. Yet this group was constantly afraid lest Grey be influenced by the pro-German sentiments of some of his parliamentary and cabinet colleagues. For example, in the spring of 1911 a Special Cabinet Committee was formed consisting of

Asquith, Lloyd George, Morley,<sup>46</sup> Lord Crewe,<sup>47</sup> and W. Runciman<sup>48</sup> to assume direction and control of the negotiations with Germany. Nicolson wrote to Hardinge expressing his fears lest this committee fall in with the German view that a political arrangement was of more importance than a naval understanding:

Grey is perfectly sound on the whole matter, but I am afraid that there are in the cabinet several members who desire to come to an understanding with Germany at almost any cost, and there are no doubt sections of the Radical party who are still more emphatic on this point.<sup>49</sup>

But there was really no need to fear. Grey kept the control of foreign policy pretty much his own exclusive cabinet concern, always being careful not to alienate the Radicals too far, but still adhering in the main to the views of the Foreign Office.

The attitude of the Foreign Office towards a possible agreement with Germany was one of definite opposition. Crowe's influence upon Grey on this subject was probably great, although it can only be surmised from the limited material at hand. The subject of Germany was undoubtedly Crowe's main interest, judging from the very large number of minutes he wrote on the dispatches and memoranda regarding a possible Anglo-German understanding, and even from his minutes on other topics which usually somehow brought in the "German menace". Crowe's arguments were persuasive, his language vivid and lucid. Making allowance for his violent anti-German prejudice which was toned down by Grey to a considerable

<sup>46</sup>Now Lord President of the Council.

<sup>47</sup>Secretary of State for India.

<sup>48</sup>President of the Board of Education.

<sup>49</sup>March 2, 1911, B.D. VI, 440.

suspicion -- but not hatred -- of Germany, it would seem that Crowe's minutes and memoranda are a very good expression of the balance of power theories that formed the basis of British foreign policy under Grey, especially his long January 1, 1907 memorandum.<sup>50</sup>

Crowe harped again and again that Germany could not be trusted, that her professions of friendship were lies and were aimed at persuading the British to drop their guard and thus be more easily gobbled up when the German navy had become strong enough: "The whole energy of the government is directed towards preparing for the coming struggle with England".<sup>51</sup> And Nicolson, who became Permanent Under-Secretary in 1910, was by this time almost as anti-German as Crowe. He wrote in 1911: "Personally I do not see how it is possible that we should ever arrive at a satisfactory agreement either with regard to reduction of armaments or as to a political formula."<sup>52</sup> This feeling of pessimism was characteristic of the school of opinion which Grey adopted as his own.

It is interesting to note the views of the British Ambassadors to Berlin. Lascelles, who held the post from 1895 until 1908, did not go along with the new foreign policy based upon suspicion of Germany. He sought to play down alarmist reports that Germany was seeking European

<sup>50</sup>See above, Chapter II, pp. 58-60.

<sup>51</sup>Minute by Crowe, January 14, 1908, B.D. VI, unnumbered, p. 108.

<sup>52</sup>Nicolson to Hardinge, March 2, 1911, ibid., 440.

hegemony and would attack Britain when she was ready for war<sup>53</sup> and tried to improve rather than embitter Anglo-German relations. Thus Grey and the Foreign Office relied heavily for their information as to the state of opinion in Germany upon the reports which Sir Fairfax Cartwright sent from Munich. Cartwright was a notorious Germanophobe; in fact, his anti-German beliefs ruled him out as Lascelle's successor at Berlin for fear of deliberately antagonizing Germany.<sup>54</sup> But he told his superiors what they wanted to hear -- that Britain must not let down her vigilance against the "German menace" by dropping out of the naval race nor by being inveigled by German overtures for a rapprochement.<sup>55</sup> Lascelle's successor, Goschen, was an advocate of Grey's balance of power, entente-centred policy, a believer in the German bid for hegemony and suspicious of German proposals for an agreement. Thus in the three most important embassies after 1908 Grey had ambassadors who were strong supporters of his policy -- Bertie in Paris, Nicolson and then Buchanan in St. Petersburg, and Lascelles in Berlin. This situation with respect to Lascelles and Cartwright makes one wonder just how anxious Grey and

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<sup>53</sup>For example, in May 1908 Lascelles sent Grey a report from Colonel Trench, Military Attaché to the British Embassy at Berlin, in which Trench warned that Germany was preparing for a surprise attack on Britain. Lascelles disagreed, labelling Trench's views "of an unnecessarily alarmist nature." Crowe's minute, however, agreed with Trench, not Lascelles. (Lascelles to Grey, May 1, 1908, *ibid.*, 94).

<sup>54</sup>Instead, he succeeded Goschen as British Ambassador to Vienna.

<sup>55</sup>Crowe minuted on a dispatch from Cartwright in May, 1907 which gave evidence of German public opinion's disillusionment and dissatisfaction with the conduct of German foreign policy: "An interesting review of the situation. Mr. Cartwright shows himself a shrewd observer of the current of German thought in political matters." Grey and Hardinge agreed. (May 6, 1907, *B.D.* VIII, 199).

his Foreign Office advisors were to get at the truth. It would certainly seem to lend credence to the criticism that Grey had a closed mind and was unwilling to believe anything which did not support his own theories regarding British foreign policy.<sup>56</sup>

In February 1912 a sort of last ditch attempt was made to come to an agreement with Germany with the visit of the Secretary of State for War, Haldane, to Berlin. It failed ignominiously as had previous attempts, stumbling on the perennially unresolvable difference of opinion between the two powers as to what an agreement was intended to do. Britain insisted that a naval agreement was the prime requisite for good Anglo-German relations; Germany insisted that a political agreement would render a naval agreement unnecessary. Grey even went so far after Haldane returned to Britain as to draw up a draft formula for a non-aggression pact, but as Bethmann-Hollweg refused to accept anything less than a guarantee of absolute neutrality, the naval race continued

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<sup>56</sup>An incident in 1911 involving Cartwright adds to the suspicion, although nothing definite can be proved from the limited information available. (B.D. VII, Appendix V) On August 25, 1911 an article appeared in an Austrian newspaper, the Neue Freie Presse, purporting to record an interview with a British diplomat. (He was not named but there was no doubt that Cartwright was the diplomat referred to). The opinions quoted were very anti-German and resulted in strong German protests to the British government. Cartwright denied having given such an interview, charging that the article was a prepared coup by the German embassy in Vienna to get rid of him. Grey believed him and secured an apology from the journalist involved. However there is room for suspicion that Cartwright was guilty after all. The opinions expressed were not out of keeping with his well known Germanophobia. Oron J. Hale says that Grey believed Cartwright's denials too readily without even investigating the matter. (Hale, p. 401-03).

unabated until the outbreak of war in 1914.<sup>57</sup>

Nevertheless the fact that Grey was willing even to consider a political agreement with Germany alarmed the anti-German group in the Foreign Office, and like Goschen they felt "great relief at the idea that the Formula question is in the process of interment".<sup>58</sup> Did Grey seriously contemplate signing a non-aggression pact with Germany that would have destroyed his entente policy? The answer is no. The formula that Grey suggested to Metternich on March 14, 1912 was a very innocuous one stating only that Britain would "make no unprovoked attack upon Germany and pursue no aggressive policy towards her"<sup>59</sup> and that aggression upon Germany formed no part of any treaty or understanding that Britain had made or would make in the future. It does not seem that such a formula would have compromised Grey's entente policy, although the Foreign Office believed that it would do so by preventing Britain from aiding France

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<sup>57</sup>When the negotiations for a political agreement failed, the Germans proceeded with a new Naval Law. Churchill, now First Lord of the Admiralty, therefore brought down increased British naval estimates for 1912-13 to maintain a 60 percent superiority over Germany in dreadnoughts. This meant that Britain would lay down two keels for every one German keel, a modification of the two-power standard adapted to meet the new situation of Germany as Britain's most probable foe. In 1912 Churchill proposed a "naval holiday" -- an agreement between the powers not to build any new ships for a year -- and he repeated the proposal twice in 1913. But it was coolly received by the Germans. In 1913 a serious split occurred in the cabinet over what the "little navy" Liberals, led by Lloyd George, regarded as the "bloated" 1914-15 naval estimates. A cabinet breakup was only narrowly averted by a compromise figure.

<sup>58</sup>Goschen to Nicolson, April 20, 1912, B.D. VI, 579.

<sup>59</sup>Enclosure in ibid., 537.

should the latter be forced to attack Germany in self defence.<sup>60</sup> Grey, however, believed that so long as the word "neutrality" was omitted from the formula, Britain's hands would not be tied.<sup>61</sup> At any rate, Grey knew that the Germans would not accept any formula that did not specifically mention "neutrality", and he probably went so far as he did in discussing a political agreement in the knowledge that no such agreement could possibly be reached. In the meantime, pro-German sentiment in the cabinet would have been appeased. Grey says of the Haldane Mission in Twenty-five Years:

There had been no preparation of the ground: there was nothing to indicate that a substantial agreement with Germany about navies was possible, and without that there could be no agreement that would really be a rapprochement.<sup>62</sup>

One must conclude that the Haldane Mission was in large part a gesture to pacify Radical sentiment in the cabinet, party, and press. Yet Grey welcomed any démarche that might relieve Anglo-German tension and prevent war so long as it did not compromise British security, even though he rejected the idea of anything so definite as an entente. When in April 1912 Crowe, Nicolson, and Bertie strongly criticized the way that Britain had taken a softer line towards Germany lately, thus endangering the good relations with France and Russia, Grey minuted:

All this is true and not to be disregarded but on the other hand it has to be borne in mind that Russia and France both

<sup>60</sup>Bertie to Nicolson, March 28, 1912, ibid., 556.

<sup>61</sup>Grey to Bertie, April 9, 1912, ibid., 569.

<sup>62</sup>Grey, Twenty-five Years, I, p. 252.

deal separately with Germany and that it is not reasonable that tension should be permanently greater between England and Germany than between Germany and France or Germany and Russia.<sup>63</sup>

Despite the failure to come to a political or naval agreement, Anglo-German relations seemed to improve considerably in the last two years before the war. For one thing, Britain and Germany co-operated in 1912 and 1913 to settle the Balkan Wars Crisis by conference.<sup>64</sup> Germany seemed set on peace, not war. A feeling of optimism pervaded the country as well as the cabinet and House of Commons. This optimism was enhanced by Anglo-German agreements over two colonial matters that had for some time troubled relations -- the question of British participation in the Berlin-Bagdad Railway<sup>65</sup> and the question of the

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<sup>63</sup>Minutes by Crowe, Nicolson and Grey on Bertie to Grey, April 3, 1912, B.D. VI, 564.

<sup>64</sup>See below, Chapter VII, Part I, pp. 1-3.

<sup>65</sup>Germany had first been granted a concession to build a railway in Turkey in 1888, and subsequent concessions extending the length of the railway followed. The Germans invited international participation in order to help finance the project. British and French financiers were on the verge of agreement with the Germans in April 1903 when the London Times attacked the undertaking and both governments withdrew. Negotiations with Germany were recommenced when Grey became Foreign Secretary and formed an important point in the discussion for an Anglo-German agreement. The stumbling block was that Grey would not participate without French and Russian consent. Russia opposed the whole idea of a railway in Turkey which would assist in the regeneration of that state and therefore delay the accomplishment of her "historic mission". A convention, however, had finally been drawn up and initialled by the middle of June 1914 and was awaiting signature pending the conclusion of Turco-German negotiations.

disposal of the Portugese colonies.<sup>66</sup> Both agreements had been drawn up and were awaiting signature when interrupted by the Sarajevo Crisis and war.

In July 1914 it seemed to many in Britain that an Anglo-German rapprochement was just around the corner and would have come had war not intervened. Britain had settled two important colonial grievances with Germany as she had done with France and Russia in 1904 and 1907 -- and the latter two agreements had signalled the beginning of closer Anglo-French and Anglo-Russian relations, even of diplomatic co-operation in international crises. But the improvement in Anglo-German relations was less than it appeared. For one thing, the most outstanding specific grievance between the two powers -- the naval rivalry -- had not been alleviated at all. And, even more important, the fundamental postulates of Grey's foreign policy remained unchanged. Grey continued to base his policy upon the balance of power and an alignment with France and Russia, and Germany was still identified as the threat to that balance of power.

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<sup>66</sup>In 1898 Britain and Germany, foreseeing the break-up of the Portugese empire, made a secret agreement regarding the disposal of the Portugese colonies. In 1899 Britain, who was in no hurry to convert the agreement with Germany into a fait accompli, secretly renewed her long-standing guarantee of Portugal's possessions. The Germans suspected what had happened, and the question of the Portugese colonies continued to be a source of Anglo-German friction. In 1912 the pro-German faction in the Liberal cabinet, led by Colonial Secretary Lewis Harcourt, persuaded Grey to reopen the question as a possible means of conciliating Germany so as to obtain a naval agreement. An agreement regarding the Portugese colonies was initialled in October 1913, but Grey insisted that it be published along with the 1898 and 1899 agreements. The Germans would not agree to publication and the agreement remained unsigned.

Hale says: "British policy showed not the slightest indication of a return to the old Salisbury tradition of disengagement toward the two continental groups and assumption of the role of mediator and balance. On the contrary ... Britain's engagements to France and Russia became more extensive and precise."<sup>67</sup>

Grey had carefully built up a British-French-Russian diplomatic alignment to prevent Germany from being successful in her bid for hegemony. If and when she got the chance to make that bid, or believed that she was strong enough to make it, or that the time had come when it was now or never to make it, Grey was convinced that Germany would not hesitate -- despite Bethmann-Hollweg and Lichnowsky and others like them. The last probability happened in July 1914.

The alignment Grey built up was purely defensive. He had absolutely no aggressive aims; indeed, the underlying aim of his whole foreign policy was to maintain peace. He was extremely suspicious of Germany. He had a blind spot towards her. But he never wanted war with her. Nevertheless, he believed regretfully that sooner or later a war was probably inevitable, and he thus made every effort he could to see that Britain would be prepared for it, although he hoped that Anglo-German relations would never deteriorate to such a point. Here is where he departed from some of his more violently anti-German advisors, for one cannot help but conclude from the minutes and memoranda of someone like Crowe that a chance to vanquish the hated Germans was not altogether

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<sup>67</sup>Hale, p. 433.

unwelcome. Perhaps the best statement of what Grey thought the relationship between Britain and Germany could be, given what he regarded as a potentially aggressive Germany, is the following from Twenty-five Years:

We wanted the Entente and Germany's Triple Alliance to live side by side in amity. That was the best that was practicable.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>Grey, Twenty-five Years, I, p. 202.

CHAPTER VII  
EPILOGUE AND CONCLUSION

Part 1: Epilogue

One other major crisis occurred before 1914 and was settled peacefully without recourse to a general European war. That was the crisis over the Balkan Wars in 1912-13. There has not been time to examine the British Documents relating to this crisis, but it would not seem that any major change occurred in Grey's policy during the Balkan Wars which would invalidate the conclusions which have been drawn in the course of this thesis.<sup>1</sup>

After her defeat by the central powers during the Bosnian Crisis, Russia had spearheaded the formation of a league of the small Balkan states to be used as a weapon against Austria in the impending struggle in the Near East. But confident in their new-found strength, the Balkan states had seized the leadership of the league from their Russian sponsor and in October 1912 began the struggle for liberation of their fellow Slavs from the Turkish yoke. Russia did not yet feel prepared to fight Austria; nevertheless, she would not have backed down again and have permitted another Austrian diplomatic victory. In France, too, a great change had been wrought since 1909. Poincaré was very concerned about the solidarity

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<sup>1</sup>The main source used for this section on the Balkan Wars was Ernst Christian Helmreich, The Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars, 1912-1913 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1938).

of the "Triple Entente" and felt that Russia must be supported in the area where her most vital interests lay -- the Balkans. Therefore should Russia have become involved in a war with Austria or Austria backed by Germany, he was prepared to honour the military pledges of the Dual Alliance. Thus, unlike during the Bosnian Crisis, in 1912 Russia was ready, if necessary, to go to war against the central powers, and France was willing to support her. Grey would, therefore, in accordance with his principle of supporting France at all costs, have believed it necessary for Britain to join in to prevent an Austro-Germany victory.

But the European powers did not become involved in the war between Turkey and the Balkan states. The war remained localized and was settled among the original belligerents with the help of the great powers co-operating at the London conference. Like Russia, Austria did not feel prepared to force a war. And Germany was this time willing to co-operate with Britain in the role of mediator rather than insisting upon a diplomatic victory for her ally.

Grey worked hard to ensure that the Balkan Wars were localized. The idea of a European conference was his, and since it was held in London, he served as its chairman. He co-operated with Lichnowsky, the German representative, a man who hated war as fervently as did Grey and who worked as hard as Grey to prevent it. Yet there is no reason to believe that Grey was any less convinced of the necessity to maintain entente solidarity, nor any less suspicious of ultimate German aims, than he had been prior to this crisis. He had always worked for peace, and although he did not want a general political understanding with Germany,

he did desire better relations with her. Particularly, he desired that Britain and Germany should co-operate to prevent a far-away Balkan conflict from turning into a general European war. Should, however, Russia have decided that her vital interests in the Balkans demanded that she go to war with the central powers, and should France consequently have joined with her, Grey would have seen it as in Britain's vital interests to give France military aid. But in the Balkan Wars Crisis, as in the Bosnian Crisis, his entente-centred policy was not put to the test.

When Europe was finally plunged into war in 1914 it was another Balkan crisis that provided the issue. The Balkan question had not been settled in 1913. As Grey says in Twenty-five Years:

The settlement after the second Balkan War not one of justice but of force. It stored up inevitable trouble for the time to come. To make peace secure for the future, it would have been necessary for the Great Powers to have intervened to make the settlement of Bucharest a just one. This they did not do. They dared not do it, being too afraid of trouble between themselves.<sup>2</sup>

But one must look beyond the assassination of the Austrian Archduke Francis Ferdinand at Sarajevo on June 28, 1914 and beyond the Balkan question as a whole in order to explain why Europe found herself at war in 1914. The search for underlying causes of the war can be carried to extremes, but it is obvious that what happened in 1914 had been brewing for many years. Sarajevo was just the spark that ignited the European tinderbox. Similarly, Grey's actions in July and August 1914 cannot be viewed in isolation. What he did in those tense two weeks was merely the culmination of the policy he had been pursuing since his first year

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<sup>2</sup>Grey, I, p. 263.

as British Foreign Secretary.

As during the previous Balkan crises, Grey tried to localize the Sarajevo affair -- to keep it limited to an Austro-Serbian conflict. Despite the harshness of the Austrian ultimatum, he urged Serbia to be conciliatory. He made repeated attempts to settle the original Austro-Serbian dispute by negotiation, and later he again proposed a European conference. But this time Germany refused. She was once again giving Austria full support as in 1908-09. Russia mobilized as she could not allow Austria to crush the Serbs and inflict another diplomatic defeat upon her. And, Poincaré was again ready to support France's ally should Germany enter the fray. It was thus soon obvious that this Balkan crisis could not be localized.

As soon as he knew that France and Russia would be involved in a war with Germany, Grey knew what Britain's policy must be. She could not stand aside:

To stand aside would mean the domination of Germany; the subordination of France and Russia; the isolation of Britain, the hatred of her by both those who had feared and those who had wished for her intervention in the war; and ultimately that Germany would wield the whole power of the Continent.<sup>3</sup>

Should France go to war and the British government decide not to support her, Grey was ready to resign.<sup>4</sup>

In his August 3, 1914 speech to the House of Commons Grey reassured his fellow members of parliament that their liberty of decision had not

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 336-37.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 312.

been compromised by any engagements entered into previously without their knowledge -- not even by the military and naval conversations which were now revealed to parliament for the first time. Yet his explanation of why on August 2 the cabinet had told France that Britain would defend the French northern and western coasts against the German fleet showed that there really was an obligation arising out of the 1912 naval "arrangement". There was first of all a moral obligation:

My own feeling is that if a foreign fleet engaged in a war which France had not sought, and in which she had not been the aggressor, came down the English Channel and bombarded and battered the undefended coasts of France, we could not stand aside and see this going on practically within sight of our eyes and with our arms folded, looking on dispassionately, doing nothing!<sup>5</sup>

And it was also in Britain's self interest to defend the French coast, for otherwise France would probably have to withdraw part of her Mediterranean fleet, and since the 1912 naval "arrangement" the British Mediterranean fleet was not strong enough to deal alone with a combination of other fleets. The only way, Grey told the Commons, for Britain to make certain of keeping outside this war would be to issue immediately a proclamation of unconditional neutrality. Germany had already requested such a proclamation, and Grey had refused:

We cannot do that. We have made the commitment to France that I have read to the House which prevents us from doing that. We have got the consideration of Belgium which prevents us also from any unconditional neutrality, and, without those conditions absolutely satisfied and satisfactory, we are bound not to shrink from proceeding to the use of all the forces in our power.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th. series, Vol. 64, August 3, 1914, p. 105-127.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

Grey's mind was made up early in the crisis as to what policy Britain should follow. But Radical opinion in the cabinet which was resolutely opposed to British involvement in a continental war and which had troubled Grey since his first days in office, forced him to adopt a "wait and see" policy. He could not comply with Cambon's desperate pleas for a statement of British support. The cabinet would surely have broken up had he done so at any time prior to August 3.

The issue which united the cabinet and made it possible for Britain to enter the war was the question of Belgian neutrality. The German refusal to respect the neutrality of Belgium which had been guaranteed by the great powers in 1839 overcame the anti-interventionist sentiments of the country as perhaps no other issue could have done. Yet the question of Belgian neutrality was not the real reason why Britain went to war in 1914, although at the time only Grey and those who supported his entente policy realized this. Britain went to war in 1914 because she could not allow Germany to crush France and then establish hegemony in Europe. This had been the basis of Grey's foreign policy since 1906.

## Part 2: Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to try to determine whether Monger's new interpretation of Sir Edward Grey's foreign policy holds true for the entire pre-war portion of his term as British Foreign Secretary. On the basis of the British Documents on the Origins of the War it would seem that the principles of Grey's policy which Monger has elucidated from a study of Grey's actions and statements in 1906-07 can

in large part be regarded as having been the ones which Grey followed until the outbreak of war in 1914. The basic principle was Grey's belief that the European balance of power must be upheld; no state must be allowed to gain hegemony on the continent. Thus, secondly, Grey's policy was European-centred in contrast to the imperial-centred policy of his Conservative predecessors. Thirdly, Grey during his first few months in office identified Germany as the potential threat to the balance of power and the diplomatic crises of the following years only further confirmed this early impression. And, fourthly, in order to combat what he regarded as the "German menace", Grey built up a British-French-Russian coalition to act as a counterpoise, a purely defensive one, to the Triple Alliance.

Although a predominantly isolationist cabinet and parliament prevented Grey from turning the ententes with France and Russia into more binding agreements, even defensive alliances, with reference to the European continent as well as to colonial areas, he went as far as he could to make the "Triple Entente" a solid diplomatic grouping. He made the French entente with British support of France at all costs -- military support if necessary -- the keystone of his policy. While he could not bind Britain definitely to give France this support in the event of a Franco-German war, his actions -- most important, his support of France in the two Moroccan crises and his sanctioning of military conversations in 1906 and of the naval "arrangement" in 1912 -- created at least a moral commitment towards France. The French realized this and acted upon the assumption that they could count upon British military aid. Russia also played an important part in Grey's foreign policy. She was one of the

links of the chain he had forged to hold back Germany, and fear of Russian desertion to the Triple Alliance was a source of constant concern for him. But it was Russia's alliance with France that was the determining factor in Grey's policy towards Russia. He would go to war in order to secure Russia's position in the Balkans only if France should see it as her vital interest to do so. This was what happened in 1914.

The main criticism that must be made of Monger's interpretation of Grey's foreign policy is his assertion -- more implied than actually stated -- that it was an anti-German policy. Grey was extremely suspicious of Germany and fearful of her ultimate aims. He believed that some of her leaders desired to establish a hegemony in Europe and that they would use any means -- even the provocation of war -- in order to achieve that aim. This suspicion coupled with fear of Germany dominated every aspect of his policy and made him reject a rapprochement with her. But Grey was not anti-German. He bore no malice towards the German people. He sincerely desired peace and believed that to secure peace an improvement in Anglo-German relations was essential, especially an abatement of the naval rivalry. But if peace was not possible he meant to see that Germany would not be successful in her supposed bid for hegemony; thus he would not sacrifice either the system of ententes he had built up or Britain's naval supremacy.

How revolutionary is Monger's interpretation of Grey's foreign policy? It is quite revolutionary in so far as it shows that Grey had a much more well-defined policy than has previously been attributed to him. It was a policy with certain definite principles which Grey followed for the entire nine years of this study. His foreign policy was virtually

a straight line from Algeciras to Sarajevo. The principles themselves -- particularly Grey's strong suspicion and fear of Germany and his decision to support France at all costs -- are also revolutionary in comparison with the standard interpretation of his policy. And Monger's book and this thesis have shown, too, that Grey was much more strongly influenced by the anti-German group in the Foreign Office than had previously been suspected and much more secretive in his dealings with his cabinet colleagues.

On the other hand, Grey's foreign policy as interpreted by Monger was actually in keeping with Britain's traditional foreign policy in times of crisis. Britain had always gone into opposition to any continental power who threatened to establish a European hegemony. For this reason she had fought the Spain of Philip III, and the France of Louis XIV and of Napoleon. She had always preferred to concentrate on domestic and imperial matters rather than becoming embroiled in continental problems. But she could never remain oblivious to the continental situation, for she could not maintain the naval supremacy, vital to the defence of her insular position and for the protection of her widely scattered imperial possessions and the trade routes to them, if the European continent and the seas around it fell into hostile hands.

In the last part of the nineteenth century, with the feeling of security resulting from the long Victorian peace and British economic and naval supremacy, and with the "new imperialism" which absorbed British efforts in building up the world's largest empire, Britain's isolation from continental affairs was greater than ever before. Grey's predecessors thus pursued a foreign policy that was imperially-centred.

But by the turn of the century "splendid isolation" was no longer feasible. Britain found her imperial and naval supremacy challenged everywhere, and herself without friends or allies. As a result, an alliance with Japan was signed in 1902 and an entente with France in 1904. However, as the Conservative government interpreted these two agreements, they did not end the policy of "splendid isolation" but rather confirmed it by allowing Britain to concentrate more fully on imperial problems, secure in her new friendships.

It was Grey who ended the policy of "splendid isolation". During his first few months in office he began to transform the entente with France from a colonial agreement into a continental alignment, and he then proceeded to negotiate an agreement with Russia as part of a British-French-Russian coalition. Grey made this switch to a European-centred British foreign policy for one reason -- because he believed that Germany was aiming at continental, and possibly world, hegemony. He was determined that this threat should not become a reality. The Conservatives, now in opposition and now also alert to the German threat, became Grey's staunchest supporters for a strong policy of standing up to Germany in defence of the balance of power.

Was Grey's policy the best one to preserve peace? Grey believed that the ententes with France and Russia made for peace. He told the House of Commons in March 1914:

What was essential, I think, and has proved to be essential to the peace of Europe during the troublous times of the last two years, has been the existing grouping of the Powers, and the part which in those groups was played by the different Powers to preserve the peace and which they could not have

played so successfully if they had not belonged to those particular groups. That has made for peace ... We intend to maintain these good understandings. We believe they make for peace.<sup>7</sup>

The balance of power was, in his opinion, the best way to ensure that the peace of Europe was preserved,<sup>8</sup> and, if that peace should be broken, that the overly ambitious aggressor should be put back into his place in the system.

The charge is laid against Grey that ententes are even more dangerous than alliances. John Morley, one of the two cabinet ministers who resigned when Britain decided to enter the war, wrote in his

Memorandum on Resignation, August 1914:

An entente was evidently even more dangerous than an alliance. An alliance has definite covenants. An entente is vague, rests on the point of honour to be construed by accident and convenience.<sup>9</sup>

There is some truth in this criticism. The commitment that is built up as the result of an entente is a moral commitment, whose limits can never be precisely defined. But at the same time such a commitment is not as binding on the signatory powers. France could not have charged

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., Vol. 59, March 18, 1918, p. 2186-2195.

<sup>8</sup>The criticism is made of Grey's policy that the current belief by 1914 was that the "Triple Entente" was stronger than the Triple Alliance and therefore, "if, as Grey once said, England always drifted into opposition to the strongest continental power, a shift in British policy might seem to have been in order." (R.J. Sontag, "British Policy in 1913-14", The Journal of Modern History, Vol. 10 [December 1938], p. 542-553.) This criticism, however, overlooks the fact that it was against the continental power who was not only the strongest but also the most aggressive, or potentially aggressive, that Britain traditionally drifted into opposition.

<sup>9</sup>John Morley, Memorandum on Resignation, August 1914 (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1928), p. 17.

Britain with breach of contract had the British refused to aid her in 1914. Grey had always made it clear to the French that no matter what he might promise, he could be overruled by parliament. It was for this reason that Grey had to be content with ententes. There is no doubt but that he would have preferred a more definite, more binding agreement, at least with France if not with Russia, as well, had it been possible.

The question then follows whether a system of ententes or alliances was really necessary. Was Grey justified in bringing Britain back into the continental arena and building up intangible commitments to continental powers? His reason for doing so was that Germany was a menace to the balance of power and the peace of Europe. Perhaps Grey exaggerated the threat of German hegemony. Yet in view of the policy which Germany pursued in the last decade before the war -- her provocation of two crises over Morocco which could easily have resulted in European war, her unquestioning support of Austria during the Bosnian Crisis, her challenge to British naval supremacy, her bullying quest for a colonial empire -- suspicion of German aims was justifiable. In the light of this suspicion, Grey pursued a policy that would allow Britain most quickly and effectively to defend the balance of power if and when Germany tried to upset it.

Grey can be criticized for having had too much faith in the peaceful intentions of France and Russia and of perhaps sacrificing the independence of British foreign policy by allowing the French to decide what line Britain would take. It can also be argued with some justification that the ententes encouraged France and Russia to be more obstinate in

their dealings with the central powers than they would otherwise have been. Grey can also be criticized for having had a closed mind regarding Germany. He could have made a greater effort to come to some sort of a rapprochement with her. But his assumptions once having been made did not change.

Despite these criticisms that Grey's policy may in some of its aspects have contributed to the increase rather than to the relaxation of European tension in the last decade before the war, despite the other accusations that have been laid against him in the course of this thesis, it must again be emphasized that Grey's motives cannot be criticized. He believed that Germany was a threat to the peace of Europe and ultimately to the safety of Britain and to combat that threat he brought Britain out of her isolationist shell and aligned her, as far as he could, with the diplomatic grouping opposed to Germany. For nine years his underlying aim was always the same: to preserve peace but, if that were impossible, to make sure that when war came Britain would be prepared and the system of independent European states maintained.

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