

Multinational Conventions and Agreements

ALGECIRAS CONVENTION

TREATY AT A GLANCE

Completed

April 7, 1906, at Algeciras, Spain

Signatories

Germany, Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Spain, the United States, France, Great Britain, Italy, Morocco, the Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, and Sweden

Overview

The convention was the result of a conference of European diplomats called to settle Germany's challenge to the impending partition of Morocco by France and Spain. Germany's chief motive was to dissolve the Anglo-French Entente of 1904 (see ENTENTE CORDIALE); in fact, as a result of the Algeciras Conference and Convention, the entente became stronger.

Historical Background

Northern Africa became the focus of much European power politics at the beginning of the 20th century. The French had tried and failed to gain control in the Egyptian Sudan in 1898 and so sought to strengthen their hold on Saharan Africa. In 1904 France reached a secret understanding with Spain over the partitioning of the Sultanate of Morocco, while at the same time reaching agreement under the Entente Cordiale with Britain not to oppose her ambitions in Egypt in exchange for a free hand in Morocco. France immediately moved on Morocco, presenting the sultan with a new economic program and a series of so-called political reforms, which basically established French hegemony.

All of this irritated Germany, whose rise to Great Power status had been premised on Britain's "splendid isolation" from the European balance of power. Britain's new rapport with France troubled a number of European countries, but it seemed to unhinge Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II, who arrived in Morocco from Tangiers and, in a dramatic show of imperial power, declared from his yacht on May 31, 1905, that the traditional open-door policy was still in effect concerning Morocco and that he backed her independence and integrity. Perhaps Wilhelm's temper was an indication of the volatility surrounding the budding naval arms race

between Britain and Germany, perhaps merely an example of his near-crazed competitive spirit when it came to his English cousin, Britain's King Edward VII. In any case, his actions resulted in an international panic that came to be known as the First Moroccan Crisis.

If the kaiser's hope was that his demonstration of personal pique would prompt England to back down from its recently concluded Entente Cordiale with France, he was to be sorely disappointed. Instead, Wilhelm's action served to draw England and France, traditional rivals, even closer together. The sultan of Morocco requested an international conference at Algeciras from January 16 to April 7, 1906, to resolve what was developing into a crisis that could result in war. The tension was relieved when the German emperor, evidently realizing he had overplayed his hand, prevailed upon U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt to help bring about the conference and to serve as mediator, much as he had the year before when he brought the Russo-Japanese War to an end with the TREATY OF PORTSMOUTH.

Terms

The Algeciras Convention included detailed "chapters" concerning the establishment of a paramilitary

police force; the creation of a largely French-controlled state bank; reform of tax laws, customs, anti-smuggling controls, and public works and services administration. The chapter establishing a police force for Morocco is an apt demonstration of how imperialism gains a foothold in an ostensibly sovereign power.

Chapter I

Declaration Relative to the Organization of the Police

I

The conference summoned by His Majesty the Sultan to pronounce on the measures necessary to organize the police declares that the following provisions should be made:

II

The police shall be under the sovereign authority of His Majesty the Sultan. It shall be recruited by the Maghzen from Moorish Mohammedans, commanded by Moorish Kaid, and distributed in the eight ports open to commerce.

III

In order to aid the Sultan in the organization of this police, Spanish officers and noncommissioned officers as instructors, and French officers and noncommissioned officers as instructors, shall be placed at His disposal by their respective Governments, which shall submit their designation to the approval of His Shereefian Majesty. A contract drawn between the Maghzen and these instructors, in conformity to the regulation provided by article IV, shall determine the conditions of their engagement and fix their pay, which must not be less than double of the pay corresponding to the rank of each officer or noncommissioned officer. In addition they will be allowed living expenses, varying according to their residences. Proper lodgings will be placed at their disposal by the Maghzen, which will likewise supply them with their horses and the necessary fodder.

The Governments having jurisdiction over the instructors reserve the right to recall them and replace them by others, accepted and engaged under the same conditions.

IV

These officers and noncommissioned officers for a period of five years, to date from the ratification of the act of the conference, shall give their service to the organization of a body of Shereefian police. They shall assure instruction and discipline in conformity with the regulations to be drawn up in respect thereto. They shall also see that the men enlisted are fit for military service. In a general way they shall supervise the administration of the soldiers and superintend the payment of their salary, which shall be effected by the "Amin," assisted by the accounting officer instructor. They shall extend to the Moorish authorities invested with the command of these bodies their technical aid in the exercise of the said command.

The regulations to assure the recruitment, discipline, instruction, and administration of the bodies of police shall be established by mutual agreement between the Shereefian Minister of War or his delegate, the inspector provided by article VII, and the highest ranking French and Spanish instructors.

The regulations shall be submitted to the Diplomatic Body at Tangier, which will formulate its opinion within a month's time. After that period the regulations shall be enforced.

V

The total strength of the police shall not be more than 2,500 men, nor less than 2,000. It shall be distributed, according to the importance of the ports, in groups varying between 150 and 600 men. The number of Spanish and French officers shall be between sixteen and twenty; of Spanish and French noncommissioned officers, between thirty and forty.

VI

The funds necessary to maintain and pay soldiers and officers and noncommissioned officer instructors shall be advanced by the State Bank to the Shereefian Treasury within the limits of the annual budget assigned to the police, which shall not exceed two million and a half pesetas for an effective strength of two thousand five hundred men.

VII

During the same period of five years a general inspection shall be made into the working of the police. Such inspection shall be intrusted by His Shereefian Majesty to a superior officer of the Swiss army, who will be submitted to His approval by the Swiss Federal Government. This officer will be styled Inspector-General and reside at Tangier.

He shall inspect at least once a year the different bodies of the police, and after such inspection he shall draw up a report which he will address to the Maghzen.

In addition to such regular reports, he will, if he regards it as necessary, draw up special reports with reference to the working of the police.

Without directly intervening either in the command or the instruction, the Inspector-General will ascertain the results obtained by the Shereefian police, as regards the maintenance of order and security in the places where this police shall have been established.

VIII

A copy of the reports and communications made to the Maghzen by the Inspector-General, with reference to his mission, shall at the same time be transmitted to the Dean of the Diplomatic Body at Tangier, in order that the Diplomatic Body be enabled to satisfy itself that the Shereefian police acts in conformity to the decisions taken by the conference, and to see whether it guarantees effectively, and in conformity with the treaties, the security of person and property of foreign citizens, subjects, and protégés, as well as that of commercial transactions.

IX

In the case of complaints filed with the Diplomatic Body by the legation concerned, the Diplomatic Body may, upon notice given to the representative of the Sultan, direct the Inspector-General to investigate and report for all available purposes in the matter of such complaints.

X

The Inspector-General shall receive an annual salary of 25,000 francs. In addition, he will be allowed 6,000 francs for the expenses of his tours. The Maghzen will place at his disposal a suitable residence and will look after the maintenance of his horses.

XI

The material conditions of his engagement and of his establishment, as provided by article X, shall be the subject of a contract drawn up between him and the Maghzen. A copy of this contract shall be communicated to the Diplomatic Body.

XII

The staff of instructors of the Shereefian police (officers and noncommissioned officers) shall be Spanish at Tetuan, mixed at Tangier, Spanish at Larache, French at Rabat, mixed at Casablanca, and French in the other three ports.

The United States assented to the convention but, characteristically, excluded itself from what George Washington would have called a "foreign entanglement." The convention concluded:

The Government of the United States of America, having no political interest in Morocco and no desire or purpose having animated it to take part in this conference other than to secure for all peoples the widest equality of trade and privilege with Morocco and to facilitate the institution of reforms in that country tending to insure complete cordiality of intercourse without and stability of administration within for the common good, declares that, in acquiescing in the regulations and declarations of the conference, in becoming a signatory to the General Act of Algeciras and to the Additional Protocol, subject to ratification according to constitutional procedure, and in accepting the application of those regulations and declarations to American citizens and interests in Morocco, it does so without assuming obligations or responsibility for the enforcement thereof.

In Executive Session, Senate of the United States.

Resolved (two-thirds of the Senators present concurring therein), That the Senate advise and consent to

the ratification of the general act and an additional protocol, signed on April 7, 1906, by the delegates of the powers represented at the conference which met at Algeciras, Spain, to consider Moroccan affairs.

Resolved further, That the Senate, as a part of this act of ratification, understands that the participation of the United States in the Algeciras conference and in the formation and adoption of the general act and protocol which resulted therefrom, was with the sole purpose of preserving and increasing its commerce in Morocco, the protection as to life, liberty, and property of its citizens residing or traveling therein, and of aiding by its friendly offices and efforts, in removing friction and controversy which seemed to menace the peace between powers signatory with the United States to the treaty of 1880, all of which are on terms of amity with this Government; and without purpose to depart from the traditional American foreign policy which forbids participation by the United States in the settlement of political questions which are entirely European in their scope.

Consequences

Since the conference included an affirmation of the independence of Morocco, Germany was, on the surface, placated; but France was accorded much control of this "independent" country, including regulation of the Moroccan police and finances, just as she had planned all along. Contrary to German expectations, only Austria-Hungary had backed the German position at the conference, while Italy, Russia, and, more importantly, Britain and the United States had lined up behind France.

For the true significance of the conference lay precisely here, in this substantial diplomatic support for France from the two English-speaking powers. Algeciras foreshadowed their actions in World War I, for which the Moroccan Crisis was a prelude. Wilhelm intervened again in the region in 1911, by sending a gunboat to Agadir after French forces punitively occupied the Moroccan capital of Fez. Faced with the same alliance, Germany backed down completely during this second crisis, and recognized French rights in Morocco. In 1912 most of the area became a French protectorate. Soon after, of course, the two countries were fighting the world war over the Balkans that they had avoided fighting over Morocco.